

EXPLANATION OF TECHNIQUES

SECTION A: HABITS OF REFLECTIVE PROCEDURE (Techniques of Self-Deception)

1. PREJUDICE

Example: Nathanael asked (referring to Jesus): "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" and thus indicated his prejudice against Jesus' home town.

Meaning: A prejudice is an unwillingness to examine fairly the evidence and reasoning in behalf of the person or thing which is the object of the prejudice. It is a prejudgment caused by indoctrination, conditioning, or some prior experience of a singularly pleasant or unpleasant character. A prejudice has strong and deep emotional support.

In discussing Prejudice here we are not talking of appeals to known prejudices. These are made from without, as by an advertising man, a salesman, or a politician. Rather, our interest is in how your own Prejudice, unaided by outside support, victimizes you.

Prejudice differs from Hasty Generalization in that although Hasty Generalization often represents a spontaneous emotional reaction, Prejudice is always a matter of much longer standing. The feeling that operates in the latter case is deep, not superficial, and is often completely hidden from the man in its grip.

2. ACADEMIC DETACHMENT

Example: "I've heard many arguments in favor of the Republican candidate and just as many for the Democratic. Hence I don't find any reason to prefer one over the other, so I'm going to stay home and not vote for either one."

Meaning: We refuse to commit ourselves when decision or action is demanded. In a situation requiring

a stand to be taken, we see (or think we see) persuasive arguments on both sides. But certification and action of one kind or another, instead of trying to remain neutral, we must make a decision on the basis of which side seems to have the greater weight of evidence.

3. DRAWING THE LINE

Example: "Either you tell the truth or you lie."

Meaning: Sharp distinctions are drawn where it is inappropriate to draw sharp distinctions.

It is permissible to draw the line between those who are for you and those who are not for you, those who tell the truth and those who do not tell the truth, and so on. But the error and inelination exhibited by common speech is to fail to realize that the logical class of those who do not tell the truth includes two subclasses that are quite different: 1) those who lie and 2) those who say nothing at all.

4. NOT LEAVING THE LINE

Example: "If we are allowed to stay out till two o'clock in the morning, why not till three — one hour doesn't make much difference."

Meaning: The existence of differences is denied just because the differences are small and therefore apparently unimportant.

5. CONSERVATISM, RADICALISM, MODERATISM

Example: (1) "This belief is an old one, but I want you to know that the old ways are the best ways."
(2) "What we need is new ideas, completely new ways of thinking; the old is not worthy of our acceptance."
(3) "Vote for me. My program is neither conservative nor radical."

✓ 6 RATIONALIZATION¹⁶ (Excuses)
✓ 7 Wishful thinking (stereotypes)
✓ 8 TABLOID "

✓ 9 CASUAL¹⁷ OVERSIMPLIFICATION
✓ 10 INCONCERNABILITY

Meaning: These three habits of mind often are forms of prejudice. But they are not necessarily such. Prejudices have histories with a beginning. But the conservative, the one who prefers what is old or familiar simply because it is old or familiar, may be born such; it is a part of the temperament he brings into the world. Radicalism is the habit of preferring the new or the revolutionary just because of its newness. The moderate habitually chooses middle-of-the-road or compromise ground; he avoids the two extremes. But there is no inherent virtue in moderation or compromise as such. Actually, there are times when our position should be conservative, times when we should take a radical stand, and still other times when we should be moderate.

5. RATIONALIZATION

Example: The student, having failed the test, blames his failure on the classroom's being so hot that he couldn't think, whereas in reality he knows that he didn't spend enough time in study.

Meaning: You cite reasons or causes that will justify action that really has less creditable grounds.

7. WISHFUL THINKING

Example: "My son will win because he ought to win after all his long hard preparation."

Meaning: You believe a proposition to be true because you want it to be true.

When we are forced to admit that our wishes have not become reality, we may then seek comfort in rationalizing. If, in the example cited above, the son does not win and the contest is fair, the parent will feel the necessity of inventing some argument that will excuse the son's failure.

8. TABLOID THINKING

Example: "In college Basil was taught all about evolution -- the ape-man theory, you know."

Meaning: To think in tabloids is to oversimplify a complex theory or set of circumstances. The tabloid thinker prefers quick summaries and has the habit of "putting things in a nutshell."

Tabloids concerning people are popular because they offer a neat summary of the character of a prominent person. "Marx? You don't know who Marx was? Why, he was that philosopher who became impatient and irritable in his old age." It is much easier to remember Marx in this simple fashion than to remember him as a man of many interesting and controversial facets of character and conviction. These human tabloids are frequently emotional, but they are not mere Emotional Terms. To be Tabloid Thinking there must be some indication that someone is trying to sum up another's character. All stereotypes ("barbers are talkative") are tabloids because they represent a certain trait or characteristic, which is really superficial or trivial, as being the essential nature of a given class.

9. CAUSAL OVERSIMPLIFICATION

Example: "If it were not for the ammunition makers, we would never have wars."

Meaning: A complex event is explained by references to only one or two probable causes whereas many are responsible.

10. INCONCEIVABILITY

Example: "Since Ballhead State has never in all its past history won the conference title, I just can't picture them winning it this year."

Meaning: You declare a proposition to be false simply because you cannot conceive it actualized or possible of realization.

EXPLANATION OF TECHNIQUES

SECTION B: WATCH THEIR LANGUAGE -- AND YOURS TOO (Techniques of Language)

1. EMOTIONAL TERMS

Example: Participant in argument: "If you damned fools would only shut your traps a while and let me...."

Meaning: An emotional term is a word or phrase which, however much factual information it conveys about an object, also expresses and/or arouses a feeling for or against that object.

It is felt that emotional language is appropriate in non-controversial situations. For the purposes of the Propaganda Game patriotic celebrations, church services, poetry and other literary forms, and whenever a person is expressing personal feeling without attempting to persuade or convince others are defined as non-controversial situations. Translated into neutral language the emotionally-charged example given above would read: "I don't agree and if you'll just give me a chance to talk, I'll show you why."

In playing the game then, emotional terms apply to controversial situations only, although we are aware that many will disagree with this characterization.

2. METAPHOR AND SIMILE

Example: Metaphor -- "Napoleon was a fox." Simile -- "Napoleon was like a fox."

Meaning: A metaphor is a comparison implied but not definitely stated. In the case of simile the comparison is explicitly stated by means of such words as "like" or "as."

In controversial situations the employment of metaphor or simile is to be avoided because

such figures of speech are apt to suggest likenesses not really intended or not actually present. Napoleon was not actually a fox. He may have been like one, but if so, was it with respect to shrewdness or thievery or both or neither?

3. EMPHASIS

Example: When "We should not speak ill of our friends" is quoted, the original meaning changes if any of the following underlined words is emphasized: "We should not speak ill of our friends." Emphasizing "we" suggests that we should not, true, but others may.

Meaning: The technique of emphasis occurs only when another speaker or writer is quoted and one or more words emphasized so as to imply what would not otherwise be implied and thus put into the mouth of the source, meaning(s) he may not have wished to convey.

Oral emphasis is usually secured by means of pitch, tone, or volume of voice. Written emphasis is secured by a variety of devices, such as italicizing and underlining. "Italics mine" (or its equivalent) is the accepted way for a writer to indicate that he is giving a stress to certain words that the original author had perhaps no thought of stressing.

4. QUOTATION OUT OF CONTEXT

Example: Someone quotes the Bible as saying that "... money is the root of all evil" but leaves out the preceding words, "the love of."

Meaning: Quotation out of context is a propaganda technique when the effect of quoting a given statement without its context is to distort the original meaning in context.

The context of a given statement is not merely the words that precede and that follow but

5) ABSTRACT TERMS
NO OFFENSE

6) VAGUE
UNCLEAR

7) AMBIG
2 meanings

8) Shift of meaning

every accompanying circumstance, whether it be time and place or gesture and facial expression.

5. ABSTRACT TERMS

Example: A speaker defines "neurosis" as "a psychological term for a state of mind involving the nerves," but when he is asked to identify or point to -- among a large number of people -- a case of neurosis, he is at a loss to do so, showing that he is unable to use the term to make any concrete distinctions.

Meaning: An abstract term is a word or symbol which stands for the qualities (one or more) possessed in common by a number of particular things, facts, or events. The technique of abstract terms occurs when an arguer employs a word for which he may have meaning in the form of other words, but the arguer is unable to identify the concrete facts to which the word supposedly refers.

6. VAGUENESS

Example: Someone says to me, "Sit down on that stool," and I sit down on the thing he points to. His meaning is not ambiguous; I understand what he is referring to. But I find the term "stool" vague under the circumstances, and I protest, "But this is not a stool, for it has a little back to it, and so it is a chair." He may reply, "But there is really not enough back there to call it a 'back,' so I call it a 'stool'."

Meaning: To call a word "vague" is to say that marginal situations can and do arise where there is doubt as to whether the word should or should not be used in describing those particular situations. The technique of vagueness exists where there is uncertainty as to the scope of a word.

7. AMBIGUITY

Example: Joe says, "Henry likes pudding better than his wife." And one or more people hearing him are left wondering whether Henry likes pudding better than he likes his wife or if Henry likes pudding more than his wife does.

Meaning: A word or phrase is ambiguous if in the mind of a hearer or reader it has two or more quite different meanings and the interpreter is uncertain as to which was really meant. In argument such a situation would at all times be undesirable.

8. SHIFT OF MEANING

Example: "The fellow who was supposed to arbitrate decided in favor of the company and fined the union. Now anyone who takes sides in a dispute is certainly not impartial. So how can this fellow claim to be an impartial arbitrator?"

Meaning: In shift of meaning a word appears explicitly or implicitly two or more times in an argument but with different meanings.

In the example appearing above "impartial" shifts meaning. In its first use it means "wholly refraining from judgment; taking no stand on an issue." But in its second use it means "judging after investigation but without previous bias." Obviously, the arbitrator's being impartial in the second sense does not necessitate his being so in the first sense. The implied conclusion ("the arbitrator is not impartial") is invalid.

In an argument between two people a given word may shift in the meaning given it by the two parties. This leads to what are called "merely verbal disagreements" or "merely verbal agreements." Again, if the reasoning depends on the word's being used in the same sense by the two parties, a technique has been used.

EXPLANATION OF TECHNIQUES

SECTION C: HOW SUGGESTIBLE ARE YOU? (Techniques of Irrelevance)

1. APPEARANCE

Example: A floor wax nationally advertised on television is shown in the commercial being applied to a floor with the immediate result of a brilliant luster. The viewer does not know that the floor has been buffed and polished for days, and then dust coated just before the wax was applied in the commercial.

Meaning: The appearance of a thing (or person) is made the basis of our acceptance or rejection without any thought that this appearance may be a deceptive indicator of value.

2. MANNER

Example: "He was such a well-behaved man, so understanding, so sincerely helpful. He wanted to help us. I couldn't insult him. So I gave him our savings to invest. He seemed so trustworthy."

Meaning: A person's manner of behaving is made the basis of our acceptance or rejection of him without any thought that this manner may be a deceptive indicator of value.

3. DEGREES AND TITLES

Example: The name on the office door reads "James A. Rydack, Th.B., M.Th.R., As.D., Counselor Extraordinary of the Society of Metaphysicians." A woman about to enter the office says to her husband, "With all those degrees and that title, he must know his stuff."

Meaning: We buy or we believe out of respect for degrees or titles attached to the names of those who persuade us.

4. NUMBERS

Example: From an advertisement: "One million more sold this year than last."

Meaning: We buy or believe because of the large numbers associated with the product or proposition.

5. STATUS

Example: Advertisement appearing in the Hampshire Gazette, January 29, 1790: "President Washington, when he addressed the two houses of Congress on the 8th instance, was dressed in a crow-coloured suit of clothes of American manufacture. This elegant fabric was from the manufactory in Hartford."

Meaning: Persons or objects for which we have a strong sentiment of respect and esteem - or which at least possess some degree of fame or prestige - are introduced into the argument as endorsing that which we are asked to buy or believe.

6. REPETITION

Example: Radio Commercial: "Get up with GET-UP, GET-UP's got get up. Got it? Get it? Get GET-UP!!"

Meaning: We buy or believe because we have heard or seen the idea or product name so often.

7. SLOGANS

Example: "WHEATLESS, THE BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS"; "LSMFT" (LUSTY STRIP BEANS FINE TOBACCO); "WHEN BETTER CARS ARE BUILT, BUNK WILL BUILD THEM"; "BETTER BUY BARD'S-EYE".

Meaning: A slogan is a short, meaningful, catchy phrase or sentence intended for general consumption and designed to terminate thought and promote action in favor of the slogan maker. However true the slogan may be, if your action is, or is intended to be, merely a favorable response to the slogan, the technique is successful.

Red Jargon

89 Blue Sophis

form

8. TECHNICAL JARGON

Example: Advertisement: "Liberty Rubber's new tires contain durium, the bonding material that makes these tires wear for years."

Rep

✓ Meaning: The technique of technical jargon is the use of technical language or unfamiliar words, whether contained in the dictionary or freshly coined, for the purpose of impressing people.

9. SOPHISTICAL FORMULA

Example: Mrs. Jones: "You know, Ann, I think the Browns must be having trouble. The last two mornings I've see Tom Brown leave the house, slam the door, and drive off in his car looking awfully mad. I'll bet they're headed for a divorce."

Mrs. Smith: "I don't know, Barbara. Really, they've always seemed to be very much in love."

Mrs. Jones: "Well, all I know is that 'where there's smoke, there's fire'."

OLIVE

Meaning: To shut off or close the argument a popular maxim or old saying is quoted. But every controversial situation must be settled in its own terms, and not on the merits (if any) of some proverb.

EXPLANATION OF TECHNIQUES

SECTION D: WHAT'S YOUR WEAKNESS? (Techniques of Exploitations)

1. APPEAL TO PITY

Example: Student to professor: "I know that my test grades have been poor and that I deserve an 'F', but my father is in the hospital and it will just break his heart if I get an 'F' in this course."

Meaning: An attempt is made to secure our commitment by presenting the object of commitment as an object of sympathy, thereby arousing our sympathetic feelings to the point where these feelings determine favorable action.

2. APPEAL TO FLATTERY

Example: Salesman to young matron answering the door: "Is your mother home?"

Meaning: An attempt is made to persuade us to buy or believe by flattering us on our personal appearance or in some other category where we excel or desire to excel.

3. APPEAL TO RIDICULE

Example: The professor, on the first day of class, having made a certain statement, is asked an embarrassing question by a member of the class. Preferring a cheap victory to an honest discussion, the professor replies sarcastically, "I am afraid, Mr. Jones, that I cannot understand what you mean. You are too deep for me." He then goes on to the next questioner.

Meaning: An attempt is made to influence us to accept a certain proposition by poking fun at those who oppose the proposition.

In the example cited above the impression will be left on the minds of other students that the questioner must have been talking nonsense,

39

since it cannot otherwise be supposed that the professor was unable to understand the question. At least that is the impression the professor hopes to leave.

4. APPEAL TO PRESTIGE

Example: Real estate advertisement: "Live in exclusive Broadmoor Terraces, where successful people live. Deluxe executive apartments furnished in the Continental manner."

Meaning: An attempt is made to induce you to buy or believe by stating or suggesting that such action will secure or maintain prestige for you.

Status and Appeal to Prestige, though related techniques, nevertheless represent quite different errors. In the former case it is suggested that if Jones, a person possessing or allegedly possessing status, buys or believes, so should you. There is no implication that your buying or believing will confer on you equivalent status. The Appeal to Prestige suggests that you should buy or believe because by so doing you will acquire or improve status.

5. APPEAL TO PREJUDICE

Example: A young man, wishing to make a good impression on his girl friend's father, learns that he is a rabid Democrat. So one evening, while waiting for the daughter to finish dressing, he engages the "old man" in conversation, and the young man turns the conversation to the point where he can rip the Republicans to pieces. The father later informs the girl that the young man has "good stuff in him and should go a long way."

Meaning: The one who makes the appeal to prejudice attempts to persuade you to act or feel in a certain way by associating his person, product

40

6 Bargain
7 flattery

8 Join the bandwagon
9 practical consequence

10 appeal → DUB

or proposal with a certain one or more of your prejudices, positive or negative -- a prejudice being a prejudgment wrapped in emotion and having a history. Not only does he rekindle your prejudice, he also arouses in you warm feelings toward the one (himself) who apparently shares your prejudice. And so it becomes much easier to make you believe or buy whatever he has to offer.

✓ 6. BARGAIN APPEAL

Example: The supermarket has a special display at the front of the store: canned peaches by the case (8 cans) for "only \$5.20". Checking the shelves where single cans of peaches may be purchased, one finds the same brand priced at 40 cents per can.

Meaning: An attempt is made to get you to buy by appealing to your desire to save money. If you buy without making your own comparison as to price, quality, and service, the technique is successful.

7. FOLKSY APPEAL

Example: The salesman who on meeting the prospect for the second (or even the first) time slaps him on the back as if he were a long lost brother and addresses him by his nickname.

Meaning: The user of this device places himself or his product on a level of neighborly intimacy with the reader or listener.

The Folksy Appeal combines elements of Appearance and Manner.

8. JOIN THE BANDWAGON APPEAL

Example: "Vote for a winner, Senator Simpkins."

Meaning: An effort is made to influence you to act in a certain way by asserting or implying that that is what is popular or what the majority is doing.

9. APPEAL TO PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

Example: Slip inserted in workers' pay envelopes: "If the Republicans do not win this election, this factory will be forced to close its doors and you will be without a job."

Meaning: An effort is made to persuade us to buy or believe by appealing to our concern for our own individual welfare, i.e., if we do as we are asked, we will secure certain beneficial consequences, while if we refuse to do as asked, the consequences will be harmful.

10. PASSING FROM THE ACCEPTABLE TO THE DUBIOUS

Example: Advertisement: "The boys in the service abroad want letters more than gifts. Write frequently because some letters may be lost. Write only good news because there are enough unpleasant things going on over there. Buy and write on Barton's Victory Stationery."

Meaning: The arguer states a series of propositions. The early ones are readily acceptable to the audience or reader, but the later ones are dubious. The listener or reader is expected to accept blindly the later ones because he has accepted those which came before.

⑥ FAULTY ANALOGY

⑧ Composition "Stupidity"

⑦ Division cut up of a group

⑧ NOW SEQUITUR Doesn't Follow DUZENT

EXPLANATION OF TECHNIQUES

SECTION B: THE FAULT MAY BE WITH THE FORM (Techniques of Form)

1. CONCURRENCY

Example: "Who was President at the time of World War I? Wilson, a Democrat. Who was President at the time of World War II? Roosevelt, a Democrat. Who was President at the time of the Korean War? Truman, a Democrat. Obviously, the Democratic party is the war party."

Meaning: Because things exist or appear simultaneously, it is claimed that one is the cause of the other. The form of the argument is: A is present along with B; therefore A is the cause of B. But two concurrents could never be the cause of one another, for a cause is something antecedent in time.

2. POST HOC

Example: "The bankers are the source of our troubles. You will notice that every depression is preceded by bank failures."

Meaning: Because two events (or things) follow one another in close temporal succession the first event is claimed to be the cause of the second. The form of the argument is: A precedes B; therefore A is the cause of B. We may take as a hypothesis for testing, that A is a (or the) cause of B, but we should not forget that any one of a score of other preceding events is equally worthy of investigation.

3. SELECTED INSTANCES

Example: Someone says, "All professors are conceited." When asked for his evidence he replies, "Well, how about Professor Smith, and Professor Jones, and Professor Blaine. Everybody knows they're as conceited as they come." But he deliberately skips over Professor Blake whom he knows to be a model of humility.

Meaning: Support is drawn for a position by choosing only those cases or instances which back it up and disregarding those cases or instances which either contradict or do not support the position. The form of the argument is: All A is B; because A1, A2, A3, and A4 are B. The form is invalid; the arguer knows that at least A5 is not B.

4. HASTY GENERALIZATION

Example: Having observed five women to be poor drivers, Jones generalizes and declares all women are poor drivers.

Meaning: The arguer jumps to a general or blanket conclusion about the members of a given group on the basis of an unrepresentative or insufficient number of cases. The form of the argument is: A1, A2, A3 are B; therefore all A is B.

Selected instances and Hasty Generalization have much the same effect. There are important differences, however. Hasty Generalization typically occurs on an emotional basis, while Selected Instances is typically coldly calculating. In the former case there is, at the time at least, no awareness of opposed instances; in the latter case, there is. Selected Instances is not merely crooked thinking but dishonesty. On the surface the two are apt to look alike, and until we have evidence that the arguer is really deliberately closing his eyes to contradictory cases, we cannot label the technique as Selected Instances.

5. FAULTY ANALOGY

Example: "Last quarter I had a student by the name of Orzyski who did good work. This quarter I have another student by that name, and I'm expecting good work from him."

MAKES & SELECTS OWN CIRCUMSTANCES



Meaning: To reason analogically is to reason that because two or more things or types of things are alike in some one or more respects (we may call this the antecedent resemblance), they will therefore be found alike in some other respect(s) -- the consequent resemblance. In cases of reliable analogies the antecedent factor is already known to have some bearing on the occurrence of the consequent factor. In faulty analogies such knowledge is lacking. The form of the argument is: A is like B in respect c; therefore A is like B in respect d.

In our example, while it is true that Orzyski is a rare name in English - speaking societies and while it is even probable that a second Orzyski enrolled at the same college would be related to the first, we need evidence that heredity is the decisive factor in scholastic performance. But an analogy is no stronger than its linking generalization, which in this case is "Heredity determines scholastic performance." Since our experience contains an abundance of cases of relatives with widely different scholastic records, we can have no confidence in an analogy based on such a linking generalization.

Some arguments take the form of alleging a complete analogy: two things are alike to the point of identity. The argument is: A (or all A) is c and B (or all B) is c; therefore B is A (or A is B). "Communists will not take the oath of allegiance and neither will Jones. Therefore he must be a Communist." The absurdity of this sort of argument becomes readily evident when we see it is just like saying "Dogs have tails; this cat has a tail; so this cat is a dog."

In discussing Metaphor and Simile the point was made that neither one, especially Metaphor, should be used in controversial situations.

That remains true. But a metaphor or simile appearing by itself is not an argument, and is very uncertain in meaning. Analogies make use of simile and make clear how A is compared to B, but it still must be said that analogical argument is strong only when A and B are essentially the same kind of thing, and A has a property deriving from its essential nature, therefore B must have the same property.

6. COMPOSITION

Example: "He's a nice boy; she's a nice girl. I'm sure they'll make a nice married couple."

Meaning: We reason as if the properties of elements or individuals were always (i.e., necessarily) the properties of the wholes which they constitute. But the assumption that what holds true of a part is automatically true of the whole cannot be justified. The form of the argument is: A is part of B and A is c; therefore B is c.

7. DIVISION

Example: "How dare you criticize any member of the Harvard faculty? Don't you know that this faculty has the highest reputation of any university faculty in the United States?"

Meaning: We reason as if the properties of any whole are always (i.e., necessary) properties of each part. But the assumption that what holds true of a whole is automatically true of its parts cannot be justified. The form of the argument is: A is part of B and B is c; therefore A is c.

8. NON SEQUITUR

Example: "Your children deserve the best milk. Buy Lorden's."

Meaning: The conclusion is not necessitated by the premise(s).

- 1 DIVERSION
- 2 DISPROVING A MINOR POINT
- 3 AD HOMINEM
- 4 APPEAL TO IGNORANCE
- 5 LEADING QUESTION
- 6 COMPLEX
- 7 INCONSEQUENT ARGUMENT
- 8 ATTACK STRAW MAN
- 9 VICTORY BY DEFINITION
- 10 BEGGING THE QUESTION