

Non-Argumentative Persuasion (Rhetorical Devices)

Chapter 7

Definition

Non-argumentative persuasion is the attempt to change one's mind, beliefs or attitudes about something with what appear like reasons but without actually providing good reasons to do so

Linguistic *Slanters*

- These are terms or ideas that have a strong emotive force
- They employ emotionally loaded terms or ideas in the attempt to sway our opinion
- They can be both overly negative or overly positive

Are *Slanters* Always Bad?

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- The easy answer: “No, not always!”

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- Keep in mind the following:
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 - **The use of emotional language is NOT always a reason to reject a claim**
 - **Key: It is NOT a reason to accept a claim**

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EXAMPLE: “John killed his dog with an axe.”

VS. ➔ “John, a murderous animal hater, killed his dog with an axe.” -- Clearly this one goes beyond the facts

Euphemisms and Dysphemisms

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- Definition: Euphemisms are a neutral or positive expression that is used in place of a negative one
- Dysphemism: This is the opposite of a euphemism. Its goal is to produce a negative effect on the reader/listener's attitude toward something or to tone down the positive association it may have

Euphemisms and Dysphemisms

- Not always bad / illogical / improper ...
 - Good Question to Ask: Will the use of this term/concept halt rational discourse?

Euphemisms and Dysphemisms

- Not always bad ...
 - Depends on the particular situation
 - Take the following - which is better when speaking to a recent widow:
 - “Joan, I am so sorry that your husband of 40 years is dead.”
- OR
- “Joan, I am so sorry that your husband of 40 years has passed on.”

Taking euphemisms too far...

- “People do not get old” --- “They become chronologically gifted”
- “Drinking does not make one drunk ---
“Individuals become sobriety-deprived”
 - From *The Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook*
- *Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Double Talk (1981)* defined a prisoner as a “client of the correctional system.”

Taking euphemisms too far...

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 - Non-traditional shopper: *A Looter*
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 - Terminally Inconvenienced: *Dead*
- *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* - **Becomes:** *The Good, The Ethically Disoriented, and the Cosmetically Different*
 - (*The Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook*)

Comparisons, Definitions, Explanations

- Persuasive Comparisons: Can be useful in helping our understanding of a subject matter to use comparisons → but take the following example ...

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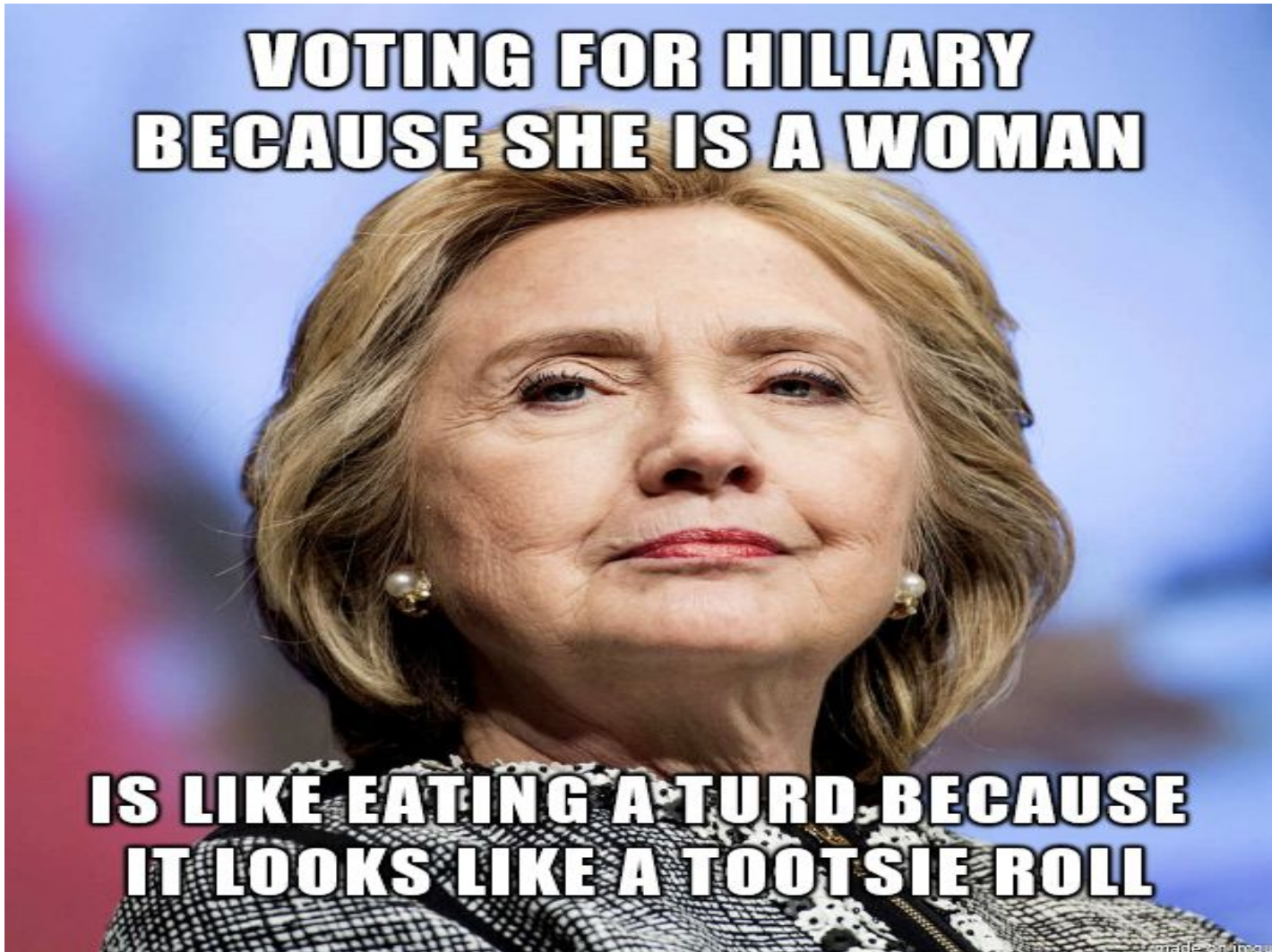
- Rhetorical Analogy → Used to Manipulate



Or ...

**VOTING FOR HILLARY
BECAUSE SHE IS A WOMAN**

**IS LIKE EATING A TURD BECAUSE
IT LOOKS LIKE A TOOTSIE ROLL**



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- Persuasive Definitions: This is to sneak prejudice of some type into the meaning of a term
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 - “A Feminazi is a woman to whom the most important thing in life is seeing to it that as many abortions as possible are performed.”
- Rush Limbaugh

Comparisons, Definitions, Explanations

- Persuasive Explanations:
 - When used as a *slanter*, it is using loaded language to explain something
 - Loaded in the sense that it directly appeals to our emotions

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- Persuasive Explanations:
 - When used as a *slanter*, it is using loaded language to explain something
 - “*We’re behind the troops but we oppose war and violence*, they say. If they dislike violence so much, then why do they block traffic, threaten pedestrians, and deface public buildings? The only explanation why these malcontents do what they do is not because they oppose violence but because they hate America.”

Stereotype

- Definition: Stereotypes are oversimplified generalizations about a class of individuals based on an unjustified assumption that every member of a class 'P' has some set of properties 'X'
- Unstated Assumption VS. Unjustified Assumption
 - The second is what a stereotype is

Stereotype Examples

- “Chinese are not as hairy as the Japanese and seldom grow an impressive mustache...The Chinese expression is likely to be more placid, kindly, open; the Japanese more positive, dogmatic, arrogant.”
 - “Japanese are hesitant, nervous in conversation, laugh loudly at the wrong time.”
- **Appeared in a 1941 issue of *Time Magazine***

Important Distinction

- Examples thus far use language (specific words, phrases, etc.) to *slant* our understanding
- Not all *slanters* operate in this way
- Some rely on manipulating expectations and assumptions that we all make

Innuendo

- “Ladies and gentlemen, I am proof that there is at least one candidate in this race who is not an alcoholic.”
 - Not emotionally based
- **Focuses more on logical expectations and assumptions and not the emotional operation of language**
 - Innuendo plays off of those assumptions
 - Creates a subtle suggestion in our minds without actually making the claim
- Innuendo as *Loaded Question*

Weasel Words or *Gobbledygook*

Weasel Words

- Modifiers either ...
 - Add *no content* to what they are trying to modify
 - or
 - Negate what they are trying to modify

Some Examples of Weasel Words

...

"Helps control dandruff symptoms with regular use."

The following examples come from:

Schrank, Jeffery. "The Language of Advertising Claims." Retrieved from:
<http://home.olemiss.edu/~egjbp/comp/ad-claims.html>

Some Examples of Weasel Words

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"Helps control dandruff symptoms with regular use."

- The weasels include "helps control," and possibly even "symptoms" and "regular use." The claim is not "stops dandruff."

Some Examples of Weasel Words

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"Leaves dishes virtually spotless."

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"Only half the price of many color [TV] sets."

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Some Additional Examples of Weasel Words...

“Bank of Stockton pays up to 10 percent more interest on checking accounts.”

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“Bank of Sacramento pays up to 12 percent more interest on checking accounts.”

"Bacos, the crispy garnish that tastes just like its name.”

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“Three out of four dentists that were surveyed recommend chewing sugarless gum for their patients who chew gum.”

A little poem about weasel words...

*The codfish lays ten thousand eggs,
The homely hen lays one.
But the codfish never cackles
To tell you what she's done.
And so we scorn the codfish,
While the humble hen we prize,
Which only goes to show you
That it pays to advertise.*

- Anonymous

Codfish: *Quiet*



Hen ... *Well*



Good Quote:



Noise proves nothing. Often a hen who has merely laid an egg cackles as if she laid an asteroid.

– Mark Twain

AZ QUOTES

To Review:

Linguistic *Slanters*:

- Terms or ideas that often have a strong emotive force
- Often, but need not, employ emotionally loaded terms or ideas in the attempt to sway our opinion
- The use of general (non-emotionally loaded) language to sway our opinion or attitude
- Can be both overly negative or overly positive

We spoke about: Euphemisms, Dysphemisms,
Persuasive Comparisons, Definitions and
Explanations, as well as Stereotypes,

We also spoke about Innuendo and Weasel Words

- Rely more on logical assumptions we make and less on emotion

Downplayers

Downplayers are words used to undermine the significance of something

- Commonly used downplayers are “mere” and “merely”

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- Commonly used downplayers are “mere” and “merely”

Example: “I have a graduate degree in physics from Columbia University. John has a mere degree from NYU.”

Downplayers

- Other terms or expressions used as downplayers are:
 - *So-called* as in “Joan is a so-called doctor.”
 - Quotation marks around a term may also indicate that something is being downplayed: *John “borrowed” my umbrella last year, and I have not seen it since.*
- Think of when we do those pesky little air-quotes when we speak

Proof Surrogates

- Used to suggest:
 - (1) There is evidence for *or* --
 - (2) An authority for --
A claim without actually citing such evidence or authority

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A claim without actually citing such evidence or authority
- Examples:
 - “Informed sources say...”
 - “It’s obvious that...”
 - “Studies show...”

Proof Surrogates

“We hope politicians on this side of the border are paying close attention to Canada’s referendum on Quebec... Canadian’s turned out *en masse* to reject the referendum. There’s every reason to believe that voters in the U.S. are just as fed up with the social engineering that lumps people together as groups rather than treating them as individuals.” (*Wall Street Journal*)

Proof Surrogates

- Proof surrogates are just that ➔ surrogates for an actual argument!
- Not real proof or evidence
- There may be good evidence, but a proof surrogate is not good evidence!
 - NOTE: if there is good evidence for something ➔ state it
 - If it is not stated ... question why

Proof Surrogate Example:

- <http://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2016/08/09/donald-trump-things-people-say-origwx-js.cnn>

Lastly... Hyperbole

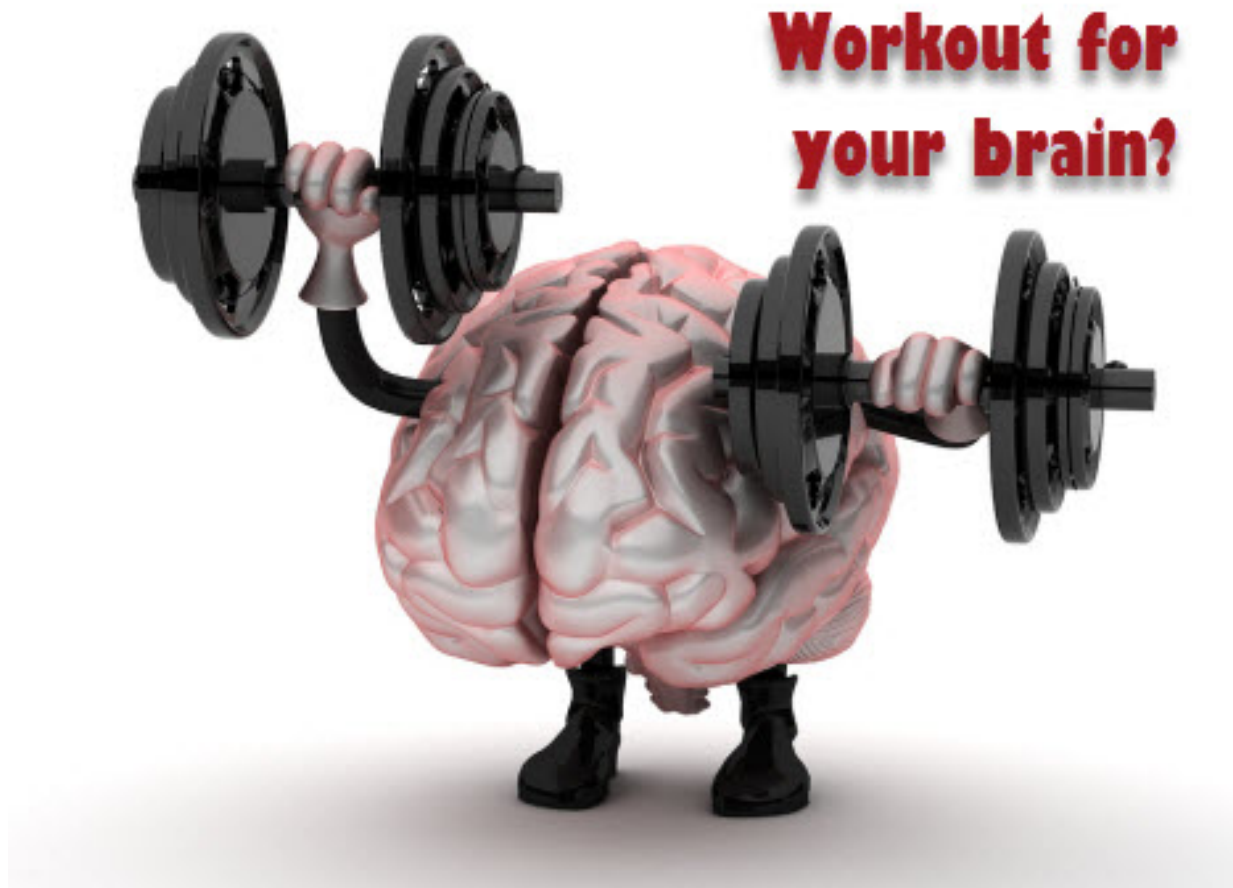
- Extravagant over-statement
- <http://www.vox.com/2016/8/1/12316646/hillary-clinton-qualified>

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- EXAMPLE: “What, John’s parents make him come home before 11 PM on weeknights! That’s fascist!”



Practice Exercise

Rhetorical Devices Review

- We have covered the following:
 - Euphemism and Dysphemism
 - Persuasive Comparison, Definition, Explanation
 - Stereotypes
 - Innuendo
 - Loaded Questions
 - Weasel Words (gobbledygook)
 - Downplayers
 - Proof Surrogates
 - Hyperbole

Pick out the Slanters in the Following ...

- 1) I trust that you have reviewed John's application and saw the "university" he graduated from?
- 2) Compared to Brad Pitt, it's fair to say that Professor Carboni is losing his hair.
- 3) I didn't say the meat was tough. I said I don't see the horse that is usually outside. (*W.C. Fields once remarked*)
- 4) Overall, I think the *gaming* industry would be a good thing for our state. (Letter to the editor, *Plains Weekly Record*)

Pick out the Slanters in the Following ...

- 1) I trust that you have reviewed John's application and saw the "university" he graduated from? -- *Downplayer*
- 2) Compared to Brad Pitt, it's fair to say that Professor Carboni is loosing his hair. -- *No issue (Boo!)*
- 3) I didn't say the meat was tough. I said I don't see the horse that is usually outside. (*W.C. Fields once remarked*) -- *Innuendo*
- 4) Overall, I think the *gaming* industry would be a good thing for our state. (Letter to the editor, *Plains Weekly Record*) -- *Euphemism*

How about these...

- 1) “Buy our best steak knife. Yours for only \$19.99.”
- 2) "Switch to Budweiser Beer. Made with live steam."
(This one may be tough...)
- 3) George W. Bush campaign manager said: "I never called Clinton a philandering, pot-smoking, draft-dodger.”
- 4) From *Harper's Magazine*: “If the United States is to meet the technological challenge posed by *Japan Inc.*, we must rethink the way we do everything from design to manufacture to education to employee relations.”

How about these...

- 1) “Buy our best steak knife. Yours for only \$19.99.” -- *Weasel Words (Best and Only 19.99)*
- 2) "Switch to Budweiser Beer. Made with live steam." (This one may be tough...) – *Weasel Words and Innuendo*
- 3) George W. Bush campaign manager said: "I never called Clinton a philandering, pot-smoking, draft-dodger."-- *Innuendo*
- 4) From *Harper's Magazine*: “If the United States is to meet the technological challenge posed by *Japan Inc.*, we must rethink the way we do everything from design to manufacture to education to employee relations.” – *Dysphemism*

Take the following *neutral* terms and slant them in a negative way ... Dyphemisms

- Talkative
- Shy
- Intelligent
- Practical

Take the following *neutral* terms and slant them in a negative way ...

- Talkative (Chatty, Blabber-Mouth, Long-Winded)
- Shy (Diffident, Timid, Fearful)
- Intelligent (Smarty Pants, Egghead, Brainy, Nerd)
- Practical (Anal, Unimaginative, Hard-Nosed)

Some closing remarks...

Basic Truth #1: The more intense our emotional state, the more difficult it is to think clearly

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Basic Truth #2: Human beings are beings with emotions

Some closing remarks...

Basic Truth #1: The more intense our emotion state, the more difficult it is to think clearly

Basic Truth #2: Human beings have powerful emotions

Basic Truth #3: We must work hard to keep emotion out of logical arguments

Plato's view of the self (in short, of course)



A far better view of the self



Basic Truth #4

Simple Rule: When making an argument,
never appeal to another's emotions – at least
as the only way to convince

The only thing we should ever feel logically
good about is truth (or as close as we can
get to it)

To use reasoning for any other purpose is to
misuse it, period!