Argument Analysis of Malcolm X's 'The Ballot or the Bullet'
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Part 1: Speech Selection

Find a speech with an argument that is at least ten years old. It may be written by, for example, an elected official, dissident, political leader, or religious leader. Select one short passage (\~1-2 paragraphs, roughly 100-200 words) from that speech that makes a logical argument.

Woolworth didn't start out big like they are today. They started out with a dime store and expanded and expanded and then expanded until today, they're are all over the country and all over the world, and they get to some of everybody's money. Now this is what you and I -- General Motors [is] the same way. They didn't start out like it is. It started out just a little rat race type operation. And it expanded and it expanded until today it's where it is right now. And you and I have to make a start and the best place to start is right in the community where we live.

So our people not only have to be reeducated to the importance of supporting black business, but the black man himself has to be made aware of the importance of going into business. And once you and I go into business, we own and operate at least the businesses in our community. What we will be doing is developing a situation wherein we will actually be able to create employment for the people in the community. (X, 1964)

Source:

X, Malcolm. (1964). *Malcolm X : the ballot or the bullet* [Transcript]. Retrieved from

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=3624

Write a short synopsis of the argument in your own words (no more than 100 words).

In this passage, Malcolm X introduces the economic philosophy of black nationalism, which entails that the stores in black communities should be owned and run by African Americans solely. He argues that the outflow of cash from a black community as a result of purchasing commodities from outside makes the community poorer. He suggests that in order to avoid this, African Americans must be educated about the importance of supporting black businesses and developing their own businesses, which will in turn create employment opportunities for other residents in the community.

Part 2: Argument Analysis

Translate each sentence into one or more atomic statements in english. [#deduction]

P: Woolworth didn't start as a big company

Q: Woolworth expanded gradually

R: Woolworth become a profitable international company

S: General Motors started out as a small company

T: General Motors expanded gradually

U: General Motors became a profitable international company

V: Therefore, African Americans must start their own businesses

W: The best place for African Americans to start businesses is in their community of residence

X: African Americans must be reeducated about the importance of supporting black businesses

Y: African Americans must be made aware of the importance of going into business

Z: African Americans will own and operate the businesses in their community

A: African Americans will develop a local economy that creates jobs for people in the community

Translate these statements into first-order symbolic logic. Be sure to use quantifiers appropriately.

Universe of Discourse (U.D.): Companies in America

Fx: x started as a small company

Gx: x has expanded gradually

Hx: x is a profitable international company

a: Woolworth

b: General Motors

1. **Fa ^ Ga ^ Ha**

2. **Fb ^ Gb ^ Hb**

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3. ∃x(**Fx^Gx^Hx**)   existential generalization (1),(2)[1]

U.D.: African Americans

Ix: x is educated about the importance of starting a business

Jx: x is educated about the importance of supporting black businesses

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[1] #deduction: I have correctly written the argument in first-order symbolic logic and identified the quantifier. I have also used a proof to show how Malcolm X takes the instances and generalizes it to a claim.

Kx: x owns and operates the businesses in the community

Lx: x creates employment opportunities in the community

    1. $\forall$x((**Ix^Jx**)-> **Kx**)

    2. $\forall$x(**Kx**-> **Lx**)

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    3. $\forall$x((**Ix^Jx**)-> **Lx**)   hypothetical syllogism (1,2)

Mx: x must start their own businesses

Nx: x should start their businesses in their community of residence

    1. $\forall$x(**Mx**)

    2. $\forall$x(**Nx**)

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    3. $\forall$x(**Mx^Nx**)   adjunction (1,2)

Are there any missing premises from the argument? Are there any implied premises?

Identify and explain. (50 words or fewer)

Malcolm X assumes in the first argument that businesses founded by African American individuals will prosper because 2 successful companies also started small. In the second argument, Malcolm X makes the assumption that economic isolation from White Americans is the best way and the only sensible way for African American individuals to thrive in the United States.

Do any of the statements from 2.1 involve inductive reasoning and why? If so, is the inductive reasoning weak or strong, and why? (200 words or fewer) [#induction]

Malcolm X argues that companies such as Woolworth and General Motors started off as very small and eventually prospered. He draws an analogy between prospective African American businesses, which share the property of starting small and implies that they will also expand and prosper in the future, so African Americans should start businesses now. This is an example of induction by analogy,[2] as it is based on the observation of specific cases and the conclusion does not follow with certainty. It assumes that because two things share some properties, they must share other properties. However, it is a weak argument because the truth of the premises make the truth of the conclusion possible, but not likely. Furthermore, it is uncertain whether the

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[2] #induction: I have correctly identified the type of inductive argument Malcolm X is making and explained why it is an inductive argument as well as why it is the specific type of inductive argument.

businesses owned by African American communities will succeed on a large-scale, especially if everyone in the community starts the same business and competes with each other for a small consumer base. The argument is also based on the observation of two companies in isolation, which were established at a time when the market favoured their prosperity and there were few competitors, which might not be the case for African American businesses. Apart from a small sample size, the sample is also unrepresentative because the population of American companies is huge, of which many did not survive and expand operations to the global market.[3]

Identify a clear deductive argument from the selected passage. [#deduction]

U.D.: African Americans

Ix: x is educated about the importance of starting a business

Jx: x is educated about the importance of supporting black businesses

Kx: x owns and operates the businesses in the community

Lx: x creates employment opportunities in the community

1. $\forall x((\mathbf{I}x \wedge \mathbf{J}x) \rightarrow \mathbf{K}x)$

2. $\forall x(\mathbf{K}x \rightarrow \mathbf{L}x)$

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3. $\forall x((\mathbf{I}x \wedge \mathbf{J}x) \rightarrow \mathbf{L}x)$ hypothetical syllogism (1,2)

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[3] #induction: I have displayed a sound understanding of induction by identifying the inductive argument correctly and explaining the weaknesses of the inductive argument in question.

Argument: ∀x ((Ix^Jx)->Kx)^(Kx->Lx)-> ((Ix^Jx)->Lx))

Is the argument valid? Support your answer with a truth table.

The second argument is a hypothetical syllogism with a conditional statement as both of its premises, which is a valid rule of inference. [4]Therefore, the argument is valid. In the table below, I show the general structure of a hypothetical syllogism and the second argument in quantified logic corresponding to that structure.

	U.D. African Americans
If P then Q If Q then R Therefore, If P then R	∀x((Ix^Jx)-> Kx) ∀x(Kx-> Lx) ∀x((Ix^Jx)-> Lx)

In order to illustrate the validity using a truth table, let us consider Bob, an African American. (b: Bob)

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[4] #deduction: I have correctly identified the rule of inference for the argument. Based on that, I have concluded the argument's validity.

Ib	Jb	Kb	Lb	Ib^Jb	(Ib^Jb)->Kb	Kb->Lb
F	F	F	F	F	T	T
F	F	F	T	F	T	T
F	F	T	F	F	T	F
F	F	T	T	F	T	T
F	T	F	F	F	T	T
F	T	F	T	F	T	T
F	T	T	F	F	T	F
F	T	T	T	F	T	T
T	F	F	F	F	T	T
T	F	F	T	F	T	T
T	F	T	F	F	T	F
T	F	T	T	F	T	T
T	T	F	F	T	F	T
T	T	F	T	T	F	T
T	T	T	F	T	T	F
T	T	T	T	T	T	T

(Ib^Jb)->Lb	((Ib^Jb)->Kb)^(Kb->Lb)	((Ib^Jb)->Kb)^(Kb->Lb)->((Ib^Jb)->Lb)
T	T	T
T	T	T
T	F	T
T	T	T
T	T	T
T	T	T
T	F	T
T	T	T
T	T	T
T	T	T
T	F	T
T	T	T
F	F	T
T	F	T
F	F	T
T	T	T

As depicted in the last column of the truth table, this argument form is tautological, proving that it is a valid rule of inference.

Another way to look at it is an argument is valid if and only if: if all the premises are true, the conclusion must be true. As depicted by the truth table, whenever $((Ib \wedge Jb) \rightarrow Kb)$ is true and $(Kb \rightarrow Lb)$ is true, $((Ib \wedge Jb) \rightarrow Lb)$ is also true. In other words, it is impossible for $((Ib \wedge Jb) \rightarrow Kb)$ and $(Kb \rightarrow Lb)$ to be true and the conclusion $((Ib \wedge Jb) \rightarrow Lb)$ to be false. Therefore, $((Ib \wedge Jb) \rightarrow Kb) \wedge (Kb \rightarrow Lb)$ logically implies $((Ib \wedge Jb) \rightarrow Lb)$.

Is the argument sound? Why or why not? (<300 words, not including the QL and truth table).

In order to be sound, an argument must be valid and all its premises must be true. Although the argument is valid since it follows the structure of a hypothetical syllogism, I argue that it is unsound. This is because the education of African Americans on the importance of supporting black business and starting their own businesses does not necessarily entail that they will start businesses in their communities. [5] Such an education may not be effective in making African Americans act entrepreneurially. There is also the possibility that with hopes to penetrate into a wider market, African Americans will start their business at a more profitable neighborhood instead of their own. Additionally, even if African Americans start businesses, it may not create

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[5] #deduction: By making a statement about this argument's soundness, I have displayed my correct understanding of what it means for an argument to be sound.

employment opportunities for others in their community. For example, it may be the case that some African Americans prefer sole proprietorship such as driving a taxi and thus only a single job will be created. Therefore, the argument is unsound.

Find two fallacies in the selected passage (you may expand to other parts of the speech but only if you cannot find two fallacies within the short part that you selected). [#fallacies]

Name the fallacies and explain why they are fallacies. (<200 words). Explain how one of the fallacies from 2.6 could be corrected.

Fallacy 1: Confirmation bias

With the objective of convincing African Americans to start their own businesses, Malcolm X mentions two companies which also had small beginnings but expanded operations to a massive scale and became extremely profitable. This is an example of a confirmation bias because he has selectively chosen examples that fit well with his belief that African Americans should develop an isolated economy and he ignores significant dissimilarities between the companies that were already established and the possible future enterprises of African Americans. [6] He ignores the many examples of small companies that did not become profitable or had to go out of business.

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[6] #fallacies: I have identified the fallacy correctly and justified my answer by explaining why the argument is a fallacy. Through this, I have communicated my in-depth understanding of confirmation bias.

Fallacy 2 : False Dichotomy

So it's the -- it's the ballot or the bullet. This government has failed us. The senators who are filibustering concerning your and my rights, that's the government. Don't say it's Southern senators. This is the government; this is a government filibuster. … You have to take that government to the World Court and accuse it of genocide and all of the other crimes that it is guilty of today. (X, 1964)

In this speech, Malcolm X proposes that either the African Americans exercise their right to vote or they must take arms. This is an example of a false dichotomy as Malcolm X urges African Americans to take an extreme position by making the assumption that there are only two options, whereas in reality African Americans have many other options such as continuing to live under oppression without resorting to violence. Since these options are not jointly exhaustive, it is a fallacious argument. The fallacy could be corrected by including the omitted options or admitting that the options are not jointly exhaustive.

[7]

Correction: 'If the American government does not acknowledge the votes of African Americans, we have many options and I recommend that we choose the option to become violent.'

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[7] #fallacies: I have accurately identified the fallacy and provided an explanation for my choice. Building on that, I have also corrected the fallacy by providing an alternative argument.

Explain whether correcting the fallacy would change the conclusion of the argument, or one or more of the premises. (<200 words)

By delivering his speech "Ballot or the Bullet", Malcolm X aimed to incite African Americans nationwide to fight back against the oppression they'd endured for centuries. X first asserts that there are only two options: either African Americans exercise their right to vote or they become violent. Since the government were filibustering and they could not exercise their right to vote, Malcolm X asserts by means of disjunctive syllogism that African Americans must become violent, which he equates to bringing justice to the crimes of the government. The form of the disjunctive syllogism [8]is:

P: African Americans cast votes

Q: African Americans become violent

$P \lor Q$

$\neg P$

_____

$\vdash Q$

Therefore, if the premise is changed to reflect the other options that African American have, such as the option to suspend action, the conclusion that African Americans must become violent is no longer valid, since it does not follow from the premise.

R, S, Z: Other options

$P \lor Q \lor R \lor \ldots \lor Z$

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[8] #fallacies: I have identified the fallacy correctly and converted the argument to propositional logic to explain why it is indeed fallacious. By using #deduction, I have also represented the correct argument with propositional logic.

¬P

We cannot conclude Q. Therefore, a non-fallacious argument would not justify to African

Americans across the United States that they need to take initiative by means of violence.

Part 3: Reflection

After some time, write a brief reflection on how learning principles deepened your knowledge of #induction, #deduction, and #fallacies while working on this assignment. (<200 words)

Since I was working on different assignments while also preparing for the readings, I found the interleaving principle[9] very useful. Whenever I reached a halt in my reasoning and could not engage effectively with the speech, I moved on to work with materials from other courses, making it easier to concentrate once I resumed work on this assignment. Oftentimes, I also returned with a new strategy, for example, when I was struggling to find a deductive argument, I applied the working backward heuristic [10] which I'd read about in Empirical Analysis to start from a conclusion and track the sequence of premises backwards, strengthening my deduction abilities.

I also generated multiple examples of each type of induction and created stories in my mind where fallacious argument are made. This form of associative chunking helped me integrate the types of inductive reasoning and types of fallacies into larger chunks which I could easily retrieve during the assignment. Whenever I was doubtful about whether I'd identified the

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[9] #scienceoflearning: I have specified a learning principle and explain why it was useful in the context of completing the assignment. I did this by providing a specific example of how content from Empirical Analysis helped me with identifying the argument.

[10] #decisionheuristics: I have used a decision heuristic method to correctly identify the arguments. I began from the conclusion and worked backwards to spot the premises that led to that conclusion.

fallacies correctly, I interrogated myself to understand my reasoning and through self-testing, I was also able to deliberately enhance my knowledge of the fallacies and recognize what materials I needed to revisit to successfully complete my assignment (and become a clearer thinker).

Part 4: Optional Challenge

Should we believe the speech even though it contains errors in reasoning (e.g., fallacies, or errors in deductive or inductive reasoning)? Why or why not? (<300 words)

I'm of two minds about X's claims to promote Black nationalism and violent protest. On the one hand, I agree that opposing institutions responsible for perpetrating injustice against African Americans requires a significant and collective course of action. On the other hand, I'm not sure if isolation of African Americans economies and communities can solve racial injustice since it prevents socializing with White Americans, which is an integral part of building an inclusive culture that acknowledges the equality of African Americans. Furthermore, acting in a violent manner would be counter productive because the nonviolent movements which spurred during the Civil Rights movements yielded lasting results towards providing equal rights and freedom for African Americans. Throughout Southern United States, Reverend Martin Luther King put the spotlight on racial prejudice against African Americans and under his leadership, millions of African Americans took to the streets for peaceful protests, civil disobedience actions and

economic boycotts. Acting in a violent manner would have given violence-prone local police, vigilantes and other defenders of racial segregation an opportunity to respond violently, which in turn would have delayed equal rights legislation for African Americans. Additionally, media coverage of the violence against African Americans and their peaceful retaliation created public sympathy for the civil rights movement, which was also essential in ending federal protection of African Americans' rights.

Though I concede that we shouldn't take Malcolm X's speech literally, I still insist that its fallacious arguments were important because it created a sense of urgency in black communities across America. The false dichotomy between the ballot and the bullet contributed to the pathos of the speech. This is significant because evoking emotions create rich retrieval cues in human minds (Kosslyn, n.d.). [11]Therefore, X's fallacious arguments were likely to have a deeper impact in convincing African Americans to actively fight for their rights. Therefore, although we should regard Malcolm X's speech with skepticism, we must acknowledge the catalytic effects of his eloquence.

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[11] #scienceoflearning: This is an effective use because I drew upon a learning principle and transferred this in understanding a real-world phenomena to explain why X's arguments, while fallacious, were important due to its ability to evoke emotions.

References[12]

X, Malcolm. (1964). *Malcolm X : the ballot or the bullet* [Transcript]. Retrieved from

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[12] #presentation: I have followed the conventions of academic writing in this paragraph and cited sources appropriately in APA format.