Ethics for Nerds

An Advanced Course in Computer Science
Summer Semester 2020

Precise Thinking 4
Rhetorical Ploys

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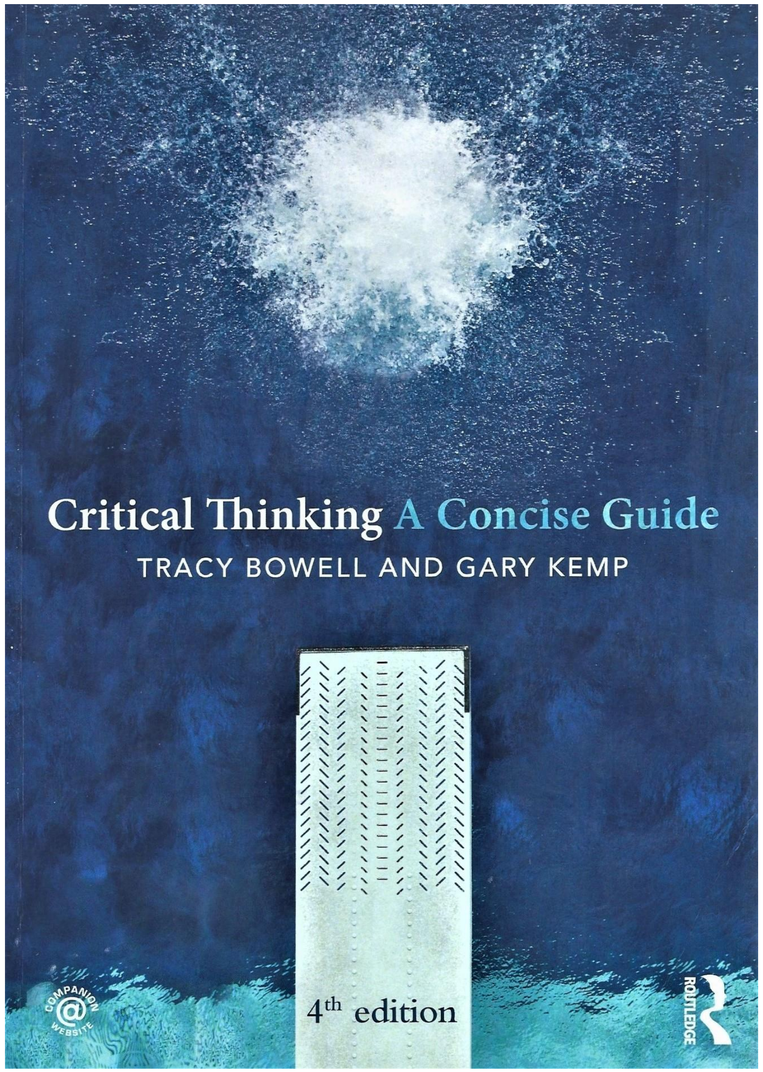
PRECISE THINKING



We *very* loosely follow this book:

> Bowell, T., & Kemp, G. (2015). *Critical thinking: A concise guide (4th ed.)*. Routledge.

However, *lots* of things deviate from the book. What is said in the lecture has precedence over the book.

You do **not** have to buy the book. If you want to have an inexpensive look, you can find a digital copy of the 2nd edition online at:

http://www.academia.edu/download/46383480/_Tracy_Bowell__Critical_Thinking_A_Concise_Guide_BookFi.org.pdf

defeasible reasoning can be hard to grasp sometimes,

but should not be confused with

rhetorical ploys

RHETORICAL PLOYS

Recap

Rhetoric (working definition)

An attempt to persuade mostly though the power of the words used, not through reason.

Problem with rhetoric: We usually (should) want to know reasons!

Solution: Know rhetorical tricks and be aware of them.

Note: Rhetoric is not always bad, but it only is acceptable in contexts where it is ok to not give reason.

RHETORICAL PLOYS

Appeals to specific feelings, emotions, attitudes etc

For example appeal to…

- novelty
- popularity
- compassion, pity or guilt
- cuteness
- sexiness
- wealth, status, power, hipness or coolness
- fear (‘scare tactics’)
- ridicule
- …

RHETORICAL PLOYS

Appeals to specific feelings, emotions, attitudes etc

Examples

https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/iphone-x-evolutionary-design-emperors-new-clothes/1444473

https://sites.psu.edu/anengineersjourney/2014/10/02/got-coke/

RHETORICAL PLOYS

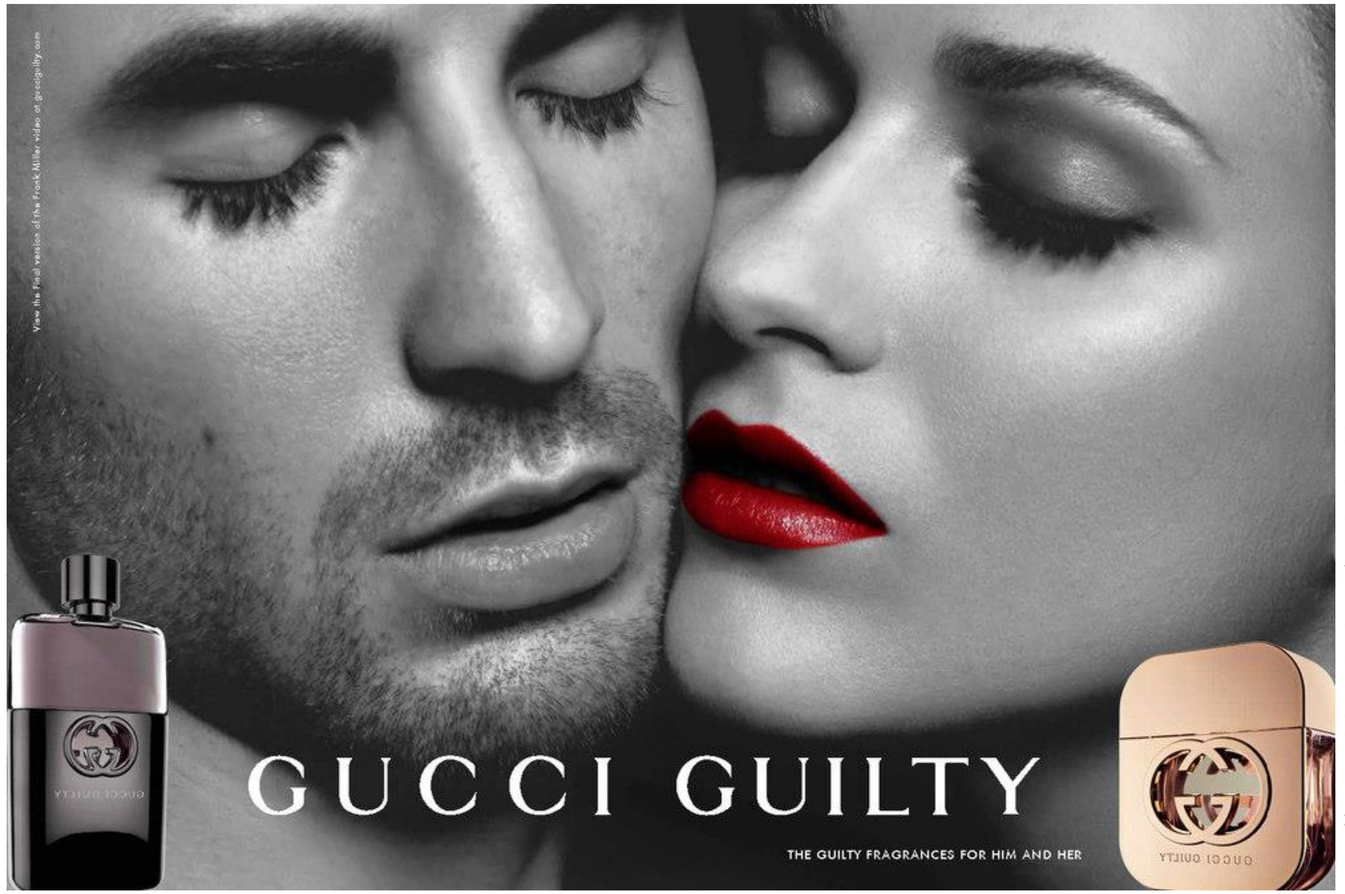
Appeals to specific feelings, emotions, attitudes etc

Examples

https://automobiles2013.wordpress.com/category/mercedes-benz/

Appeals to specific feelings, emotions, attitudes etc

Examples



http://www.ruiniemariotti.com/gucci-guilty-2014

RHETORICAL PLOYS

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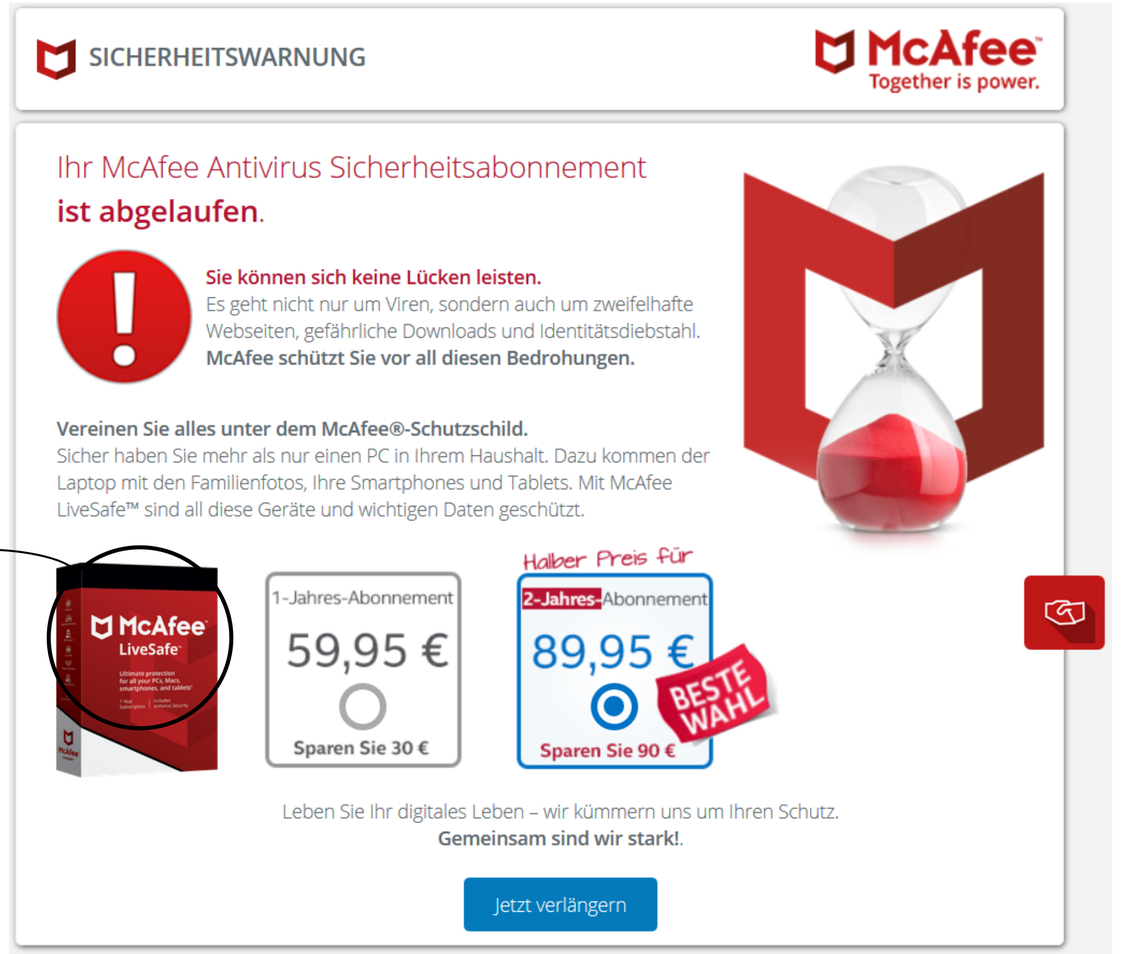
Examples



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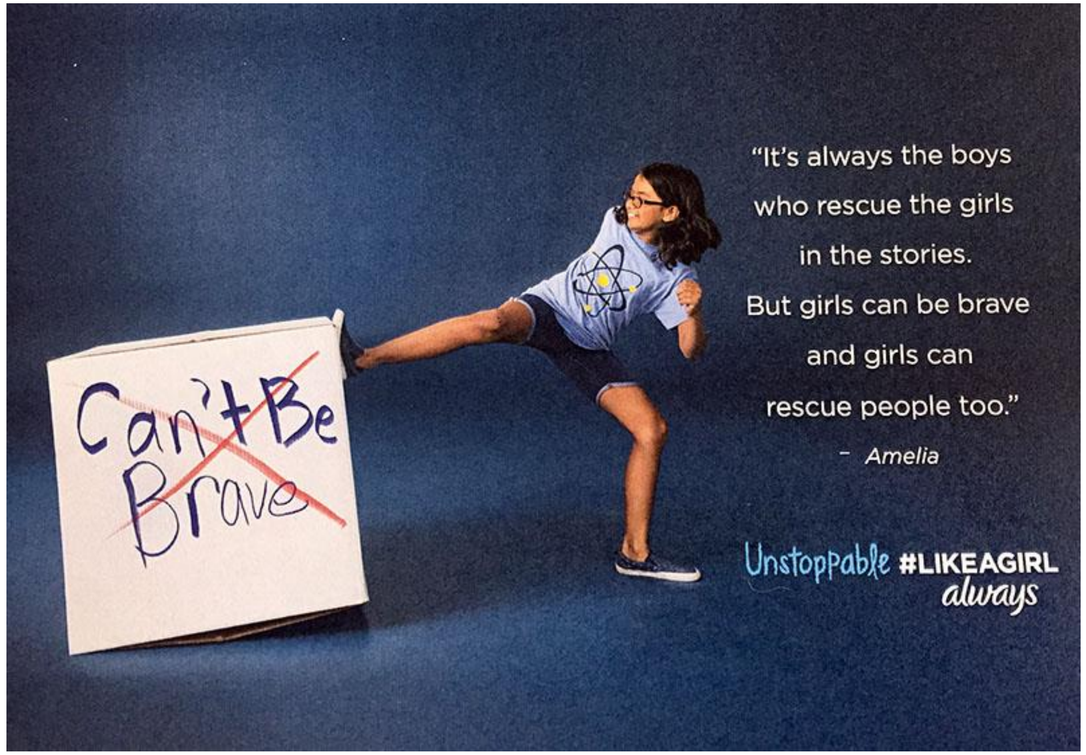
Examples



https://hrexach.wordpress.com/2015/07/15/always-likeagirl-unstoppable-empowering-ad/

https://www.menstruationresearch.org/2014/07/17/what-does-it-really-mean-to-be-likeagirl/

RHETORICAL PLOYS

Direct attack

We are just said what we should do or believe, not why so.

- “Vote Major Smith!”
- “Drink Coke!”
- “Say no to nuclear power!”

Trading on implicature

a speaker conveys something by implicature that he does not want to say directly

Example: “When the government increases income tax, it will be a further burden on families.”

- audience will be more likely to believe that the government plans on increasing income tax, even if there are no such plans

Renouncing Quotation Marks

B attempts to make A's (alleged) position look suspicious or ridiculous by using quotation marks that suggest to the reader that something is wrong with A's (alleged) usage of words.

- Windows is the most popular operating system.
- Windows is the most popular 'operating system'.
- Thanks for your help!
- Thanks for your 'help'!
- Feminists are advocating women's rights.
- Feminists are advocating women's 'rights'.

Don't confuse this with the legitimate use of quotation marks! Speaking of which…

Excursus I: The ideal use of quotation marks in this lecture

Double quotes “…”

for quotes

Example:

“The fundamental theme of Rule One is that philosophical views or positions require support by argument,” writes Jay F. Rosenberg.

for mention

Example:

“Bald” is vague.

Single quotes ‘…’

legitimate renouncing quotation marks

Example:

The autonomous car has the ‘duty’ to not kill its passenger.

Excursus II: Use and Mention

You can use phrases…	…and you can mention phrases.
One usually uses phrases.	One only mentions words when one talks about phrases.
Wood is an organic material from trees.	“Wood” is a four-letter word with a double vowel.
Sarah is 1,68m	“Sarah” certainly is not 1,68 m.

Trading on a presupposition

Presupposition (working definition)

A statement presupposes p iff in order to properly make sense of the statement you have to assume p.

Example:

- "After the government wasted millions for faulty military equipment, they are now spending hard-earned tax money on trying to fix government buildings beyond repair." presupposes that
  - the government bought military equipment
  - that is was faulty
  - that it costed millions
  - and that those millions were wasted

RHETORICAL PLOYS

Buzzwording
using ‘hot’ words when actually they are not useful in that context

Namesdropping
unnecessarily mentioning a lot of (allegedly) important persons, often without giving an explanation and making the listener feel like they need to know these people

Jargon
using unnecessarily many technical terms and expert jargon that is not commonly known by the target audience

Extensive use of acronyms
using unnecessarily many acronyms that are not commonly known to the target audience