

introduction



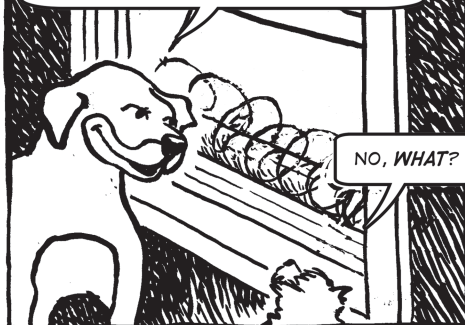
SQUANDERING SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

IF WE DON'T MAINTAIN OUR *STRENGTH*, WE WILL BE *SWALLOWED UP* BY THE *PAPIST MOB*. WE MUST STAND FIRM.

WE HAVE SUFFERED *EGREGIOUSLY UNDER* ENGLISH PROTESTANT *TYRANNY*. WE MUST FIGHT FOR PRESENT *RIGHTS* AND *RESTITUTION* FOR PAST *WRONGS*.



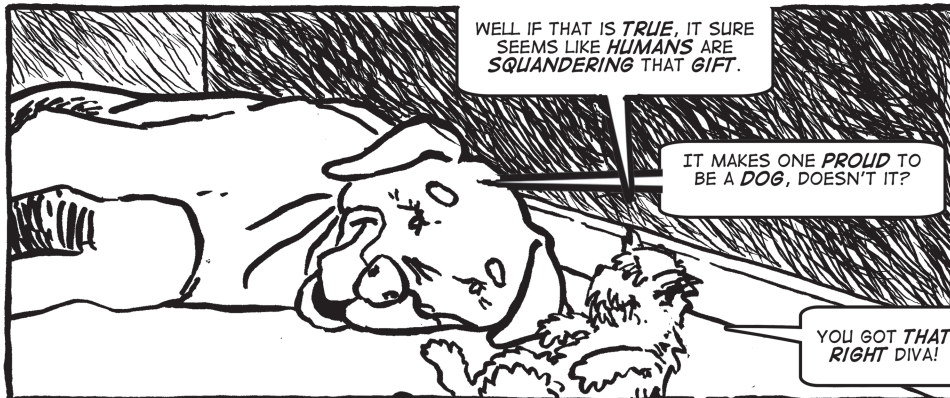
YO BENNIE, DO YOU KNOW WHAT MAKES *SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS POSSIBLE*?



SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS *REQUIRES* THAT YOU *SEE YOURSELF* FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF *OTHERS*.



WELL IF THAT IS *TRUE*, IT SURE SEEMS LIKE *HUMANS* ARE *SQUANDERING* THAT *GIFT*.



YOU GOT THAT *RIGHT* DIVA!

"At its best, schooling can be about how to make a life, which is quite different from how to make a living."

NEIL POSTMAN'

How is it possible that even though what we do has lifelong implications for ourselves as individuals, for our loved ones, and for the communities of which we are members, so little of our formal education focuses on analyzing, let alone upgrading, our **practical reasoning**—the reasoning that leads to action? Why is this the case?

The answer may lie in the fact that most of us assume that we humans are free in the sense of being self-legislating because of our power of thinking *per se*. This belief is false. Although the emergence of symbolic language has moved humans out of the frying pan of strict “conditioning,” it has flipped us into the fire of psychological and sociological determinism. With the emergence of linguistic deductive reasoning, outside sources gained the ability to implant values directly into the heads of others. And the fact that rebellion often results when outside sources conflict is no more indicative of freedom than a dog suddenly refusing to jump through a hoop because it had been reinforced by another trainer not to leave the ground.

However, we need not be blindly subjected to one another’s invisible linguistic “conditioning.” Self-legislation is possible, but it requires that we take control of our own practical reasoning. This is not to say that one must simply learn how to supply oneself with reasons. If autonomy is the goal, then there is a certain kind of reasoning that must be mastered: the kind that neutralizes outside influence or bias. After all, to be autonomous means that one can make decisions by oneself, that one’s decisions are not determined by outside pressures. Reasoning that is not determined by outside pressure is **impartial reasoning**.

Part I of this book focuses on a theoretical analysis of practical reasoning: how freedom is possible through impartial reasoning (Section 1) and, in general, what impartial reasoning looks like (Section 2). Since one must be convinced that one is “not already there” in order to be seduced into taking the journey, Part I is the critical motivator for this entire endeavor, which—if autonomy is the goal—must be woven into every judgment that one makes hereafter.

In order for impartial practical reasoning to actually fuel autonomy, it must be logically adequate. Logically adequate impartial reasoning requires that one assemble as many potential candidates for truth as possible, test the adequacy of the reasoning behind each option (referred to as establishing **local sufficiency**), and then determine the least-weak candidate (referred to as establishing **global sufficiency**). Section 1 of Part II focuses on local sufficiency, that is, estimating the adequacy of individual arguments. Section 2 focuses on global sufficiency, that is, estimating the adequacy of individual arguments *relative* to those of other contenders. Since there is a dynamic relationship between Sections 1 and 2, students will be instructed to move back and forth between them. However, since Section 2 provides a template for writing *any* argumentative essay, it has been written as a self-sufficient unit (with only passing reference to Section 1) so that it can serve as a quick reference point for future thinking and writing.

What follows, then, is no mere academic exercise. Since you are a self-conscious language user, you have the capacity to create yourself. However, if you do not actively take control of that process, you will remain a slave to the physical, psychological, social, and political forces to which you are constantly subjected. If you do not actively take control of that process, you will continue to be whatever others want you to be. You can instead become your own person, the master of your own fate. The choice is yours.



Pre-tests

Before you begin the journey laid out for you here, it is recommended that you take the two following pre-tests: "What kind of thinker are you?" and "Demonstrating the need for logic."

The first pre-test measures what kind of thinker you are. You will be asked to complete the same test at the end of the course, so that you will have an empirical measure of the degree to which the way you think has changed after taking the journey set out for you here. Thus, although the marking scheme is included in Appendix V, you should *not* mark this pre-test until you have completed the post-test at the end of the course.

The second pre-test focuses on logic. You will be asked to complete a similar post-test at the end of the course. (The answers to both tests are also included in Appendix V.) You should mark the logic pre-test immediately. If your score is low, you should be both concerned and surprised, as this test measures merely how well you understand the meaning of simple sentences. You should also be particularly keen on tackling the logic portion of what is to follow, as it is logic that will help to transform your present messy understanding.