

# Emotional Appeals

Critical Thinking

# Emotions and Reasoning

- Emotions are an important part of our lives. They drive us to do things, and without them, we might just be sitting still.
- But how do emotions effect our reasoning?
- Sometimes this is ok, such as when the emotion is appropriate and relevant.
  - E.g. Can you please bring me to the hospital? I just broke my leg. (appropriate appeal to care/pity)
- However, emotions can also be used in an inappropriate way
  - E.g. Can you please get me an A on this HW? I just broke my leg. (inappropriate appeal to pity)

# Emotional Appeals and Rhetorical Devices

- Many rhetorical devices are used to invoke certain kinds of emotions.
- Again, we have to ask ourselves:
  - Is the language used to invoke a type of emotion that is irrelevant to the issue? E.g. should we be doing something because ‘everyone’s doing it’?
  - Even if it is an appropriate type of emotion, is it unreasonably exaggerated? E.g. if something unpleasant is happening to us, should we really be ‘mad as hell’?

# Some Common Emotions

- Fear
- Desire
- Anger / Outrage
- Humor / Laughter
- Guilt / Shame
- Pride
- Indignation
- Pity
- Disrespect
- Reverence
- Reciprocation
- Revenge
- Etc.
- We can appeal to all these emotions in order to persuade someone to believe or do something

# Appeal to Fear

- You should clean your room, because if you don't, I'll take away your allowance.
- While this may be a good practical or prudent reason to clean your room, it does not argue for why you \*should\* clean your room.
- Difficult case: cleaning commercial showing bugs everywhere. Is that an inappropriate appeal to fear, or is that an appropriate reason to do something about that?
  - I would say this is a matter of degree, depending on how does the commercial present these bugs? The ultimate point is: Is the evoked emotion interfering with clear thinking?
- Similarly: fear of God, fear of terrorism.

# Appeal to Desire

- Any case of wishful thinking is an appeal to desire
- But also: scantily clad ladies in beer commercials!

# Appeal to Anger / Outrage

- “Can you believe that those politicians don’t want to raise the minimum wage right after giving themselves a big pay raise?!”
- This is something to become real angry about, but their pay raise is really irrelevant to whether or not it is a good idea to raise the minimum wage
- A good example of people who appeal to anger are radio ‘shock jocks’.

# Appeal to Humor

- Humor can work to persuade in several ways:
  - It can be charming / disarming
  - It can be distracting
  - It can give the audience a sense of ownership of the ‘reasoning’ taking place (“Ha, I get it!”)
  - It can be used to ridicule (sarcasm/irony/horse laugh)



# Appeal to Guilt/Shame

- “I can’t believe you leave him hanging there, after all he’s done for you!”

# Appeal to Pride / Vanity / Flattery

- “Smart people like you ...”
- “You deserve ...”

# Appeal to Indignation

- An appeal to anger, but directed at someone rather than something, and thus often used to discredit whatever it is that this person is saying or claiming.

# Appeal to Pity

- “If I don’t get an A, I can’t get to graduate school.”
- OK, maybe that’s true, but you don’t therefore \*deserve\* an A, which is of course all that counts!

# Appeal to Disrespect

- Very much like the appeal to indignation, but the disrespect need not come in the form of anger.

# Appeal to Reverence

- “Our founding fathers ...”

# Appeal to Reciprocation

- Hey, I helped you. You should help me!

# Appeal to Revenge

- He hurt me, so I can hurt him.
- aka: Two Wrongs (don't!!) make a Right fallacy



# Other Appeals

- Appeal to Tradition
- Appeal to Novelty
- Appeal to Popularity
- Appeal to Exclusiveness
- Social Pressure
  - Peer pressure
  - Herd Instinct
  - Common Practice
  - Bandwagon
  - Provincialism
  - Nationalism

But remember, sometimes appeals to emotions can be quite relevant!

- “You should bring me to the hospital, because I just broke my leg”
- This is *\*not\** an inappropriate appeal to pity!