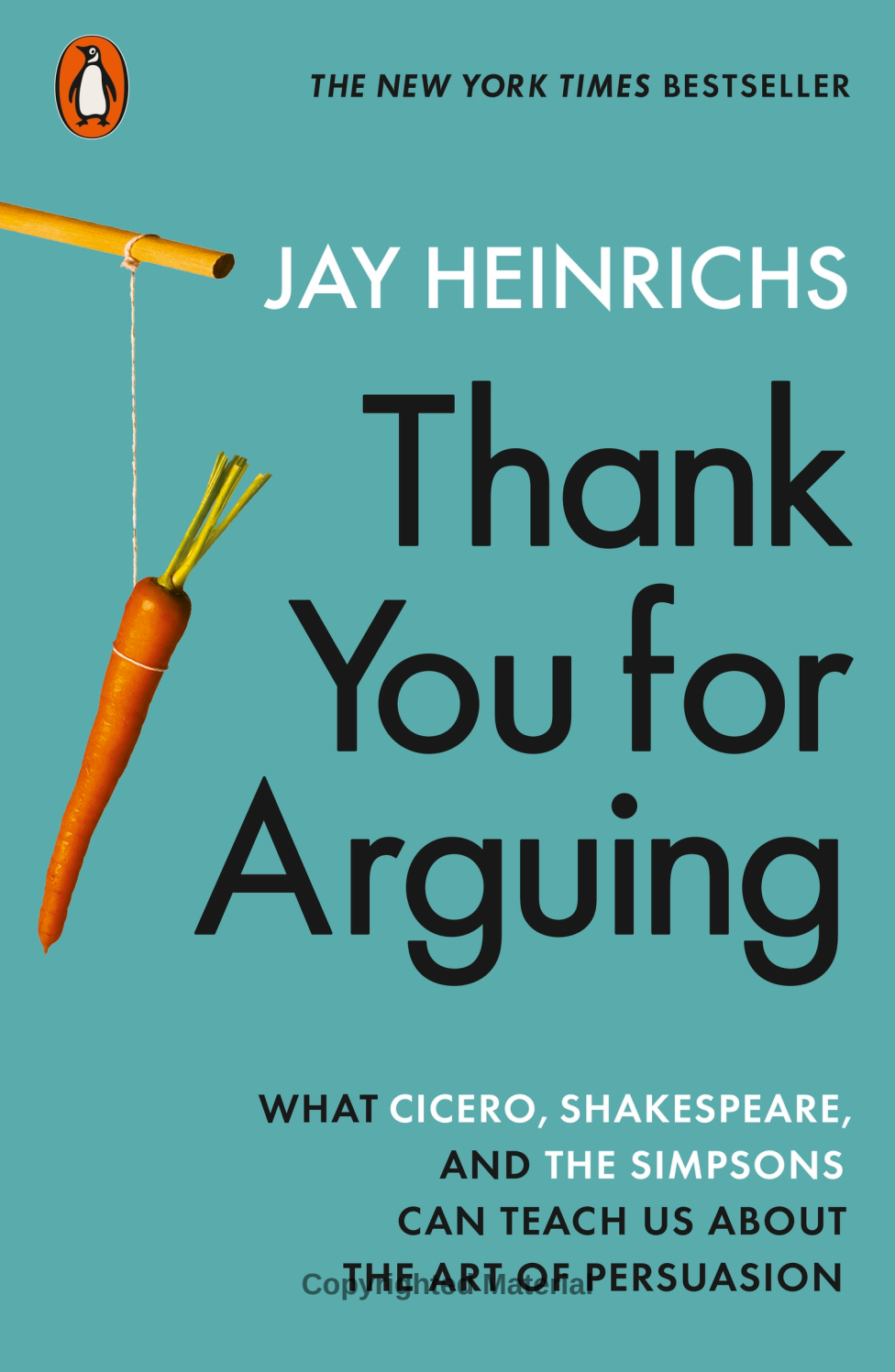

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JAY HEINRICHS
Thank You for Arguing
WHAT CICERO, SHAKESPEARE, AND THE SIMPSONS CAN TEACH US ABOUT THE ART OF PERSUASION
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THANK YOU FOR ARGUING

Jay Heinrichs has written for dozens of publications, including *The New York Times Magazine*, *Vice* and the *Huffington Post*, and has won numerous journalism awards. He has taught rhetoric to college and university editors at Ivy League universities, and at NASA and the Pentagon. He is also the author of *Word Hero: A Fiendishly Clever Guide to Crafting the Lines that Get Laughs, Go Viral and Live Forever*. He runs the acclaimed blog Figarospeech.com as well as the rhetoric site ArgueLab.com.

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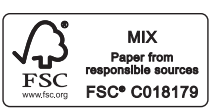
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To Dorothy Jr. and George:
You win.

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PREFACE

Few people can say that John Quincy Adams changed their lives. Those who can are wise to keep it to themselves. Friends tell me I should also avoid writing about my passion for rhetoric, the three-thousand-year-old art of persuasion.

John Quincy Adams changed my life by introducing me to rhetoric.

Sorry.

Years ago, I was wandering through Dartmouth College's library for no particular reason, flipping through books at random, and in a dim corner of the stacks I found a large section on rhetoric, the art of persuasion. A dusty, maroon-red volume attributed to Adams sat at eye level. I flipped it open and felt like an indoor Coronado. Here lay treasure.

The volume contained a set of rhetorical lectures that Adams taught to undergraduates at Harvard College from 1805 to 1809, when he was a United States senator commuting between Massachusetts and Washington. In his first class, the paunchy, balding thirty-eight-year-old urged his goggling adolescents to "catch from the relics of ancient oratory those unresisted powers, which mould the mind of man to the will of the speaker, and yield the guidance of the nation to the dominion of the voice." To me that sounded more like hypnosis than politics, which was sort of cool in a *Manchurian Candidate* way.

In the years since, while reading all I could of rhetoric, I came to realize something: Adams's language sounded antique, but the powers he described are real. Rhetoric means more than grand oratory, more than "using words . . . to influence or persuade," as Webster's defines it. It teaches us to argue without anger. And it offers a chance to tap into a source of social power I never knew existed.

You could say that rhetoric talked me into itself.

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PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

Years ago, before I developed the persuasive habit of mind that this book teaches, I stood in a karaoke bar in South Bend, Indiana, and attempted to sing a cappella. I can't remember what made me think this was a good idea, except that South Bend is a college town, college students love irony, and what's more ironic than singing karaoke without accompanying music?

I realized my mistake the moment I started singing some song that had never made the Top 40. People just stared at me. The friends who had come with me turned away and pretended not to know me. When I finished, the bar went as profoundly silent as a saloon in an old western film when the outlaw barges in.

There's a lesson there, a rhetorical lesson: Before you open your mouth, you need to know how to read the occasion. As you'll see in Chapter 23, the ancient Romans thought reading the situation to be so important that they worshipped a god who specialized in this ability. They called him Occasio.

In the four years since I wrote the third edition of this book, our cultural occasion has changed, big-time. What seemed unobjectionable back then now raises hackles in readers. In previous editions, I had a scene where I mentioned the seductive aspects of the Food Channel and garden flowers. More important, I used the word *seduction* to describe persuasion that plays on the desires of an audience. The MeToo era has changed the connotation, making a term that seemed innocuous (or at least to me) downright creepy today.

And I don't have to tell you how touchy our political discussions have become. What read like analysis four years ago can come across as propaganda.

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So. You'll find seduction taught a bit differently in this edition, with desire detached from bedroom activities, and less sexy food. The political discussion focuses more on the tools for talking politics, and less on the politics themselves.

And I've added material, such as how to fine-tune an argument for particular audiences, and how to change a person's priorities. I've updated some pop-culture references. The book is a bit shorter than the last version, which I hope makes it easier to develop a rhetorical habit of mind. Most important, I've added some material about the persuasive power of love. Use it wisely.

I can credit many of these changes to the students whose classes I've video-chatted with a couple times a week for the past decade and more. Their teachers have been enormously helpful. All of them give me hope for the future. The older students are voting and persuading their peers to vote. They're learning to parse the issues, extract the logic, argue when the facts aren't trusted, and use the force of words for good.

This generation is creating new, interesting, uncomfortable occasions for argument. As a card-carrying Boomer, I'm tempted to decry all the political correctness, call for pure facts and logic, and tell it like it is. But I hope you can see in this book that this self-centered attitude is entirely unpersuasive. It's just singing alone in a karaoke bar.

Now: Cue the music.

Jay Heinrichs
January 2020

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Concordia discors.

Harmony in discord.

—HORACE

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INTRODUCTION

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1. Open Your Eyes

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THE INVISIBLE ARGUMENT

A personal tale of unresisted persuasion

Truth springs from argument among friends. —DAVID HUME

It is early in the morning and my seventeen-year-old son eats breakfast, giving me a narrow window to use our sole bathroom. I wrap a towel around my waist and approach the sink, avoiding the grim sight in the mirror; as a writer, I don't have to shave every day. (Marketers despairingly call a consumer like me a "low self-monitor.") I do have my standards, though, and hygiene is one. I grab toothbrush and toothpaste. The tube is empty. The nearest replacement sits on a shelf in our freezing basement, and I'm not dressed for the part.

"George!" I yell. "Who used all the toothpaste?"

A sarcastic voice answers from the other side of the door. "That's not the point, is it, Dad?" George says. "The point is how we're going to keep this from happening again."

He has me. I have told him countless times how the most productive arguments use the future tense, the language of choices and decisions.

"You're right," I say. "You win. Now will you please get me some toothpaste?"

"Sure." George retrieves a tube, happy that he beat his father at an argument.

TRY THIS IN A MEETING
Answer someone who expresses doubt about your idea with "Okay, let's tweak it." Now focus the argument on revising your idea as if the group had already accepted it. This move is a form of *concession*—rhetorical jujitsu that uses your opponent's moves to your advantage.

Or *did* he? Who got what he wanted? In reality, by conceding his point, I persuaded him. If I had simply said, "Don't be a jerk and get me some toothpaste," George might have stood there arguing. Instead I made him feel triumphant, triumph made him benevolent, and that got me exactly

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what I wanted. I achieved the pinnacle of persuasion: not just an agreement, but one that gets an audience—a teenage one at that—to do my bidding.

No, George, *I* win.

The Matrix, Only Cooler

What kind of father manipulates his own son? Oh, let's not call it manipulation. Call it *instruction*. Any parent should consider rhetoric, the art of argument, one of the essential R's. Rhetoric is the art of influence, friendship, and eloquence, of ready wit and irrefutable logic. And it harnesses the most powerful of social forces, argument.

▸ **Useful Figure**
SYNCRISIS: Reframes an argument by redefining it. "Not manipulation—instruction." You'll find a whole chapter on figures later on, as well as a glossary in the back.

▸ **Persuasion Alert**
It's only fair to show my rhetorical cards—to tell you when I use devices to persuade you. The Matrix analogy serves as more than a pop-culture reference; it also appeals to the reader's acceptance of invisible wheels within wheels in modern existence, from computer software to quantum physics. Rhetoric calls this shared attitude a "commonplace"; as you shall see, it is one of the building blocks of persuasion.

Whether you sense it or not, argument surrounds you. It plays with your emotions, changes your attitude, talks you into a decision, and goads you to buy things. Argument lies behind political labeling, advertising, jargon, voices, gestures, and guilt trips; it forms a real-life Matrix, the supreme software that drives our social lives. And rhetoric serves as argument's decoder. By teaching the tricks we use to persuade one another, the art of persuasion reveals the Matrix in all its manipulative glory.

The ancients considered rhetoric the essential skill of leadership—knowledge so important that they placed it at the center of higher education. It taught them how to speak and write persuasively, produce something to say on every occasion, and make people like them when they spoke. After the ancient Greeks invented it, rhetoric helped create the world's first democracies. It trained Roman orators such as Julius Caesar and Marcus Tullius Cicero and gave the Bible its finest language. It even inspired William Shakespeare. Every one

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of America's founders studied rhetoric, and they used its principles in writing the Constitution.

Rhetoric faded in academia during the 1800s, when social scientists dismissed the notion that an individual could stand up to the inexorable forces of history. Who wants to teach leadership when academia doesn't believe in leaders? At the same time, English lit replaced the classics, and ancient thought fell out of vogue. Nonetheless, a few remarkable people continued to study the art. Daniel Webster picked up rhetoric at Dartmouth by joining a debating society, the United Fraternity, which had an impressive classical library and held weekly debates. Years later, the club changed its name to Alpha Delta and partied its way to immortality by inspiring the movie *Animal House*. To the brothers' credit, they didn't forget their classical heritage entirely; hence the toga party.

▸ **Persuasion Alert** Here I yank you from Webster to *Animal House,* not just to encapsulate rhetoric's decline but to make you unconsciously vote for my side of the argument. Whose side are you on, Webster's or John Belushi's? The technical term for this shotgun marriage of contrasting thoughts is *antithesis,* meaning "opposing idea."

Scattered colleges and universities still teach rhetoric—in fact, the art is rapidly gaining popularity among undergraduates—but outside academia we forgot it almost entirely. What a thing to lose. Imagine stumbling upon Newton's law of gravity and meeting face-to-face with the forces that drive the universe. Or imagine coming across Freud for the first time and suddenly becoming aware of the unconscious, where your id, ego, and superego conduct their silent arguments.

I wrote this book for that reason: to lead you through this ill-known world of argument and welcome you to the Persuasive Elect. Along the way you'll enhance your image with Aristotle's three traits of credible leadership: virtue, disinterest, and practical wisdom. You'll find yourself using logic as a convincing tool, smacking down fallacies and building airtight assertions. Aristotle's principles will also help you decide which medium—text? phone? skywriting?—works best for each message. You will discover a simple strategy to get an argument unstuck when it bogs down in accusation and anger.

And that's just the beginning. The pages to come contain more than a hundred "argument tools" borrowed from ancient texts and adapted to modern situations, along with suggestions for trying the techniques at home,

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school, or work, or in your community. You will see when logic works best, and when you should lean on an emotional strategy. You'll acquire mind-molding figures of speech and ready-made tactics, including Aristotle's irresistible enthymeme, a neat bundle of logic that I find easier to use than pronounce. You'll see how to actually benefit from your own screw-ups. And you'll discover the most compelling tools of all in your audience's own self-identity.

By the end of the book you will have mastered the rhetorical tricks for making an audience eager to listen. People still love a well-delivered talk; the top professional speakers charge more per person than a Bruce Springsteen concert. I devote a whole chapter to Cicero's elegant five-step method for constructing a speech—invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery—a system that has served the greatest orators for the past two thousand years.

Great argument does not always mean elaborate speech, though. The most effective rhetoric disguises its art. And so I'll reveal a rhetorical device for implanting opinions in people's heads through sheer sleight of tongue.

TRY THIS IN A PRESENTATION

The Romans were using the "But wait, there's more" pitch a couple of millennia before infomercials. They gave it a delectable name: *dirimens copulatio,* meaning "a joining that interrupts." It's a form of *amplification,* an essential rhetorical tactic that turns up the volume as you speak. In a presentation, you can amplify by layering your points: "Not only do we have this, but we also . . ."

Besides all these practical tools, rhetoric offers a grander, metaphysical payoff: it jolts you into a fresh new perspective on the human condition. After it awakens you to the argument all around, the world will never seem the same.

I myself am living proof.

My Perfectly Rhetorical Day

To see just how pervasive argument is, I recently attempted a whole day without persuasion—free of advertising, politics, family squabbles, or any psychological manipulation whatsoever. No one would persuade me, and I would avoid persuading them. Heck, I wouldn't even let myself persuade myself. Nobody, not even I, would tell me what to do.

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If anyone could consider himself qualified for the experiment, a confirmed hermit like me could. I work for myself; indeed, having dropped out of a career in journalism and publishing, I work *by* myself, in a cabin a considerable distance from my house. I live in a tiny village in northern New England, a region that boasts the most persuasion-resistant humans on the planet. Advertisers have nightmares about people like me: no TV, no smartphone, dial-up Internet. I'm commercial-free, a walking NPR, my own individual, persuasion-immune man.

As if.

My wristwatch alarm goes off at six. I normally use it to coax myself out of bed, but now I ignore it. I stare up at the ceiling, where the smoke detector blinks reassuringly. If the smoke alarm detected smoke, it would *alarm,* rousing the heaviest sleeper. The philosopher Aristotle would approve of the smoke detector's rhetoric; he understood the power of emotion as a motivator.

For the time being, the detector has nothing to say. But my cat does. She jumps on the bed and sticks her nose in my armpit. As reliable as my watch and twice as annoying, the cat persuades remarkably well for ten dumb pounds of fur. Instead of words she uses gesture and tone of voice—potent ingredients of argument.

I resist stoically. No cat is going to boss me around this morning.

The watch beeps again. I wear a Timex Ironman, whose name comes from a self-abusive athletic event; presumably, if the watch works for a masochist who subjects it to two miles of swimming, a hundred miles of biking, and 26.2 miles of running all in one day, it would work for someone like me who spends his lunch hour walking strenuously down to the brook to see if there are any fish. The ancient Romans would call the Ironman's brand appeal *argumentum a fortiori,* "argument from strength." Its logic goes like this: if something works the hard way, it's more likely to work the easy way. Advertisers favor the argument from strength. Years ago, Life cereal ran an ad with little Mikey the fussy eater. His two older brothers tested the cereal on him, figuring that if Mikey liked it, anybody would. And

TRY THIS IN A PROPOSAL

If your idea has been used elsewhere, describe its success in vivid detail as though the audience itself had accomplished it. Show how much more skill and resources your plan dedicates to the idea. Then feel free to use your favorite cliché, e.g., "It's a slam dunk."

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he liked it! An *argumentum a fortiori* cereal ad. My Ironman watch's own argument from strength does not affect me, however. I bought it because it was practical. Remember, I'm advertising-immune.

But its beeping is driving me crazy. Here I'm not even up yet and I already contemplate emotional appeals from a cat and a smoke detector along with a wristwatch argument from strength. Wrenching myself out of bed, I say to the mirror what I tell it every morning: "Don't take any crap from anyone."

The cat bites me on the heel. I grab my towel and go fix its breakfast. Five minutes later I'm out of toothpaste and arguing with my son. Not a good start to my experiment, but I'll chalk it up to what scientists euphemistically call an "artifact" (translation: boneheaded mistake) and move on. I make coffee, grab a pen, and begin writing ostentatiously in a notebook. This does little good in the literary sense—I can barely read my own scribble before coffee—but it produces wonderful rhetorical results: when my wife sees me writing, she often brings me breakfast.

Did I just violate my own experiment? Shielding the notebook from view, I write a grocery list. There. That counts as writing.

TRY THIS AT HOME
If you're appalled at the notion of manipulating your loved ones, try using pure logic—no emotions, no hidden tactics, no references to your authority or the sacrifices you make. Do it for a whole day, and you may be surprised by a rising level of anger in your family. Persuasion is a great pacifier.

Dorothy returned to full-time work after I quit my job. The deal was that I would take over the cooking, but she loves to see her husband as the inspired author and herself as the able enabler. My wife is a babe, and many babes go for inspired authors. Of course, *she* might be persuading *me:* by acting as the kind of babe who goes for inspired authors, she turns me on. Desire underlies the most insidious, and enjoyable, forms of argument.

We live in a tangled, dark world of persuasion. A used car salesman once seduced me out of fifteen grand. My family and I had just moved to Connecticut, and I needed cheap transportation. It had been a tough move; I was out of sorts. The man at the car lot had me pegged before I said a word. He pointed to a humble-looking Ford Taurus sedan, suggested a test drive, and as soon as I buckled in he said, "Want to see P. T. Barnum's grave?" Of course I did.

The place was awesome. We had to stop for peacocks, and brilliant-green feral Peruvian parrots squawked in the branches of a huge fir tree.

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Opposite Barnum's impressive monument stood General Tom Thumb's marker with a life-sized statue of the twenty-six-inch millionaire. Enthralled by our test drive, I did everything else the salesman suggested, and he suggested I buy the Ford. It was a lemon.

He sized me up and changed my mood; he *beguiled* me, and to tell you the truth, I enjoyed it. I had some misgivings the next morning, but no regrets. It was a consensual act.

Which leads us to argument's grand prize: the consensus. It means more than just an agreement, much more than a compromise. The consensus represents an audience's commonsense thinking. In fact, it *is* a common sense, a shared faith in a choice—the decision or action you want. And this is where emotional persuasion comes in. As St. Augustine knew, faith requires emotion.

> **TRY THIS AT WORK**
> You can use desire—the nonsexual kind—in a presentation. Will your plan increase efficiency? Get your audience to lust after it; paint a vision of actually taking lunch hours and seeing their families more.

Persuasion is manipulation, manipulation is half of argument, and therefore many of us understandably shy from it. But even Aristotle, that logical old soul, believed in the curative powers of persuasion. Logic alone will rarely get people to do anything. They have to *desire* the act. You may not like persuasion's manipulative aspects; still, it beats fighting, which is what we usually mistake for argument.

Birds Do It . . .

Meanwhile, my experiment gets more dubious by the moment. I'm leaving the bathroom when Dorothy puts a plate of eggs on the table, shrugs into her suit jacket, and kisses me goodbye. "Don't forget, I'll be home late—I'm having heavy hors d'oeuvres at the reception tonight," she says, and leaves for her fundraising job at a law school. (Fundraising and law. Could it get more rhetorical?)

I turn to George. "So, want to have dinner with me or on campus tonight?" George attends a boarding school as a day student. He hates the food there.

"I don't know," he says. "I'll call you from school."

I want to work late and don't feel like cooking, but I'm loath to have

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George think my work takes priority over him. "Okay," I say, adding with as much enthusiasm as I can fake, "we'll have stew!"

"Ugh," says George, right on cue. He hates my stew even more than school food. The odds of my cooking tonight have just gone way down.

Oops, as that fine rhetorician Britney Spears put it, I did it again. And so goes my day. In my cabin office, I email editors with flattering explanations for missing their deadlines. (I'm just trying to live up to their high standards!) I put off calling Sears to complain about a $147 bill for replacing a screw in our oven. When I do call eventually, I'll take my time explaining the situation. Giving me a break on the bill will cost less than dealing with me any further.

TRY THIS AFTER YOU'RE PUT ON HOLD
This works with most bureaucrats. Pretend you have all the time in the world, and present your choice as the lesser of two evils. They either cut you a break or waste more time with you. Functionaries, like water, follow the path of least resistance.

At noon, I grab some lunch and head outside for a walk. A small pile of fox scat lies atop a large granite rock. *Mine,* the fox says with the scat. *This spot belongs to me.* Territorial creatures, such as foxes and suburbanites, use complicated signals to mark off terrain and discourage intruders—musk, fences, scat, marriage licenses, footprints, alarm systems . . . Argument is in our nature, literally.

A mockingbird sings a pretty little tune that warns rivals off its turf. Without a pause it does the same thing in reverse, rendering a figure of speech called **chiasmus**. This crisscross figure repeats a phrase with its mirror image: "You can take a boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of a boy." "I wasted time, and now time doth waste me." Our culture underrates figures, but only because most of us lack the rhetorical savvy to wield them. They can yield surprising power. John F. Kennedy deployed a chiasmus during his inaugural address—"Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country"—and thousands joined the Peace Corps. I fell in love with figures, and even launched a website, Figarospeech.com, devoted to them. Figures add polish to a memo or paper, and in day-to-day conversation they can supply ready wit to the most tedious conversations.

TRY THIS IN A PRESENTATION
Present a decision with a chiasmus by using a mirror image of your first choice: "Either we control expenses or let expenses control us."

The phone is ringing when I get back to my cabin. It's George calling to say he plans to eat at

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school. *(Yes!)* So I work late, rewarding myself now and then by playing computer pinball. I find I can sit still for longer stretches with game breaks. Is this persuasion? I suppose it is. My non-rhetorical day turned out to be pretty darn rhetorical, but nonetheless agreeable.

I finally knock off work and head back to the house for a shower and shave, even though this isn't a shaving day. My wife deals with a lot of good-looking, well-dressed men, and now and then I like to make a territorial call, through grooming and clothing, to convince her she did not marry a bum. I pull on a cashmere sweater that Dorothy says makes my eyes look "bedroomy" and meet her at the door with a cold gin and tonic.

Let the persuasion begin.

▸ **Persuasion Alert** Whoa there. A presidential chiasmus drove people into the Peace Corps? I use one of the more persuasive ways to cheat in logic—because B follows A, A caused B. I call it the *Chanticleer fallacy,* after the rooster who thought his crowing made the sun come up.

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OFFENSE

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2. Set Your Goals

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CICERO'S LIGHTBULB

Change the audience's mood, mind, or willingness to act

Aphrodite spoke and loosened from her bosom the embroidered girdle of many colors into which all her allurements were fashioned. In it was love and in it desire and in it blandishing persuasion which steals the mind even of the wise. —HOMER

Back in 1974, *National Lampoon* published a parody comic-book version of Plato's *Republic*. Socrates stands around talking philosophy with a few friends. Each time he makes a point, another guy concedes, "Yes, Socrates, very well put." In the next frame you see an explosive "POW!!!" and the opponent goes flying through the air. Socrates wins by a knockout. The *Lampoon*'s *Republic* has some historical validity; ancient Greeks, like argumentative nerds throughout the ages, loved to imagine themselves as fighters. But even they knew the real-life difference between fighting and arguing. We should, too. We need to distinguish rhetorical argument from the blame-shifting, he-said-she-said squabbling that defines conflict today. In a fight, each disputant tries to win. In an argument, they try to *win over* an audience—which can comprise the onlookers, television viewers, an electorate, or each other.

▸ **Meanings**
"Debate" and "battle" share the same Latin root. Typical of those pugnacious Romans.

This chapter will help you distinguish between an argument and a fight, and to choose what you want to get out of an argument. The distinction can determine the survival of a marriage, as the celebrated research psychologist John Gottman proved in the 1980s and 1990s. Working out of his "love lab" at the University of Washington, he and his assistants videotaped hundreds of married couples over a period of nine years, poring over every tape and entering every perceived emotion and logical point into a database. They watched hours and days and months of arguments, of

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couples glaring at each other and revealing embarrassing things in front of the camera. It was like a bad reality show.

When Gottman announced his findings in 1994, though, rhetoricians around the country tried not to look smug, because the data confirmed what rhetoric has claimed for several millennia. Gottman found that couples who stayed married over those nine years argued about as much as those who ended up in divorce. However, the successful couples went about their arguments in a different way, and with a different purpose. Rhetoricians would say they instinctively followed the basic tenets of argument.

When some of the videotapes appeared on network television, they showed some decidedly uncomfortable moments, even among the happy couples. One successfully married husband admitted he was pathologically lazy, and his wife cheerfully agreed. Nonetheless, the couples who stayed married seemed to use their disputes to solve problems and work out differences. They showed faith in the outcome. The doomed couples, on the other hand, used their sessions to attack each other. Argument was a problem for them, not a means to a solution. The happy ones argued. The unhappy ones fought.

TRY THIS WITH YOUR CAREER
The growing profession of "leadership branding coaches" teaches CEO wannabes how to embody their company. The ideal trait? Not aggression, not brains, but the ability to tell a compelling life story and make yourself desirable. Later on, you'll see how storytelling is critical to emotional persuasion.

Much of the time, I'm guessing that the happy ones also *enticed*. While our culture tends to admire straight shooters, the ones who follow their gut regardless of what anyone thinks, those people rarely get their way in the end. Sure, aggressive loudmouths often win temporary victories through intimidation or simply by talking us to exhaustion, but the more subtle, eloquent approaches lead to long-term commitment. Corporate recruiters will confirm this theory. There are a few alpha types in the business world who live to bully their colleagues and stomp on the competition, but if you ask headhunters what they look for in executive material, they describe a persuader and team builder, not an aggressor.

You succeed in an argument when you persuade your audience. You win a fight when you dominate the enemy. A territorial dispute in the backseat of a car fails to qualify as argument, for example, unless each child makes the unlikely attempt to persuade instead of scream. ("I see your point, sister. However, have you considered the analogy of the international frontier?")

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At the age of two, my son, George, became a devotee of what rhetoricians call "argument by the stick": when words failed him, he used his fists. After every fight I would ask him, "Did you get the other kid to agree with you?" For years he considered that to be a thoroughly stupid question, and maybe it was. But eventually it made sense to him: argument by the stick—fighting—is no argument. It never persuades, it only inspires revenge or retreat.

In a fight, one person takes out his aggression on another. Donald Trump was fighting when he said of Rosie O'Donnell, "I mean, I'd look at her right in that fat, ugly face of hers, I'd say 'Rosie, you're fired.'" On the other hand, when George Foreman tries to sell you a grill, he makes an argument: persuasion that tries to change your mood, your mind, or your willingness to do something.

Homer Simpson offers a legitimate argument when he demonstrates our intellectual superiority to dolphins: "Don't forget—we invented computers, leg warmers, bendy straws, peel-and-eat shrimp . . . *and* the pudding cup."

Mariah Carey pitches an argument when she sings "We belong together" to an assumed ex-boyfriend; she tries to change his mind (and, judging by all the moaning in the background, get some action).

Taylor Swift ungrammatically telling Katy Perry "We got bad blood": fight.

Business proposal: argument.

Bernie Sanders saying Republicans have "declared war on the middle class" (in fact, anyone who deploys the war metaphor): fight.

Yogi Berra saying, "It's not the heat, it's the humility": argument.

The basic difference between an argument and a fight: an argument, done skillfully, gets people to want to do what you want. You fight to win; you argue to achieve agreement.

That may sound wimpy. Under some circumstances, though, argument can take a great deal of courage. It can even determine a nation's fate.

▸ **Persuasion Alert**
The ancients hated arguing through books, partly because an author cannot see his audience. If I could speak to you personally, I probably wouldn't veer from my son to Donald Trump to George Foreman to Homer Simpson to Taylor Swift. I would know which case appeals to you the most. Still, the wildly varied examples make a point all their own: You can't escape argument.

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Ancient rhetoricians dreaded most the kind of government led by a demagogue, a power-mad dictator who uses rhetorical skills for evil. The last century shows how right the ancients were. But the cure for the dark side of persuasion, they said, is the other side. Even if the stakes aren't quite as high—if the evildoer is a rival at work or a wacky organization on campus—your rhetorical skills can balance the equation.

TRY THIS IN A POLITICAL ARGUMENT
If you actually get someone to agree with you, test her commitment to your point. Ask, "Now what do you think you'll say if someone brings up this issue?"

But rhetoric offers a more selfish reason for arguing. Learn its tools and you'll become the face to watch, the rising star. You'll mold the minds of men and women to your will, and make any group yield to the dominion of your voice. Even more important, you'll get them to *want* to yield, to *commit* to your plan, and to consider the result a consensus. You will make them desire what you desire—entice them into a consensual act.

How to Beguile a Cop

A police patrol stops you on the highway and you roll your window down.

YOU: What's wrong, Officer?
COP: Did you know that the speed limit here is fifty?
YOU: How fast was I going?
COP: Fifty-five.

The temptation to reply with a snappy answer is awful.

YOU: Whoa, lock me up!

And indeed the satisfaction might be worth the speeding ticket and risk of arrest. But rewind the scene and pause it where the cop says "fifty-five." Now set your personal goal. What would you like to accomplish in this situation?

Perhaps you would like to make the cop look like an idiot. Your snappy answer accomplishes that, especially if you have passengers for an audience. Good for you. Of course, the cop is unlikely to respond kindly,

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the result will be a fight, and you are the likely loser. How about getting him to apologize for being a martinet? Sorry. You have to set a realistic goal. Judge Judy and Daniel Webster combined could not get this cop to apologize. Instead, suppose we set as your personal goal the avoidance of a ticket. Now, how are we to do that?

▸ **Argument Tool**
THE GOAL: Ask yourself what you want at the end of an argument. Change your audience's mind? Get it to do something or stop doing it? If it works, then you've won the argument, regardless of what your opponent thinks.

To win a deliberative argument, don't try to outscore your opponent. Try instead to get your way.

It's unlikely that your opponent knows any rhetoric. He probably thinks that the sole point of an argument is to humiliate you or get you to admit defeat. This cognitive dissonance can be useful; your opponent's aggressiveness makes a wonderful argument tool. Does he want to score points? Let him score points. All you want to do is win—to get your audience to accept your choice or do what you want it to do. People often win arguments on points, only to lose the battle. Although polls showed that Barack Obama and Mitt Romney scored a tie during their three debates, Romney's popularity spiked. The audience liked Obama's logic, but they liked Romney better—temporarily.

▸ **Meanings**
Rhetoric has a name for debating that seeks to win points: *eristic.*

Even if your argument includes only you and another person, with no one else looking on, you still have an audience: the other person. In that case, there are two ways to come out on top: either by winning the argument—getting your opponent to admit defeat—or by "losing" it. Let's try both strategies on your cop.

1. Win the argument with a bombproof excuse.

YOU: My wife's in labor! I need to get her to the hospital stat!
COP: You're driving alone, sir.
YOU: Oh my God! I forgot my wife!

Chances are, this kind of cop won't care if your wife is having triplets all over the living room floor. But if the excuse works, you win.

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2. Play the good citizen you assume the cop wants you to be. Concede his point.

YOU: I'm sure you're right, Officer. I should have been watching my speedometer more.

▸ **Argument Tool** *CONCESSION:* Concede your opponent's point in order to win what you want.

Good. You just let the cop win on points. Now get him to let you off easy.

YOU: I must have been watching the road too closely. Can you suggest a way for me to follow my speedometer without getting distracted?

This approach appeals to the cop's expertise. It might work, as long as you keep any sarcasm out of your voice. But assume that the appeal needs a little more sweetening.

COP: You can start by driving under the speed limit. Then you won't have to watch your speedometer so much.
YOU: Well, that's true, I could. I've been tailgated a lot when I do that, but that's their problem, isn't it?
COP: Right. You worry about your own driving.
YOU: I will. This has helped a lot, thanks.

Now, what do you think is most likely to happen? I can tell you what *won't* happen. The cop won't order you out of the car. He won't tell you to stand spread-eagled against it while he pats you down. He won't call for backup, or even yell at you. You took the anger out of the argument, which these days is no mean accomplishment. And if he actually does let you off with a warning, congratulations. You win. The cop may not recognize it, but you have just notched the best kind of win. He leaves happy, and so do you.

TRY THIS IN A POLITICAL ARGUMENT
Practice your rhetorical jujitsu with a variation on the rhetorical question "With friends like that, who needs enemies?" Opponent: "The Russians are our allies." You: "With allies like that, who needs enemies?"

The easiest way to exploit your opponent's desire to score points is to let him. Concede a point

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that will not damage your case irreparably. When your kid says, "You never let me have any fun," you say, "I suppose I don't." When a coworker says, "That'll never work," you say, "Hmm, maybe not." Then use that point to change her mood or her mind.

In other words, one way to get people to agree with you is to agree with them—tactically, that is. Agreeing up front does not mean giving up the argument. Instead, use your opponent's point to get what you want. Practice rhetorical jujitsu by using your opponent's own moves to throw him off balance. Does up-front agreeing seem to lack in stand-up-for-yourself-ishness? Yes, I suppose it does. But wimps like us shall inherit the rhetorical earth. While the rest of the world fights, we'll argue. And argument gets you what you want more than fighting does.

The Rhetoric Diet

Changing the mood is the easiest goal, and usually the one you work on first. St. Augustine, a onetime rhetoric professor and one of the fathers of the Christian Church, gave famously boffo sermons. The secret, he said, was not to be content merely with seizing the audience's sympathetic attention. He was never satisfied until he made them cry. (Augustine could not have been invited to many parties.) As one of the great sermonizers of all time, he converted pagans to Christianity through sheer emotional pyrotechnics. By changing your audience's emotion, you make them more vulnerable to your argument—put them in the mood to listen.

TRY THIS AT HOME
To see whether people actually do the thing you ask them to—whether they desire the acts—create a "commitment ratio": divide the times they do what you ask by the number of "Okays" and "Yes, dears." I achieved a 70 percent rate over three days—a passing grade. (You may do better if you don't have children.)

Wringing tears from an audience is easy compared to goal number two, making them *decide what you want*. Henry Kissinger used a classic persuasive method when he served as Nixon's national security adviser. He would lay out five alternatives for the president to choose from, listing the most extreme choices first and last, and putting the one Kissinger preferred in the middle. Nixon inevitably chose the "correct" option, according to Kissinger. (Not exactly

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TRY THIS IN A STORE
Like Kissinger, retailers use the Goldilocks technique all the time, offering lower-priced junk and high-end goods to make their bestselling items seem just right. Next time you buy, say, an electronic gadget, ask the sales staff to show you the midpriced version first. Then go up or down in price depending on your desires and budget.

the most subtle tactic, but I've seen it used successfully in corporate PowerPoint presentations.)

Usually, since most arguments take place between two people, most of the time you deal with just two choices—yours and your opponent's. My daughter, Dorothy Jr., makes an especially difficult adversary. Although she enjoys argument much less than her brother does, she can be equally persuasive. She launches an argument so gently you fail to realize you're in one.

I once visited her in London, where she was spending a term as a college student. My first evening there, she proposed dinner at a low-price Indian restaurant. I wanted to play the generous dad and take her someplace fancier. Guess who won.

ME: We could still eat Indian, but someplace more upscale.
DOROTHY JR.: Sure.
ME: So do you know of any?
DOROTHY JR.: Oh, London's full of them.
ME: Uh-huh. So do you know of any in particular?
DOROTHY JR. *(vaguely):* Oh, yeah.
ME: Any near here?
DOROTHY JR.: Not really.
ME: So you'd rather eat at your usual place.
DOROTHY JR.: If you want to, sure.
ME: I don't want to!

And then I felt guilty about losing my patience, which, though she denies it, may have been Dorothy Jr.'s strategy all along. We ate at her usual place. She won, using my guilt as her emotional goal. Dorothy couldn't have done better if she had prepared a Ciceronian speech in advance. Cicero might even approve: the most effective rhetoric disguises itself, he said. Dorothy knew this instinctively. She has a biting tongue but knows how to restrain it to win an argument. Still, Dorothy had it relatively easy. We were going to dinner one way or another. All she had to do was pull me toward her choice.

Goal number three—in which you get an audience to *do something or*

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to stop doing it—is the most difficult. It requires a different, more personal level of emotion, one of desire. Suppose I didn't want to go to dinner at all. Dorothy would have had a lot more arguing to do to get me out the door. That's like getting a horse to drink, to use an old expression. You can give the horse salt to stimulate its desire for water (arousing its emotions, if you will) and you can persuade it to follow you to a stream (the choice part), but getting it to commit to drinking poses the toughest rhetorical problem.

Up until recently, get-out-the-vote campaigns for young people have been notoriously bad at this. The kids flocked to rock concerts and grabbed the free T-shirts; they got all charged up and maybe even registered as Democrats or Republicans—a triumph of persuasion, as far as emotions and choice were concerned. But until such tribal media as Facebook and Snapchat entered the picture, showing up at the polls on election day was something else altogether. Youth turned stubborn at the getting-to-drink part. (I meant that metaphorically.)

Besides using desire to motivate an audience, you need to convince it that an action is no big deal—that whatever you want them to do won't make them sweat. A few years ago, when I was an editorial director at the Rodale publishing company, I heard that some people in another division were working on a diet book. *God,* I thought, *another diet,* as if there weren't enough already. Plus, the title they planned for the book made no sense to me. It referred to a particular neighborhood in a major city, a place most Americans probably had never heard of. The author, a cardiologist, happened to live there. But who would buy a book called *The South Beach Diet?*

So I'm a lousy prognosticator of bestsellers. In retrospect, however, I can explain why the title was not such a bad idea after all. "South Beach" conjures an image of people—*you*—in bathing attire. It says vacation, one of the chief reasons people go on a diet. The Rodale editors stimulated

TRY THIS IN A WRITTEN PROPOSAL

After you outline the document, jot down a two-part inventory of your goal: (1) Have you thought of all the benefits and weighed them against the alternatives? (2) How doable is it? How cheap or easy compared to the other choices? Now check off those points in your outline. Did you cover everything?

▸ **Persuasion Alert**

Self-deprecating humor is an acceptable way to brag. Mentioning a moment of boneheadedness at my former company beats the far more obnoxious "I was a high-level manager at a publishing company that had twenty-three million customers the year I left." The term du jour for this device: **humblebrag.**

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an emotion by making readers picture a desirable and highly personal goal: you, in a bathing suit, looking great. So much for the desire part. The book's subtitle employs the no-big-deal tactic: *The Delicious, Doctor-Designed, Foolproof Plan for Fast and Healthy Weight Loss.* No suffering, perfectly safe, instant results . . . they hit all the buttons except for *So You Can Eat Like a Glutton and Get Hit On by Lifeguards.* People took action in droves. The book has sold in the millions.

The Tools

This chapter gave you basic devices to determine the outcome of an argument:

- Set your personal goal.
- Set your goals for your audience. Do you want to change their **mood,** their **mind,** or their **willingness** to carry out what you want?

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3. Control the Tense

▲

ORPHAN ANNIE'S LAW

The three basic issues of rhetoric deal with time

MARGE: *Homer, it's very easy to criticize . . .*
HOMER: *And fun, too!* —THE SIMPSONS

You have your personal goal (what you want out of the argument) and your audience goals (mood, mind, action). Now, before you begin arguing, ask yourself one more question: *What's the issue?* According to Aristotle, all issues boil down to just three (the Greeks were crazy about that number):

Blame
Values
Choice

▸ **Argument Tool**
THE THREE CORE ISSUES: Blame, values, choice.

You can slot any kind of issue involving persuasion into one of these categories.

Who moved my cheese? This, of course, is a **blame** issue. Whodunit?

Should abortion be legal? **Values.** What's morally right or wrong about letting a woman choose whether or not to end the budding life inside her own body? (My choice of words implies the values each side holds—a woman's right to her own body, and the sanctity of life.)

Should we build a plant in Detroit? **Choice:** to build or not to build, Detroit or not Detroit.

Should Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt have split up? **Values**—not moral ones, necessarily, but what you and your interlocutor value. Were they just too hot to separate?

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Did O.J. do it? **Blame.**
Shall we dance? **Choice:** to dance or not to dance.

Why should you care which question slots into which core issue? It matters because you will never meet your goals if you argue around the wrong core issue. Watch a couple in their living room, reading books and listening to music:

SHE: Can you turn that down a little?
HE: You're the one who set the volume last.
SHE: Oh, really? Then who was it blasting "Free Bird" all over the place this afternoon?
HE: So that's what this is about. You hate my music.

▸ **Persuasion Alert** What's missing from my list? How about capital-*T* Truth? Can't you argue about truth and falsity? You can, but that wouldn't be persuasion. Absolute Truth demands a different kind of argument, one the philosophers called "dialectic." It seeks to discover things, not talk people into them.

What does she want out of this argument? Quiet. It's a choice issue. She wants him to choose to turn the music down. But instead of choices, the argument turns to blame, then values.

Blame: You're the one who set the volume last.
Values: So that's what this is about. You hate my music.

It's hard to make a positive choice about turning the volume knob when you argue about a past noise violation and the existential qualities of "Free Bird."

The examples I gave of the core issues—blame, values, and choice—show a certain pattern. The blame questions deal with the past. The values questions are in the present tense. And the choice questions have to do with the future.

Blame = *Past* Values = *Present* Choice = *Future*

If you find an argument spinning out of control, try switching the tense. To pin blame on the cheese thief, use the past tense. To get someone to believe that abortion is a terrible sin, use the present tense. The future, though, is the best tense for getting peace and quiet in the living room.

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Aristotle, who devised a form of rhetoric for each of the tenses, liked the future best of all.

The rhetoric of the *past*, he said, deals with issues of justice. This is the judicial argument of the courtroom. Aristotle called it "forensic" rhetoric, because it covers forensics. Our music-challenged couple uses the past tense for blaming each other.

HE: You're the one who set the volume last.
SHE: Then who was it blasting "Free Bird"?

If you want to try someone on charges of volume abuse (not to mention bad taste), you're in the right tense. Forensic argument helps us determine whodunit, not who's-doing-it or who-will-do-it. Watch *Law & Order* or *CSI* and you'll notice that most of the dialogue is in the past tense. It works great for lawyers and cops, but a loving couple should be wary of the tense. The purpose of forensic rhetoric is to determine guilt and mete out punishment; couples who get in the habit of punishing each other suffer the same fate as the doomed marriages in Dr. Gottman's Love Lab.

TRY THIS AT WORK
Most office backstabbing uses the past or present tense ("He's the one who screwed up that bid"; "She's a total jerk"). If you find yourself a victim, refocus the issue on future choices: "How is blaming me going to help us get the next contract?" "Whether you think I'm a jerk or not, let's figure out a way for you and me to get along."

How about the *present* tense? Is that any better? It can be. The rhetoric of the present handles praise and condemnation, separating the good from the bad, distinguishing groups from other groups and individuals from each other. Aristotle reserved the present for describing people who meet a community's ideals or fail to live up to them. It is the communal language of commencement addresses, funeral orations, and sermons. It celebrates heroes or condemns a common enemy. It gives people a sort of tribal identity. (We're great, terrorists are cowards.) When a leader has trouble confronting the future, you hear similar tribal talk.

▸ **Persuasion Alert**
If this seems to hint at an agenda, you're right. As you saw during the last presidential election, Democrats and Republicans love the present tense. "The Republicans are corrupt!" "The Democrats are corrupt!" It's a great way to stir up the base, and a lousy way to conduct a democracy. More on this in Chapter 4.

Aristotle's term for this kind of language is *demonstrative rhetoric,* because ancient orators used it

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to demonstrate their fanciest techniques. Our argumentative couple uses it to divide each other.

HE: So that's what this is about. You hate my music.

▸ **Meanings**
Aristotle's Greek word for demonstrative rhetoric is *epideictic,* but the only people who use that unpronounceable term are academic rhetoricians. They're just being demonstrative.

TRY THIS IN A PITCH
If you're competing against a superior company or candidate (or suitor of any kind), use the future tense against your opponent. "You've heard a lot of bragging about past accomplishments and how great my opponent is, but let's talk about the future: What do you want done?"

You might say that the man bears sole blame for switching tenses from past to present. But let's not get all forensic on each other, okay? The man may be right, after all; perhaps the argument has to do with the guy's thing for Lynyrd Skynyrd and not the volume knob. In any case, their dialogue has suddenly turned tribal: I like my music, you hate it. If the man happened to be a politician he would find it hard to resist adding, "And that's just wrong!" We use the present tense to talk about values: That is wrong. This is right. Detesting "Free Bird" is morally wrong.

If you want to make a joint decision, you need to focus on the future. This is the tense that Aristotle saved for his favorite rhetoric. He called it "deliberative," because it argues about choices and helps us decide how to meet our mutual goals. Deliberative argument's chief topic is "the advantageous," according to Aristotle. This is the most pragmatic kind of rhetoric. It skips right and wrong, good and bad, in favor of expedience.

Present-tense (demonstrative) rhetoric tends to finish with people bonding or separating.

Past-tense (forensic) rhetoric threatens punishment.

Future-tense (deliberative) argument promises a payoff. You can see why Aristotle dedicated the rhetoric of decision-making to the future.

Our poor couple remains stranded in the present tense, so let's rewind their dialogue and make them speak deliberatively—in the future tense, that is.

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SHE: Can you turn that down a little?
HE: Sure, I'd be happy to.

Wait. Shouldn't he say, "*I'll* be happy to"? "I *will*," not "I *would*"? Well, sure, you're probably right. He could. But by using the conditional mood—"would" instead of "will"—he leaves himself an opening.

HE: But is the music too loud, or do you want me to play something else?
SHE: Well, now that you mention it, I'd prefer something a little less hair-bandy.

Ouch! He plays nice, and she insults the entire classic rock genre. That makes him feel justified in retaliating, but he does it moderately.

HE: Something more elevatorish, you mean? That doesn't really turn me on. Want to watch a movie?

By turning the argument back to choices, the man keeps it from getting too personal—and possibly keeps her off balance, making her a bit more vulnerable to persuasion.

SHE: What do you have in mind?
HE: We haven't seen that *Avengers* movie in ages.
SHE: *Avengers*? I hate that movie.

As he well knows. This is a little off topic, but I can't resist giving you another rhetorical trick: propose an extreme choice first. It will make the one you want sound more reasonable. I used the technique myself in getting my wife to agree to name our son after my uncle George. I proposed lots of alternatives—my personal favorite was Herman Melville Heinrichs—until she finally said, "You know, 'George' doesn't really sound that bad." I kissed her and told her how much I loved her, and notched another argument on my belt.

Back to our couple.

▸ **Persuasion Alert**
I presumably didn't dash this book off in one draft, so what excuse do I have for straying off topic? Cicero used digressions to change the tone and rhythm of an argument, and so do I. By describing a persuasive trick in the middle of my description of tenses, I hope to show how these tools work on all sorts of occasions.

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HE: Well, then, how about *Titanic*?

He knows she would prefer a different movie—she gets seasick easily—but it doesn't sound that bad after the first choice.

SHE: Okay.

Titanic it is. Which happens to be the movie he wanted in the first place. The distinctions between the three forms of rhetoric can determine the success of a democracy, a business, or a family. Remember the argument I had with my son, George?

TRY THIS WHEN ARGUING TURNS TO FIGHTING
Consider "What should we do about it?" and "How can we keep it from happening again?" as rhetorical versions of WD-40 lubricant. The past and present can help you make a point, but any argument involving a decision eventually has to turn to the future.

ME: Who used all the toothpaste?
GEORGE: That's not the question, is it, Dad? The question is, how are we going to keep it from happening again?

Sarcasm aside, the kid deserves credit for switching the rhetoric from past to future—from forensic to deliberative. He put the argument in decision-making mode. What choice will give us the best advantage for stocking an endless supply of toothpaste?

Annie's Pretty Sure Bet

Hold on. The future sounds lovely, but isn't civil discourse supposed to be about sticking to the facts? The future *has* no facts, right? Doesn't it simply speculate?

Correct. Facts do not exist in the future. We can know that the sun came up yesterday and that it shines now, but we can only *predict* that the sun will come up tomorrow. When Little Orphan Annie sings that godawful "Tomorrow" song, she doesn't make a fact-based argument, she *bets*. Like a proper Aristotelian, Annie even admits the case: "Bet your bottom dollar / That tomorrow / There'll be sun!"

Annie concedes that the sunrise has not yet become a fact. Call it

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Orphan Annie's Law: the sun only *may* come up tomorrow. A successful argument, like anything about the future, cannot stick to the facts.

Deliberative argument can *use* facts, but it must not limit itself to them. While you and I can disagree about the capital of Burkina Faso, we're not arguing deliberatively; we simply dispute a fact. Neither of us can decide to make it Ouagadougou. We merely look it up. (I just looked it up.)

All we have for the future is conjecture or choices, not facts. When Homer Simpson argues with his wife in the future tense of deliberative argument, facts have nothing to do with it:

> MARGE: Homer, I don't want you driving around in a car you built yourself.
>
> HOMER: You can sit there complaining, or you can knit me some seat belts.

▸ **Persuasion Alert**
A good persuader anticipates the audience's objections. Ideally, you want to produce them even before the audience can. The technique makes your listeners more malleable. They begin to assume you'll take care of all their qualms, and they lapse into a bovine state of persuadability. (Oh, wait. You're the audience here. Scratch "bovine.")

Instead of helping us to find some elusive truth, deliberative argument *deliberates,* weighing one choice against the other, considering the circumstances.

Choices:

Beach or mountains this summer?
Should your company replace its computers or hire a competent tech staff?
Should a ten-year-old be on Snapchat?
Does it makes sense to go to Mars?

When you argue about values, you use demonstrative rhetoric, not deliberative. If you rely on a cosmic authority—God, or Beyoncé—then the audience has no choice to make.

Eternal truths will answer these:

Is there a God?
Is homosexuality immoral?
Is capitalism bad?
Should all students know the Ten Commandments?

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