

The Little Logic Book
Hardy, Ratzsch, Konyndyk De Young and Mellema
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Exercises for The Little Logic Book may be downloaded by the instructor as Word documents and then modified for distribution to students; or students may be instructed to download the exercises and then told which ones to answer. This is an exercise bank; it is not assumed that students will do all the exercises for any one chapter. Comments, questions or suggestions for Chapter Thirteen of The Little Logic Book can be sent to logic@calvin.edu

Exercise Bank for Chapter Thirteen:
The Ethics of Argument
(Posted May, 2014)

1.0 Basic Concepts

Define or identify the following:

- 1.1 Philosophy
- 1.2 Principle of charity
- 1.3 “Iron sharpening iron”
- 1.4 “Labeling and lumping”
- 1.5 Creative reconstruction

2.0 Ethics of Argument Basics

Indicate whether the following statements are true or false; briefly explain why.

- 2.1 The purpose of argumentation is to prove that you are right.
- 2.2 If you know that your position is right, you have nothing to gain from listening to criticisms of it.
- 2.3 Labeling and lumping are important processes in reasoning correctly.
- 2.4 Some of the more vicious tactics in debate actually consist of logical fallacies.
- 2.5 Intellectual pride can result in fear.

3.0 The Ethics of Argument

- 3.1 What is the primary purpose of reasoning and argumentation?
- 3.2 Why is philosophy best done in community?
- 3.3 State Wolterstorff’s Commandment.
- 3.4 How can respect for others help us better achieve the primary purpose of reasoning?
- 3.5 In the context of discussion and argumentation, what two things deserve our respect?
- 3.6 What two questions help make discussion and debate more productive?
- 3.7 Even if you know that you are right, what can you still learn from discussion and conversation with others?
- 3.8 Name the ‘four p’s.’
- 3.9 Briefly describe the 5-step process in debate that express the values advocated in this chapter.
- 3.10 What does the author identify as the hardest thing to do in an argument?

- 3.11 Name at least two ways of looking at the basics of ethical reasoning and argumentation.
- 3.12 “Humility is required for study” – why would someone believe that?
- 3.13 What is the attitude of a “lifelong learner”?
- 3.14 Some intellectual virtues can be seen as lying between a vice of excess and a vice of deficiency. Discuss an example.

4.0. A Stretch

Below are two debate scenarios between Melissa, René and Andrea on a very controversial topic. They end in very different places. In this exercise (a) Compare the two (In what ways are they similar? In what ways do they differ?); (b) In the first scenario, identify as many of the negatives discussed in the chapter as you can; (c) In the second scenario, identify as many of the positives discussed in the chapter as you can; (d) Indicate if you think that even among seekers of wisdom, there are times when the value and importance of examining arguments is outweighed by the value and importance of focusing on other concerns of one’s fellow wisdom seekers? Briefly explain your reasons for the response you give to this question.

Scenario One

“Look. Just drop it. I’m exhausted and emotionally drained and the last thing I need right now is more of your smug righteousness.” Melissa had clearly about had it with René.

“Well, *someone* needs to get through your usual moral blindness. I mean, even you must realize that you just helped someone kill their unborn child. In fact, you helped kill your own unborn niece.”

There was a stunned silence. Then . . . “I don’t believe you just said that, René.” Melissa started toward the door, but suddenly turned around. There was a hard edge in her voice. “In real life some things just aren’t as neat and black and white as you always like to pretend. You really do need to get real and quit being so judgmental and superior. My sister was pregnant, her fiancé abandoned her, she had no money, and no one else to turn to after Dad refused to let her move back home. She didn’t want to do it—in fact, she cried about it a *lot*—but she didn’t know what else to do. She asked me to go with her to the clinic so she wouldn’t have to be completely alone. What was I supposed to do? Do your version of the “loving” thing and tell her I condemned her too? Call her the sorts of names you would have called her? Have a little human decency already.”

“Well, you might have shown at least a tiny bit of concern for your unborn niece as well. She was a real person too. In fact, she was the only completely innocent person in this whole thing, and she’s the one that gets killed. I mean, you might try to have at least a little human decency yourself, Melissa.”

“Wow, coming from you that’s . . . What do you mean—‘killed’? Nobody knows when being a person begins. You certainly aren’t qualified to make that pronouncement, regardless of how smart you think you are.”

“I think that a person starts at conception. That’s just logical. Every step from conception to birth is a smooth, slow, gradual process. So if we try to just pick some point partway along the way and say ‘OK, *that’s* when the fetus becomes a person’ – well, that just seems arbitrary.”

“That’s a stupid argument, even for you, René. For your information it’s a slippery slope fallacy. And you’re admitting that we don’t really know when personhood begins, so you’re basing your entire position on your own ignorance. As usual.”

“Oh sure. Attack my argument so that you don’t have to face what you and your sister really did. Anyway, I *do* know when personhood begins. But suppose that for once you’re right and nobody knows. If we really don’t know when a person begins, then we should be especially careful so that we don’t mistakenly kill something that’s already a person. Ignorance like yours is a really good reason *not* to allow abortions.”

“And then what about people like my sister? She’s alone, and you still want to force her to have a child she can’t support. But I didn’t see *you* offering anything to help her. You say the fetus was a person, but I didn’t see *you* doing anything to save that ‘person.’ Except, of course, condemning my sister, me, and anyone else you could think of. So where’s *your* great compassion? Basically, you think life is all about rules, and the stricter and harsher the rules are the better you like it.”

“That’s not true. It’s just that unlike some people, I don’t believe in child sacrifice simply to avoid temporary inconvenience.”

Andrea, who to this point had just been watching the war in words, finally broke in. “You know, it seems to me that some of what both of you say might be right. Or at least worth discussing. Did it ever occur to you guys to shut up and actually try to *hear* each other’s arguments instead of . . .”

“Oh right,” someone interrupted – it could have been either Melissa or René. “Like I really *care* what arguments *her* side gives. And she doesn’t ever listen anyway.”

Fortunately, the semester was nearly finished. Maybe over vacation everyone would cool off a bit.

Scenario Two

René came in, dropped her backpack on the floor and flopped down on her bunk. “That was the absolute *worst* organic chem test ever. I don’t want to go through another two hours like that again as long as I live. *If* I live, after that.” Only then did it register that Andrea, in the chair by the window, was completely silent, and that Melissa, sitting on the other bunk with her hands folded in her lap, was staring at the floor, looking utterly dejected.

“What’s going on? What happened?”

Melissa finally looked up. “About two weeks ago my sister found out she was pregnant. Her fiancé then abandoned her, she didn’t have a job and she was about out of money. When she asked Mom and Dad if she could come back home Dad flatly refused. She was nearly in a panic, no idea what to do. But then this afternoon she called and asked if I would go to the clinic with her. She went in for an abortion. She really didn’t want to—she’s always been strongly opposed—but she just couldn’t see any way around it, anything else she could do. And she was frightened to go alone and she wanted me to go with her.”

“Oh, my goodness. That was tough. I mean, really tough. Did you go?”

“I had to, René. But walking into that clinic with my sister, knowing that when we came out it wouldn’t be . . . , I mean it would be . . . that she . . . I don’t even know how to talk about it Anyway, it was about the hardest thing I’ve ever done. Even though I’ve never been totally sure that abortion is wrong, at least not in every case, I’ve still always been pretty uncomfortable with it. But she’s my sister. I think I’ve loved her more than anybody else since I was a kid. I just *had* to be there for her, even if I wasn’t sure that what she was doing was right. And I still don’t know if I did the right thing by going.”

“Wow. I can understand the dilemma that put you in. I don’t know if I could have done it, even for someone I loved that much. I mean, you know my views on this—and some of my reasons. Every step from conception to birth is a smooth, slow, gradual process. So if we try to just pick some point partway along the way and say ‘OK, *that’s* when the fetus becomes a person’—well, to me anyway that seems arbitrary. But if that argument’s right, then we’re dealing with a person from conception on, as I’m absolutely convinced we are. And that would make a lot of difference to how we should think about your sister’s—and your—dilemma. And it certainly wouldn’t make your decision any easier.”

“Yeah, you’ve brought up that argument before. I mean, it does sound sensible and I can see why you accept it. But for some reason I’ve never found it convincing, although I can’t say for sure why. I know it’s obviously important to get at the truth here. In fact, it’s literally life and death. I know that. And of course given my sister’s situation I really *want* there to be something wrong with that argument, so that it really *wasn’t* a person. But even if the argument is right, I don’t think I could have just . . . turned away from my sister. Aren’t there some really important things that go deeper than arguments can?”

“That may be right. In fact, I’m sure of it,” from René.

“Matter of fact I’m with you on this one, too, Melissa, at least about that particular argument,” Andrea interjected quietly. “René, do you ever worry just a bit that that argument might turn out to be a slippery slope fallacy? That, just for instance, the development sequence may not be as smooth and continuous as that argument assumes?”

“Yeah, sometimes I do wonder about that. Lots of people think that it is fallacious, and so that objection comes up fairly frequently. Anyway, I can see why you ask, and I wish I had a more solid response than I actually do. But I’m still committed to the conclusion, even if I can’t absolutely prove that this argument is airtight.”

“Well, I think it’s fallacious,” said Andrea, “but from your perspective you *might* be able to argue that although there may be a slope—maybe even a slippery one—it doesn’t constitute a fallacy. Not all sequential arguments are fallacious, you know, and maybe you can convince us that this is one of the exceptions. Anyway, I can see that together the three of us are going to have to try to chase down the truth of that matter sometime. But right now”—turning toward Melissa—“whether or not we all agree about personhood or about the rights and wrongs here, René and I can at least understand your dilemma and your sister’s decision and that both of you are really hurting and confused.”

“She’s right, Melissa. Maybe there’s something we can do to at least help a little. Because, arguments and issues and even our occasional squabbles aside, we do both love you.”

Melissa just looked at both of them, then began to weep, quietly, gratefully.