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8 MODES OF ARGUING

We build arguments in many different ways. To expand the account of argument we have already introduced, this chapter discusses four different modes of arguing often used. It discusses expanding the scope of arguing beyond verbal arguing (i.e., arguing that depends only on words). The account that we develop will help you understand, build, and evaluate arguments with non-verbal elements that are the basis of auditory, emotional, intuitive, and visual ways of building arguments.

Most of the examples of argument we have examined so far are instances of the verbal mode of argument. We employ a **verbal argument** when we argue in speech or writing using words literally or metaphorically. The verbal mode of arguing is an important mode that is emphasized in the history of logic, and in this and other logic books. But real-life arguing employs, in central ways, many other kinds of reasoning and communication. Recent research on argument has emphasized this by promoting a "multimodal" approach to arguing that recognizes these other modes of argument.

Attempts to communicate are commonly called **speech acts**. The most obvious kind of speech act is the uttering of a literal statement, but speech acts also include emojis, political cartoons, films, maps that show you where someone lives, or thumbs-up gestures. Artwork, emotional gestures, emojis, facial expressions, photographs, and metaphors are speech acts that play an important role within our arguments.

In this chapter we discuss four non-verbal modes of arguing that have been proposed in studies of argument:

- Arguments in the **visual mode** use non-verbal images of some sort (photographs, video, drawings, diagrams, emojis, maps, etc.).
- Arguments in the **auditory mode** depend on non-verbal sounds (a certain tone of voice, natural sounds, music, etc.).
- Arguments in the **emotional mode** depend on expressions of emotion (which can be communicated verbally, but also by gestures, facial expressions, etc.).
- Arguments in the **intuitive mode** depend on non-verbal intuition.

When we consider specific instances of argument, it is important to remember that arguers often mix different modes of arguing, producing arguments which are verbal and emotional, verbal and visual, visual and auditory, and so on. In the case of very complex arguments (say, the arguments propounded in a documentary film), you may need to consider components of an argument that are auditory, emotional, intuitive, verbal, and visual.

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1 Argument Flags

In the course of argumentation, non-verbal forms of communication can be used in a variety of ways. Often, they function as argument components—as ways to express the premises or conclusion of an argument. In other cases, they are used to introduce and organize arguments—regulating the flow of real-life arguing.

In this regard, we might compare the world of argumentation to the streets of a major city. An argument is a vehicle that takes us through the streets, from one position (place) to another. The traffic flows at many speeds and in many (and sometimes opposite) directions. What makes travel possible in a city are "rules of the road" that are frequently enforced via non-verbal means of communication: traffic lights tell us to stop, go, or be cautious; traffic signs use arrows and visual symbols that indicate direction, the curve of a road, or that no bicycles are allowed; traffic police use whistles, sirens, signs, and hand signals to direct and stop cars, trucks, and other vehicles.

In the world of argumentation, non-verbal cues often play a similar role, regulating arguments. In a court room, the banging of a judge's gavel demands silence (and "order in the court"). In a formal debate, a buzzer or bell may indicate when arguing can commence and when it must end. In an interpersonal exchange, the dismayed look on your partner's face may be a warning sign that tells you that this is not the time to argue.

One important way in which arguers use non-verbal elements is as **argument flags**—attention grabbers that draw attention to an argument. Flags of this sort are important because an argument (however strong it is) cannot convince an audience of its conclusion unless an arguer finds a way to attract attention to it.

Sometimes arguers attract and maintain the attention of an audience with words. Strong speakers often preface an argument with a witty quote, a joke, or a moving story that captivates their audience and makes them interested (sometimes intensely interested) to hear what follows. Words that are used like this function as *verbal* argument flags.

In other cases, non-verbal cues are argument flags. Sometimes such flags are auditory. An arguer who wants us to listen to their argument may raise their voice or shout at us, whistle, or clap their hands three times. A drum roll or a riveting piece of music may precede an argument in a documentary film or podcast. In other cases, captivating images are used as flags. A haunting image of someone sobbing, a stunning photograph of a natural landscape, or a disturbing image of war may grab our attention in a social media post.

Advertisers often hire famous actors, athletes, reality stars, influencers, or models to present their arguments because we are instinctively inclined to pay attention to them. How they captivate target audiences changes over time. Twenty years ago, we witnessed famous athletes promoting brands in television commercials. Today we also see product endorsements promoted on Instagram and TikTok.

In a world in which we are constantly bombarded by arguments—in advertisements, on the internet, in political debates, at home, at school, in a public restroom, and at work. Effective argument flags attempt to break through the argumentation clutter in creative

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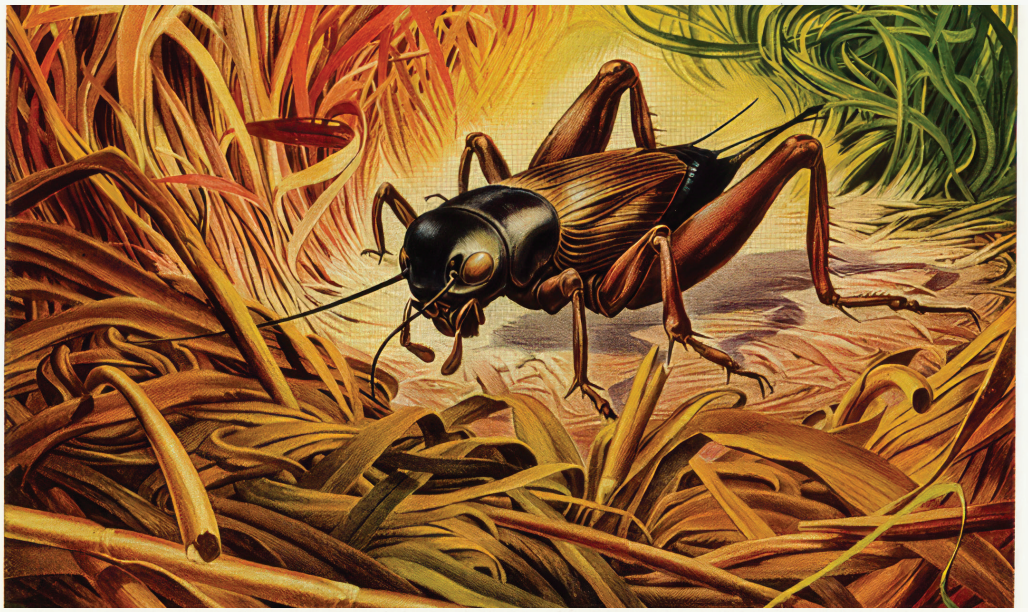

The minstrel who loves his home

MOST CRICKETS, as you might expect, are wandering minstrels—cheerful vagabonds who love the open road.

But the great French naturalist, M. Fabre, tells us that the field cricket, (Gryllus campestris), views life differently. He yearns to become a solid citizen, a fellow with a permanent address.

So, after a briefly irresponsible youth, he settles down. Choosing a spot with a good, sunny exposure, he starts to dig.

He makes a small house, first. But he keeps improving it—deepening his hall, enlarging his bedroom, making a clean-swept doorway where he can sit and strum away on summer evenings. And, invariably, his doorway is concealed under a tuft of grass which protects it from intruders.

Now the field cricket's attitude, though unusual among his kind, is by no means so rare among humans. We, too, have a deep-seated instinct for home owning. We, too, tend to keep adding and improving, so that our homes constantly become more valuable to us. And we also do our best to protect our homes against both intruders and a more serious menace, fire. We do this by carrying insurance.

But in the last few years, many of us have overlooked an important fact about this protection: even if you haven't improved your house by so much as a new shingle, the chances are that it has materially increased in value. And, obviously, the insurance which used to be adequate may be woefully inadequate today.

Moreover, not only is your house worth more, but so is almost everything in it. Even if you have bought nothing new, the amount of fire and burglary insurance which used to be sufficient may now be far too little.

Fire and burglary insurance are not only two of the most useful forms of protection, but also two of the least costly. Why not call your Travelers agent, or your own broker, and let him bring your policies up to date—today?

MORAL: INSURE IN

The Travelers

ALL FORMS OF INSURANCE AND SURETY BONDS

The Travelers Insurance Company, The Travelers Indemnity Company, The Travelers Fire Insurance Company, The Charter Oak Fire Insurance Company, Hartford, Connecticut.

Illustration 8.1 The minstrel who loves his home

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ways that tell an audience that it should "Read! Listen! Look! Think About!" the arguing that follows.

We have reproduced a vintage example of a visual flag on the previous page.

It is a 1920s illustration of a cricket, featured in an advertisement for Travelers home insurance. The image is a *visual argument flag* because it is used to attract the reader's attention to the verbal argument that accompanied it. In the context in which it occurred, the image's success in catching its viewer's eye was enhanced by the quality of its artwork and its vividness, at a time when colour printing was rare and remarkable. Against a background that consists of pages of black and white print and advertising, the cricket picture "jumps out" at viewers and piques their interest. When they read the text, they are told that the painting depicts a field cricket building its home, a theme that introduces the idea that building homes is important, not only for crickets, but for humans.

In a case like this, the visual flag that catches our attention is just a flag and not an element of the argument. It does not give us a significant reason why we should protect our homes or consider buying Travelers insurance, functioning only as a way to direct us to the accompanying text, which presents a verbal argument.

Visual and auditory flags are increasingly common elements of everyday arguing, because technology is making it easier and easier to create them. Some flags serve only to attract attention to an argument, others do so while at the same time offering evidence for its conclusion. A shocking picture of migrants at sea may disturb us and attract our attention, while at the same time serving as evidence of their plight in an argument that infers the conclusion that we should financially support a campaign to help them.

Argument flags are relevant when you construct an argument and when you consider the arguments of others. When you argue, you can improve the chances that your reasoning will be considered by a broader audience by including an effective argument flag—verbal or non-verbal. In other cases, argument flags can help you locate and identify arguments.

The importance of the arguments attached to argument flags is sometimes forgotten by audiences who are captivated by visually or sonically clever flags and pay more attention to them than the credibility of the argument they are planted in. We all know people who want to buy a particular brand of car, or soda pop, or sneakers, because they are entranced by the advertising for it. Not because the advertisement contains a compelling argument, but because it is presented in an alluring way they find funny or attractive. In situations in which a flag is just a flag, and not a part of the argument it flags, we need to treat a flag as *noise* when we turn to argument assessment (captivating noise in many cases, but still noise).

Exercise 8-1

1. Go to your university or college website, then to the section for prospective or future students. Identify and analyze the non-verbal elements it contains (photographs,

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music, sounds of students, tone of voice, etc.). Identify argument flags. How do they and the other non-verbal aspects of the pages contribute to the overall attempt to attract students to your school?

*2. Think of a product endorsed by a famous person (e.g., YouTube star, actress, content creator, etc.). You can probably already think of an instance; or scroll social media to find a celebrity-endorsed product. Once you decide on a product and endorsement, analyze the argument flag(s) at work in the marketing with direct reference to the endorsement.

2 Modes of Presentation

We have already defined an argument as an attempt to provide evidence for a conclusion. In a purely verbal argument this evidence is presented with words and sentences. In a visual argument, images of some sort (a photograph, a video, a drawing, a blueprint, etc.) are used (usually with words as well).

Visual arguments can be stronger than purely verbal arguments, because the images they contain may provide a better account of the subject of the argument. If you want to prove that your twelve-year-old son looks just like Uncle Carlos did when he was twelve, this can best be done by comparing what he looks like to what you see when you look at an old photograph of Carlos.

Someone's statement that they performed some action—surfed a 30-foot wave, met a movie star, got their hair coloured green, etc.—is just a string of words that can be put together by anyone who speaks the language. In contrast, a trustworthy video or photograph of the claimed action provides independent visual evidence that they did what they claim to have done. This evidence is not perfect—photographs can be photoshopped—but good visual evidence is one of the strongest ways to confirm or refute purely verbal claims.

The Visual Mode

A "visual" argument has premises (or a conclusion, and sometimes premises and a conclusion) which are rooted in a visual image of some sort—in photographs, signage, a cartoon, artwork, video, gestures, pictographs, etc. In most cases, visual arguments have verbal components.

The use of visual arguments is expanding rapidly as the technology for producing and distributing images makes it easier and easier to create and distribute images. Every day we see thousands of images—in social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, etc.), magazines, public transit advertisements, newspapers, on billboards, etc. As arguers, we need to be ready to analyze and assess the images used in arguments.

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Illustration 8.2 Great Blue Heron

Let's begin with a simple example. Suppose someone who is an avid kayaker returns from a paddle on the river. "That was a wonderful paddle," they say, with a big smile on their face. When we ask them why, they show us the photograph in Illustration 8.2 and say, "I saw *this*!"

In doing so, the kayaker presents an argument, for they are backing their claim that they have had a wonderful paddle with a reason for believing that this is so. The conclusion of the argument is the claim "That was a wonderful paddle." The premise is the verbal/visual claim that "I saw *this*," where *this* is what we see when we look at the photograph.

We can represent this argument as follows.



Like any other argument, this one can be assessed using the basic principles we have already outlined for evaluating arguments: by asking whether the premise of the argument is true and whether the conclusion follows from it. It is important to note that the content of the premise is visual as well as verbal, and is defined by the image the paddler presents.

The image used in this case is a powerful way to present what the kayaker saw because it reproduces it, allowing us to "see for ourselves" what they have seen. The image could be used in another argument to identify the bird as a great blue heron, by comparing this photograph to a photograph of a great blue heron in Cornell University's guide to bird-watching, *All About Birds*. In cases of identification, images are more useful than words because they replicate what their subjects look like.

In legal cases, images can be decisive evidence offered in support of a conclusion. When the Toronto Raptors won the NBA title over the Golden State Warriors in 2019, video obtained by KTVU FOX 2 showed a county sheriff's deputy shoving Masai Ujiri,

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the president of the Toronto Raptors basketball team, during a sideline altercation at Oakland's Oracle Arena. In body-camera footage which was secured through a federal lawsuit, Ujiri is seen trying to get on the court to celebrate the Raptor's championship win before the altercation occurred. In the video, the deputy, Alan Strickland, can be seen pushing Ujiri in the chest twice before the Raptors president shoved him back.

In a lawsuit launched by Deputy Strickland against Ujiri, the former alleged he suffered "injury to his head, body, health, strength, nervous system and person, all of which caused and continue to cause great mental, physical, emotional and psychological pain and suffering." A Raptors spokesperson responded with the following statement:

> *We are mindful this remains before the courts, but we have always maintained that the claims made against Masai are baseless and entirely without merit . . . We believe this video evidence shows exactly that—Masai was not an aggressor, but instead was the recipient of two very violent, unwarranted actions.*

In the end, the *Strickland v. Ujiri* dispute was settled out of court. Both sides dropped their lawsuits. The details were never released. In our discussion it is enough to note that there are many court cases in which the visual mode of arguing is the key mode used in an attempt to prove or disprove that someone is guilty of a crime.

The kinds of images used in visual arguments come in all shapes and sizes. They are not restricted to photographic displays. In some cases, they use visual signs and symbols. In 2015, for the first time, the *Oxford Dictionary*'s "Word of the Year" was an emoji rather than a word: 😂 ("face with tears of joy"). In a discussion of multimodal communication, emojis are of special interest because they occupy a mid-point between pictures and words—attempting to visually capture facial expressions and their meanings.

Like other images, emojis (and visual expressions themselves) can play a role in visual arguments. Imagine a case in which Rashid in Edmonton texts Emma in Vancouver, advising her not to come for a planned visit in the first week of January. When Emma asks why, Rashid texts the following emoji:



Illustration 8.3 Cold face emoji

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This is a case of argument, for the emoji Rashid sends offers a reason why it may not be a good idea to visit someone in Edmonton at the beginning of January (because the experience one would have is represented by the emoji). We can diagram this simple argument as:

P1
↓
C

where:

P1 = 🥶
C = You shouldn't come for a visit.

Like our other visual example (and like any other argument), this argument can be assessed as strong or weak using the tools introduced in this book—by asking if the visual premise (the emoji) really does properly represent what it is like to be in Edmonton in the first week of January, and by asking whether it validly implies that it would not be a good place to visit. In the latter case, one might argue otherwise by contending that there are many recreational opportunities indoors, or that winter sports (skating, hockey, cross country skiing, etc.) make Edmonton a desirable winter destination.

The Auditory Mode

When we use the verbal mode of arguing, we use words and sentences to provide evidence for some conclusion. When we use the visual mode of arguing we use pictures or some other kind of image to do so. We use the "auditory" mode of arguing when we present evidence by using non-verbal sounds as evidence in support of a claim.

Consider another case of birding. We go home in the evening and our partner tells us that wild canaries (the species *serinus canaria*) were in the yard in the morning. Perhaps he will say that he didn't see them, but heard their song. If he knows their song well, this is good evidence that the birds were there. In an argument, he might prove that they visited by playing a video. When we watch it, we might see nothing but trees and dense foliage, but clearly hear the bird song.

We can diagram the auditory argument this evidence allows as follows:

P = video/audio recording
C = There were wild canaries in the yard.

P
↓
C

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If the recording in question is an accurate (and in this sense "true") recording of what happened in the morning, then **P** is an acceptable premise. If the song in question really is the song of wild canaries, then the inference to **C** is also valid. If there is a dispute about the recording or the inference (where it was recorded, what wild canaries sound like, etc.), we may need to add hidden premises to our diagram: premises that claim "This was recorded in our yard," "This is the sound of wild canaries," and so on.

Arguments which depend on sounds that function as auditory premises are common in situations in which listening provides key evidence for conclusions. Two doctors arguing about the condition of your heart may develop arguments based on what they hear when they listen to your heart with a stethoscope. Mechanics who diagnose problems with automobiles have their own version of a stethoscope designed to help them listen to an automobile engine in a way that allows them to conclude that it has this or that problem (a leaky gasket, a failing oil pump, etc.). A radio advertisement has to depend on words and on the additional cues provided by non-verbal auditory cues like tone of voice, music, etc.

Like other arguments, auditory arguments can be evaluated by asking whether their premises should be accepted (as a correct and not misleading presentation of some sound), and whether we can reasonably infer the conclusion from it. This means that auditory arguments, like verbal and visual arguments, can be strong or weak, good or bad.

A 2021 incident that received a great deal of media attention occurred in St. George, Utah, when police were told of gunshots near an elementary school. The evidence they and others were directed to was a popping sound interpreted as the sound of a gun. This is an auditory argument, the sound leading to a conclusion: that a shooter was on the loose. In response, the Police Department dispatched twenty officers to secure the nearby schools.

In the investigation that followed, the popping sound was confirmed but investigators determined that the police and those who reported it had mistakenly (i.e., invalidly) inferred that it was the sound of a gun. As it turned out, the source was not a gun, but "a backfiring, late-80s Ford pickup truck."

Auditory arguments are not as common as visual arguments but they are still common. When an academic music program considers applications for admissions, it considers past experience, marks, and accomplishments, but serious music schools also conduct auditions. They do so because the best way to know whether someone plays an instrument or sings with exceptional ability is by *listening* to them perform. After they have listened, the judges will probably discuss what they have heard, in ways that use particular segments of their performance (quite possibly recorded) to support the conclusion that the performer should or should not be admitted to their program.

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Illustration 8.4

Exercise 8-2

*1. The image above is a road sign on Highway 407 in Toronto. It is part of a provincial campaign against driving high. The advertisement contains a visual argument. What is the conclusion? What are the premises? Diagram the argument, indicating the premises and the inferences it includes. How strong an argument is it? Explain your answer.

2. The following link will take you to an advertisement for the Audi R8 V10 that was used in movie theatres. Standardize, diagram, and discuss the auditory argument it presents (to experience the full cinematic impact, be sure to turn up the volume on your computer when you listen to it!). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XflP9D53slY

3. In a society where words are valued, we might not be used to interpreting images to convey arguments. We do this more than we realize though. Think about a virtual disagreement you have had or witnessed that made use of gifs or other non-verbal communication. Explain how the non-verbal communication presented an argument—standardize the argument.