

## Critical Review

### *Arguing With People*

by Michael A. Gilbert

Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2014. Pp. 1-12, front matter; 13-137. Paper, \$CDN 19.95 ISBN 9-781554-811700

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#### 1. Introduction

The thesis of Michael Gilbert's *Arguing with People* is that the recent developments in theorizing about argumentation have brought us past the focus on the logic of individual arguments understood as pieces of reasoning or advocacy (which is all very well), to a much-needed additional focus on the properties of arguments understood as interactions between people engaged in negotiating disagreements. It is much needed, he says, because these engagements—people arguing with one another—are where arguing really matters, where we form our opinions and where we can have an influence. This change in focus calls for many more features to come into play and, consequently, for a richer and more complicated understanding of arguments with people than the earlier focus afforded.

Although *Arguing with People* appeared three years ago, it is as timely today as ever, and will be tomorrow. It's a little book, with only 104 pages of text (along with front matter, 19 pages of exercises, a bibliography and an index), but it's loaded with insights and good advice. To my mind there are a few questionable bits, but if you read it through, I think you will come away from it agreeing with the high-powered line-up of endorsements on the back cover:

*Arguing with People* invites its readers to reflect on the varied purposes of argumentation, while at the same time calling for reflection on the manifold physical, social, emotional, and spiritual resources that are drawn into the journey from disagreement to the meeting of minds. —G. Thomas Goodnight

*Arguing with People* makes good reading. It is a practical introduction to the background that Argumentation Theory provides to Critical Thinking. Written in a highly accessible style, it gives a clear overview of various relevant insights. . . . —Frans H. van Eemeren

Gilbert's *Arguing with People* interjects the person-centredness of argumentation studies into the rigors of critical thinking projects. Gilbert is both a philosopher and a novelist, and this book displays both precision and intuitive insight. —Dale Hample

Following an Introduction, the book is divided into three chapters: 1. All about arguments (21 pages), 2. All about arguers (22 pages), and 3. Arguing with people (44 pages)—the first two providing preliminary material for the third, the main event, though they stand on their own as independent essays.

## 2. Chapter 1 All about arguments

A striking and admirable feature of Chapter 1 is how Gilbert has woven a tapestry incorporating many of the diverse theoretical insights developed in the rich past half-century and more of argumentation theory. Thus we find Wenzel's distinction between argument as product, process and procedure; D.J. O'Keefe's argument<sub>1</sub> and argument<sub>2</sub>; the trio of logic, dialectic and rhetoric; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's new rhetoric; Tindale's emphasis on the importance of rhetoric; argumentation theory; Walton's dialogue types (heuristic inquiry, negotiation, persuasion, quarrel); Pragma-dialectic's four stages of argumentation; Brockriede's arguers as lovers, seducers or rapists; Johnson's dialectical tier; Johnson and Blair's relevance, acceptability and sufficiency criteria; Gilbert's earlier contribution of modes of argument and coalescent argument; the roles of emotion in argument; gender and argument; and more. Gilbert doesn't worry whether these threads form a consistent pattern, and dealing with that worry is a task for another book.

However, this chapter is one place where a few details give pause. For instance, in laying out Wenzel's three perspec-

tives on argument—logic, dialectic and rhetoric—Gilbert describes dialectic as “the study of arguments geared to finding the truth.” He adds: “unlike logic, which focuses on the structure of individual arguments, and examines them for specific logical properties, dialectic looks at arguments as they ought to occur between people” (p. 22). Well, logic also applies to arguments as they occur, and as they ought to occur, between people, but one can see what Gilbert is trying to get at: a dialectical perspective focuses on how arguers ought to interact and on which arguments to use to get at the truth (or agreement) in a discussion, whereas a logical perspective focuses on the quality of the individual arguments that are used in such discussions. He makes this clear later in Chapter 3. However, seeing the point here requires already being familiar with Wenzel’s distinction.

Gilbert should be applauded for using the concept of arguments as products without falling prey to the temptation, which I think Goddu (2011) has persuasively rebutted, that they are the products of the process of arguing.

When he introduces rhetoric, Gilbert ascribes to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca the view that “*we can never be sure if we do or do not have the truth*” (p. 23; his italics). I have not been able to find where they have made this surprising assertion, but in any case, it is absurd. He also says that “Rhetoricians ... don’t believe that we know for certain when we have it [the truth]” (*ibid.*). I very much doubt that rhetoricians make such a claim. “‘Really’ has six letters.”; “ $5 + 7 = 12$ ”; “Hillary Clinton conceded victory in the 2016 presidential election in the United States to Donald Trump.”; “Millions of Jews were murdered by the Nazi regime during WWII.”—five statements that are true, and you and I are sure they are true. There are untold numbers of examples of when we can be sure that we do, or that we do not, have the truth. Isn’t the point, instead, that rhetoricians hold that argument is how we do, or should, attempt to make decisions and resolve differences in those matters in which truth is not what’s at issue or is impossible to ascertain?

On the topic of emotional arguments, Gilbert writes:

Some scholars in the area of Critical Thinking and even in Argumentation Theory would have you believe that arguments are intended to be quiet and orderly discussions with careful turn-taking and great attention to precisely what has been said. Not only are such arguments the exception rather than the rule, but they can also hide a great deal of important information, feelings, values and ideas. I call this the *Critical-Logical* model. (Pp. 26-27.)

Does Gilbert have in mind the use of “ideal” models in argumentation theory? I don’t believe they are intended as prescriptions for carrying out arguments with people. But Gilbert asserts that this makes a useful model for teaching Critical Thinking (whatever Critical Thinking is; he hasn’t told the reader); it just “does not really apply when arguing with people” (p. 27). Note how critical thinking and logic are associated by the hyphen of “the *Critical-Logical* model”, and both relegated to the “not really useful” category when it comes to arguing with people. In the next sentence he introduces the term “clinical arguments”—“arguments with a minimum of emotion” (*ibid.*). How are clinical arguments related to the Critical-Logical model? He doesn’t say.

In any case, Gilbert rightly stresses the roles emotions play in arguing with people. We argue because we care about something, he asserts. Caring about something is having an affective attitude towards it, and an affect is an emotion (Gilbert assumes the reader knows what count as emotions). He gives an example of “emotion ... used to advantage” in arguing with people. Natalie is negotiating a price for an order of widgets. In order to get a better price, she fakes reluctance in conceding a negotiating point that she had planned all along to concede. Gilbert says she is using reluctance rhetorically (p. 25). The fact that one can affect an argument by faking an emotion shows that emotions can play a role.

Another example is supposed to be of emotion affecting decision-making (which is relevant, Gilbert says, because “many arguments are about making decisions”) (p. 25). Gilbert is on campus at Toronto’s York University and trying to decide where to go for lunch. He doesn’t entertain the thought of going to New York or to San Francisco for lunch because, he says, “emotionally it’s not an option” (*ibid.*). The impracticality of going to New York or San Francisco for lunch isn’t what causes him to dismiss them from consideration, he says, for they are, after all, “logically...possibilities” (*ibid.*). Instead, it’s that his experience has taught him “that they just don’t feel right” (p. 26). “So emotion keeps us from floundering in a sea of alternatives by marking them as unreasonable.” I must say that I find this to be a strange example to illustrate the point.

Also, “when arguing it is often emotion that lets you know what is and is not relevant” (*ibid.*). This might seem improbable, but the reader has to remember that Gilbert is thinking here of arguing with people, and what relevance pertains to there is the meaning or significance of a communication of some type from one’s discussion partner, like a frown or arms folded across his

chest, not the probative relevance of an argument understood as a product.

In a few dense pages Gilbert introduces a flurry of distinctions bearing on the role of emotion in argument. “Emotion is an integral part of every argument,” we learn (p. 24), and yet there’s a continuum between being emotional and being “clinical” (i.e., non-emotional). There’s an “emotional vs. logical” distinction, which, I gather, is not a continuum since an argument can be emotional and logical, or clinical (i.e., emotionless) and illogical. There’s an “orderly-chaotic” continuum. Arguments are orderly when the parties listen to each other and speak in turns; they’re chaotic when the parties don’t listen to each other, interrupt one another, or chime in with irrelevancies. A bit of chaos can be good. An argument can be logical and yet, if lacking “feelings, emotions or human considerations”, be immoral. The arguments being referenced here, remember, are arguings, not reason-claim pairs.

Gilbert makes nice use of the Pragma-dialectical approach’s four stages of arguments: the confrontation stage, where disagreements are voiced; the opening stage, where rules and procedures and common ground are agreed upon (usually tacitly); the argumentation stage, “where the actual argument takes place, where reasons are put forward and claims defended, objections are made and answered, and premises and conclusions tracked and followed” (p. 34); and the concluding stage, where the differences that started the whole thing are either resolved, settled, or suspended (pp. 30-35). I’m glad to report that Gilbert’s use of the four stages is a user-friendly adaptation of the strict Pragma-dialectical divisions. He illustrates with realistic and illuminating examples, showing how, in an argument you’re having with someone, it can be fruitful to attend to where you are in terms of these stages.

The activity of arguing with people gets even more complicated, Gilbert says, once the fact that there are different *kinds* of argument is taken into account (pp. 36-47). He has in mind Douglas Walton’s six types of dialogue, of which he selects the inquiry dialogue, the negotiation and the persuasion dialogue for close attention. For Gilbert, an *inquiry* dialogue occurs when two parties (“dialogue partners”, also termed “dispute partners”) with no hidden axe to grind, beyond a mutual desire to figure out what’s true or best or advised, consider the options and their pros and cons with an entirely open mind, and being up front with their interests, goals, and stakes in the matter. This happens so rarely, Gilbert thinks, that he dubs it a “pure inquiry”; and he also calls it a “heuristic inquiry” to emphasize that it is

people with goals and interests who are the dialogue partners trying to discover the best answer or solution. The key distinguishing features of *negotiations* are that the parties have different, often conflicting, goals, and that these goals are not revealed. Each dialogue partner cares most about getting what he or she wants out of the argument. In *persuasion* dialogues, one of the parties has a goal, solution, value or belief he or she wants the other party to accept. Such dialogues vary in degrees along a continuum from heuristic to eristic (geared towards winning at all costs).

Gilbert ends the first chapter with a section distinguishing argument from polemics, which he defines as speeches to audiences that agree with the speaker and “designed to make a point aggressively and without being open to disagreement” (p. 47). The polemicist who brooks no dissent is a fanatic, says Gilbert, and is not worth arguing with. But speech making doesn’t fare much better. The trouble with speeches, for Gilbert, is that they cannot be interactive and engage individuals’ questions, arguments, objections and counter-arguments. I think this condemnation of speeches is a little extreme. After all, books—like this one—are like long speeches in many of these respects.

The point of all these distinctions is that in arguing with people it is important to keep them all in mind. What’s the nature of the argument you’re in? Is it an inquiry (if so, how pure is it), negotiation (if so, what are the parties’ objectives?), or persuasion? What stage of the argument are you in, and are you both in the same stage? What emotions are in play, how strong are they, and how are your and your discussion partner’s emotions affecting your arguing? And so on.

A word of warning. Gilbert makes references to “the Critical Thinking course or workshop you’ve taken” throughout Chapter 1, and indeed, throughout the book. A theme of the book is that this Critical Thinking course (or workshop) does not prepare one nearly well enough for arguing with people, and in fact this book’s purpose is to fill this unmet need. Gilbert simply assumes that the reader knows what a “Critical Thinking” (always in caps) course or workshop teaches. He nowhere says what he means by “Critical Thinking” or by ‘critical thinking’.

What he has in mind by this reference can be guessed at based on the teachings he ascribes to such courses or workshops. They teach how to parse the structure of the arguments used in arguing, and how to assess their logical cogency. In other words, by ‘critical thinking’ he means applied logic, also known as informal logic. This does not become fully clear until the final chapter. So the careful reader has to adjust on the fly to

the fact that in this book “Critical Thinking” does not denote what many definitions in the literature take critical thinking to consist of.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Chapter 2 All about arguers

Chapter 1 has dealt with many of the complexities of concepts of argument; Chapter 2 turns to many of the complexities related to arguers.

According to Gilbert, we mostly argue with “familiar” — people we know — so the opening stage can need little attention. It also means arguers share a language, with familiar terminology, and they mostly understand the context that supplies much of the meaning and the nuances of their communications.

Gilbert emphasizes the importance of the fact that people arguing with each other have goals they want to achieve from the arguing, usually more than one and often several, most of which are unexpressed and some of which the participants aren’t even aware of themselves; and these goals are often different from the claim over which they are arguing. For instance there are relationship goals. I might be arguing with you over what should be cut back to meet our budget shortfall, but I need to cooperate with you on the planning committee, so I don’t embarrass you in front of our co-workers when you get your figures mixed up (my example). Some goals are deliberately hidden, especially in negotiation dialogues.

Gilbert revisits his theory, expounded in his book *Coalescent Argumentation* (1997), that there are different *modes* of argument. He doesn’t explain here (or there) what he means by a “mode”; the reader has to work that out. I think Gilbert’s “modes” are different from the visual mode/verbal mode distinction made in work on visual argument, or its expansion into multi-modal argument in general. There a mode seems to be a vehicle or medium of communication, e.g., via words or via pictures (or via odors, or sounds, or tastes, or touch).

Gilbert’s first mode is the *logical* mode, yet logic isn’t a means of communication. By “logical” arguments Gilbert means linear arguments, with identifiable premises and conclusions. I don’t think he means ‘logical’ in its more usual sense, meaning cogent. If you look up ‘linear’, you find that it means “arranged in a straight or nearly straight line” or “progressing from one

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<sup>1</sup> See, *inter alia*, Dewey (1910), Glaser (1941), Ennis (1958), McPeck (1981), Paul (1990), Siegel (1988), Lipman (2003), Facione (1992), Fisher & Scriven (1997) for different views of the nature of critical thinking.

stage to another in a single series of steps”. So is a mode an internal structural property of how an argument is organized and proceeds, so that if it is logical, it proceeds step-by-step in a straight line from the initial premises to the conclusion? Gilbert says almost every argument product or process “has at least some logical aspect to it” (p. 58). But that doesn’t quite square with the next kind of mode, the *emotional* mode: “We all send and receive emotional signals that carry important meaning” (*ibid.*), transmitted via “words, tone, context, posture and expression”. I can readily imagine being in an argument with someone in which such emotions as anxiety, impatience, hostility, contempt, sympathy, exuberance, enjoyment, embarrassment are communicated in all sorts of ways. But these don’t describe the way the argument is organized or structured. They are attitudes towards the context or the contents; they are not properties of the internal structure of the argument. Yet Gilbert calls both logic and emotions “modes”.

The third mode, the visceral “includes all aspects of the argument that are physical or circumstantial” (p. 5). This includes the setting, the physical configuration of the arguers, or gestures, such as making sure one’s discussion partner is comfortable. “It is the arena in which power roles, gender roles, social roles, as well as actions and events are at play” (p. 59). An example: if we disagree over which of us is the faster runner, we stage a race, and Gilbert calls this race a visceral mode of argument (pp. 59-60). So if we disagree about how a word is spelled and look it up in a dictionary, is looking it up a visceral mode of argument? If you’re my boss and we meet to discuss the raise I’m asking for, if you arrange the room so that you are sitting on a high chair behind a big desk with your face in shadow, and I’m sitting on a low bench in front of your desk with a bright light in my eyes, those features will no doubt make a difference to how our arguing proceeds, Gilbert is surely right about that; but in what sense are these features a “mode” of the arguing? And are they all things of the same kind—are they species of the same genus?

The fourth mode, the *kisceral*, Gilbert also terms a “realm” (p. 65). He speaks of kisceral beliefs, which include, for instance, believing in angels, or goblins, or demons, or God. The belief that a sacred text comes from God is a kisceral belief. Trusting one’s hunches, intuitions, instincts or feelings is kisceral. When arguing involves such matters, it is necessary that the participants share respect for this realm of beliefs and argue within its assumptions. This “mode” seems to consist of non-



rational (not ‘irrational’) or perhaps a better way to put it, non-evidential, kinds of support.

I am not a fan of Gilbert’s “modes of argument” talk. I think I see what he’s getting at. These things—logic, emotion, physicality and the non-rational—can be ways of *trying to influence* a person. (Reasons and evidence, but also emotional appeals to pity, or aggressive *ad hominem*s, or earnest appeals to the authority of the Bible or of the Koran or appeals to one’s intuitions are examples.) But are all the modes ways of *arguing* for a viewpoint with a person whom one wants to convince? I understand arguing as one way of trying to influence someone, but to my mind not all kinds of attempts to influence are arguments. This might just be a point of difference between Gilbert and me. My concept of argument ties arguing to reason-giving; Gilbert’s seems to be broader. But also, some of these “modes” seem not to be ways of trying to influence a discussion partner, but are instead ways of conveying one’s attitude towards how the discussion is going. Some manifestations of emotion (for instance, expressions of impatience, anger, anxiety) belong in this category. Gilbert makes a good case that it’s important to be able to “read” these signals so as to adapt your argument in ways that take them into account, but they are not all kinds of reasons why a claim is true or is false, or why it should or should not be accepted.

Gilbert pleads that when arguing with people we should aim for and focus on coalescence—points of agreement—rather than on points of disagreement: “The best arguments, like the best business deals, always end with everyone feeling like they came out on top” (p. 62). This requires listening, and listening not just to the words uttered, but also listening to what there is in the disagreement beyond what’s said: listening for the emotional message, for the person’s various goals, for the kind of dispute and what stage it is at. When addressing an audience, it means attending to what Tindale (2004) has called *the mutual cognitive environment* (e.g., what you all know or believe and what you all share in taking for granted). The areas of agreement you find provide the opportunity for resolving the disagreement that gave rise to the argument. Gilbert advises following this rule: always try to be more heuristic than your argument partner (pp. 65-66).

With the information from Chapters 1 and 2 as background, Chapter 3 proceeds with advice about how to argue with people, particularly in ways “that can foster agreement and good argument” (p. 73).

#### 4. Chapter 3 Arguing with people

In the introduction to the third chapter, Gilbert notes an implication of there being various kinds of, and perspectives on, argument, namely, that there will be *different kinds of good argument*. In others words, an argument can be a good argument of one kind without being a good argument of all kinds; it can be good from one perspective but not from another. I think this is an important point. It is frequently not recognized and students are mis-educated to think there is only one set of criteria for a good argument.

In 3.1, “Heuristic, ethos and audience”, Gilbert observes that arguments vary in various ways, including these two: (1) according to how heuristic or eristic the participants are (itself a function of the topic, the personal history between arguers, power conflicts, gender relations, the moods of participants, whether one is threatened or not, the goals, objectives and beliefs of the participants, and the need to appear conciliatory or confrontational); and (2) according to perceptions by discussants of one another’s ethos (that is, their reputation, character, honesty, reliability, and track record—all of which in turn can vary with the topic and situation). We try to adjust our projected ethos to the expectations of the audience.

The next section, “Watching the process,” advises that in arguing with people, you need to Pay Attention! and, in particular, attend to (a) what your interlocutor is saying (meaning of his/her message) and, *at the same time*, to (b) the person arguing with you. Pay attention to what is being said, how it is said, and who is saying it (their goals, objectives, beliefs and feelings). Often one’s discussion partner is unsure of his or her goals. You need to be able to figure out what the goals are. And it’s essential to monitor the emotions (your discussion partner’s and your own). Here trust your instincts.

Gilbert introduces the metaphor popularized by the title of Quine and Ullian’s eponymous handbook, *The Web of Belief*, to explain why we find it so difficult to change our beliefs. Our beliefs support one another, and at the centre they hook up to firmly held fundamental beliefs. Nevertheless, Gilbert maintains, the most important belief you can have is: “No matter what—you may [i.e., might] be wrong”. “Everything,” he goes on to assert, “can be false” (p. 85). As I’ve already indicated, I’m skeptical of such roundhouse swings. I’m much happier with Gilbert’s more modest declaration: “... we should always be prepared to change, improve and alter [our beliefs and val-

ues]” (p. 85). I only wish he had added, “... in the light of powerful evidence or good reasons to the contrary.”

The attitude of a willingness to change your mind is important for arguing with people, Gilbert says, because “if you go into a situation believing that you have the truth and can’t be wrong, your ability to listen will be greatly diminished” (p. 86). If you’re open to the possibility that your dispute partner might be right, you might be able to accommodate his or her views; in negotiation, respecting the other side’s goals can help make progress; in heuristic inquiries, the ability to appreciate the way your partner sees the world can help “get the best answer” (*ibid.*).

Gilbert introduces two sets of rules that he recommends to guide arguing with people, although he is at pains to insist that while these rules do apply, one is well-advised to recognize that they have exceptions and that they are not to be blindly followed.

One set is the rules of formal and informal logic taught in the typical “Critical Thinking” course. While a student in a course calling for detailed analyses of arguments and close evaluations of their logic might think this sort of effort won’t be applicable outside the classroom, Gilbert argues that such a course attunes one’s senses for arguments and triggers one’s mind to spot both flaws and virtues in arguments. An aspect of close argument analysis and assessment is the requirement that it be free, open and fair. Arguers should be free to assert and to criticize, open to objections, and balanced in their critical judgments.

The other set of rules are the norms governing behaviour in social interactions. For the purposes of arguing with people, “The rules are formed from the matrix that is a blend of where you are, who the participants are, and what personal and power relationships are in play” (p. 91).

The ideal rules of formal and informal logic assume a level playing field, but in practice in social interactions there are always relationship goals in play. Moreover, we don’t always know what those rules are (p. 92). While we use all sorts of devices—among others: word choice, tone of voice, body position—to achieve our argument goals, we draw the line at using what we know to be bad arguments that will embarrass us, or such things as ridicule and insults that will alienate our argument partner (pp. 93-94).

Gilbert thinks there will be consensus around the following traits of an ideal arguer. *Reasonable*—she holds that evidence is important, arguments matter; and that what we want to

be true or want to believe is not thereby made true. *Undogmatic*—she is open to the possibility of being wrong and prepared to entertain arguments that undercut our own or that show we are mistaken. *A Good Listener*—she wants to understand your position and hears your arguments. And *Empathetic*—she respects your emotional commitment to your position and tries to see things from your point of view. These are the traits one would like to find in one’s audience; they underlie what Gilbert calls the “Golden Rule of Argumentation”, which is: “argue with someone as you would want to be argued with” (p. 95).

The rules of arguing with people are changeable and flexible, as determined by audience and context.

When arguing with familiars, you know through experience their goals and their beliefs, their ethos, and their rules. You are in a position to enter your audience’s world, “and relying on their values to begin creating an adherence to an outcome you are both happy with” (p. 98). You also appreciate the need to maintain your own ethotic standing so as to be trustworthy in future exchanges.

When arguing with people who are not familiars, Gilbert advises, politeness and respect are likely to be reciprocated. Whether the context is social/casual or business/commercial, there is a likelihood you will meet the person again, so establishing and maintaining an ethos of reliability is advisable. Use clues about the person and the developing interaction to figure out the rules that might vary from those you use in arguing with familiars. It seldom hurts to be seen as reasonable. To be sure, some people are super-eristics who won’t be contradicted, and not much can be done about them.

It’s Gilbert’s conviction that the best way for an argument to end is with agreement, whether it be a heuristic inquiry, a persuasion dialogue, or a negotiation (p. 102). The goal is not agreement by any means, but by mutually agreed-upon rules and beginning from mutually agreed-upon starting points. This common ground can be revisited if the argument becomes stuck.

Finding common ground requires the effort of listening empathetically to the other person’s assertions so as to ascertain “the beliefs, values, goals and feelings associated with them” (p. 105). Two sorts of rules apply to the arguing. One consists of meeting the criteria for a logically cogent argument, such as acceptable and relevant premises, and the right kinds and quantity of evidence. The other consists of the procedural rules negotiated by the arguers that have as their inspiration the four characteristics of the ideal arguer (being reasonable, un-dogmatic, a good listener and empathetic). Spotting errors in the partner’s

reasoning can convey information about his or her beliefs and attitudes, appreciation of which can then help get around barriers to agreement (p. 106).

At the end of section 3.6, Gilbert puts in a nutshell the lessons he hopes to have conveyed. His advice is: become comfortable with applying your skills of argument analysis and evaluation (my version of “your Critical Thinking skills”), and in addition:

- be aware of the stage of the argument
- be aware of the primary mode the argument is in
- begin by behaving like an ideal arguer
- begin by assuming your partner is an ideal arguer
- allow the context and your partner to reveal the rules being followed
- seek points of basic agreement in order to build adherence
- always include your partner’s goals and respect your partner’s values.

Gilbert closes Chapter 3 with three invented examples of different situations in which people argue with each other. Although invented, the examples are highly realistic: they read like transcripts of unscripted arguments. Gilbert shows an argument going awry, then shows a better route taken. He models in practice the advice just summarized. By concretizing the lessons the book has been written to convey, he brings them to life.

## 5. Conclusion

The book is cleanly designed, and contains healthy number of exercises for each chapter, a useful index and list of further readings. Addressed to students, it is clearly and engagingly written. The instructor will notice some repetition, but I think it is pedagogically justified. The only editing slips I spotted, minor embarrassments, are these two: we learn in Chapter 2 that “Context is everything” on page 55, then on page 65 that “Audience is everything”; and, on page 87, Gilbert announces, “I will use the terms ‘rules’ and ‘norms’ interchangeably”, whereas on page 93 he says, “Norms are customs that are followed in different contexts, and they may or may not mirror the rules.”

In *Arguing With People*, Gilbert is at pains to point out that, and how, the standard course in which students begin to study arguments is typically not concerned with arguing with people. While skill in handling the material taught in this

course—the logical analysis and evaluation of arguments as objects—is necessary for arguing well with people, it is very far from sufficient. I think he makes a compelling case for this point. Gilbert gives this standard course a label. He calls it the *Critical Thinking* course. He writes as if his student readers will know exactly what he is referring to and perhaps they will, for this course is widely, if not universally, called the Critical Thinking course. Or, to put it the right way around, what is typically taught in courses labeled “Critical Thinking” is the analysis and evaluation of arguments as objects.

Still, I wish Gilbert had not chosen to go along with conventional usage in this way, for two reasons. First, just as the so-called Critical Thinking course—the one teaching argument analysis and evaluation—is not sufficient for teaching one how to argue with people, it is equally not sufficient for teaching one how to think critically, despite its label. Routine argument analysis and evaluation does not require critical thinking. It requires good thinking, just as routine literary criticism, routine scientific thinking, routine problem solving, etc., all require good thinking. But if “critical thinking” is to be a useful concept and not just a puffed up way of saying “good thinking,” it must denote something more. The “more,” I would submit, has to do with self-consciously reflective interpretive and evaluative judgment, a constant informed and skilled meta-analysis, which is applied as appropriate to any and all objects of thought (not just to arguments), one’s own no less than others’; that is what ‘critical’ adds to ‘thinking’. To blur the difference between critical thinking so understood and routine argument analysis and assessment is unfortunate.

My second reason for regretting Gilbert’s acquiescence to the popular misuse of the term ‘critical thinking’ is that it results in a lost opportunity—the opportunity to associate what this book describes and prescribes with critical thinking properly understood. For what Gilbert has produced in *Arguing With People* is a sophisticated, detailed, and operational account of the skills and attitudes entailed in arguing with people *as a critical thinker would*. The extraordinary sensitivity to the argument goals and emotions of one’s arguing partner that he calls for, the recognition and exploitation of complex argument types, stages and the moves appropriate to them that he advocates, and the humility in such interactions that he urges (the difficulty of all of which he rightly emphasizes)—these are critical thinking skills and attitudes of high order required for effective arguing with people.

I recommend assigning this book as supplementary reading for a critical thinking course *and also* for an informal logic course. Any caveats I have are minor and can be used as learning opportunities in class.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> My thanks to Ralph Johnson and Christopher Tindale for comments, suggestions and corrections.