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English 103

Argument as Inquiry

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<div align="center">Argument as Inquiry</div>

"Sometimes the purpose of an argument is to generate truth, which will then resonate with an audience and be persuasive, but persuasion is the by-product and not the goal" (Weeblog).

As a society, the importance of communication and the never ending search for truth has motivated great scholars and thinkers alike to express their ideas and values in the form of an argument.   As seen from the quote above, the form of an argument not only serves a purpose in generating truth, but also in understanding perspectives and as a mode of relaying information.

Truth to most is a relative term. So then how is it possible to successfully argue a truth?   The book, everything's an argument provides a clear answer to this paradox, "the point of argument is to discover some version of the truth, using evidence and reasons…The aim of persuasion is to change a point of view, or to move others from conviction to action. In other words, writers or speakers argue to find some truth; they persuade when they think they already know it" (Lunsford 6). Therefore, the method of presenting an argument does not necessarily mean the presenter must convince his audience, but simply provide absolute facts. As this varies from culture to culture, the response to a well argued truth can be a simple,

quiet acceptance, or a heated debate. Most importantly however, is that in presenting a truth, the speaker or writer is using this argument as a mode of inquiry not only towards those that experience his argument, but towards himself as well. These personal arguments can be seen in a deep meditation or in prayer, and can also be used in a personal decision making. As a result, this purpose for an argument not only helps the speaker to understand the truths and beliefs of others in the world around him, but also increasing his ability to question himself.

Understanding perspectives is a very humbling and challenging way to argue. Carl Rogers, a successful psychotherapist who founded the Rogerian argument, achieved a method which "is based on finding common ground and establishing trust among those who disagree about issues, and on approaching audiences in nonthreatening ways" (Lunsford 6).   For that reason, the success of the argument is founded not only in trust but also on the grounds of first understanding others' perspectives and principles; encouraging the opponent to genuinely listen and learn from what is said.

With a foundation of truth and understanding, an argument can be valued in its ability to provide convincing evidence and information. Philosopher Aristotle "provides an elegant scheme for classifying the purposes of arguments, one based on issues of time – past, future, and present" (Lunsford 10), also known as forensic arguments. Many lawyers, politicians, and great speakers use evidence, policies, and facts from the past to support or justify their present argument.   These arguments can focus not only on scientific, religious values, but on existing ethical and cultural differences as well.   There are a variety of ways that different cultures

handle legal systems, and thus various ways of presenting arguments. For instance, the Muslim religion and culture disparages and scorns women who refute or defy the authority of their husbands. Whereas the cultural ideals of American society encourage women to think for themselves, and challenge their husbands – often times with arguments.

The ability to understand different cultures can be found in their own method of argument. Additionally, using arguments from the past can serve as a fountain of information and truth, as well provide a solid foundation and validate future arguments.

Works Cited

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