

Reason and Rationality in the Post-Pandemic Era

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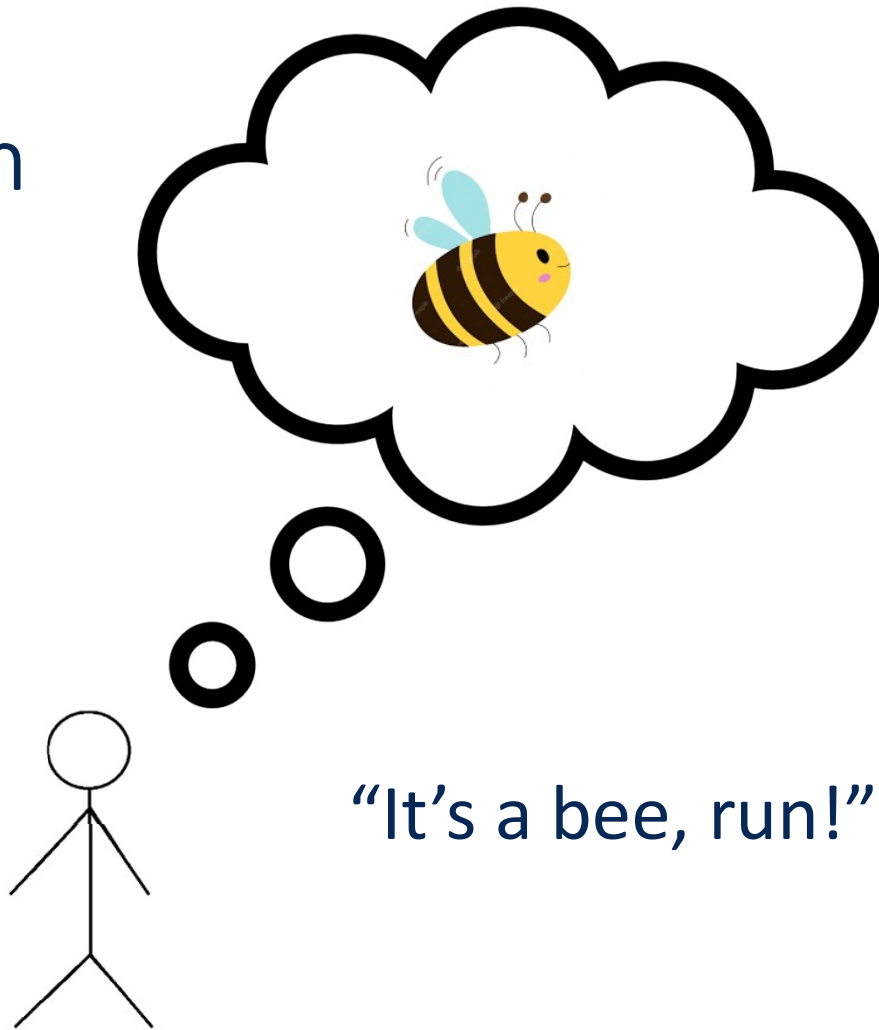
“For the ability to understand comes from God...where do my errors originate, then?”

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS OF REASON?
- HOW DOES REASONING WORK IN POLITICS?
- WHAT ARE THE FLAWS OF REASON?
- HOW DO THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA EXACERBATE REASON'S FLAWS?
- ARE THERE WAYS WE CAN IMPROVE OUR REASONING ESPECIALLY ON THE INTERNET?

How we reason

- Animals (humans as well) can make intuitive inferences

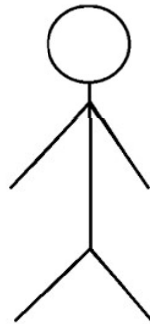


"It's a bee, run!"



How we reason

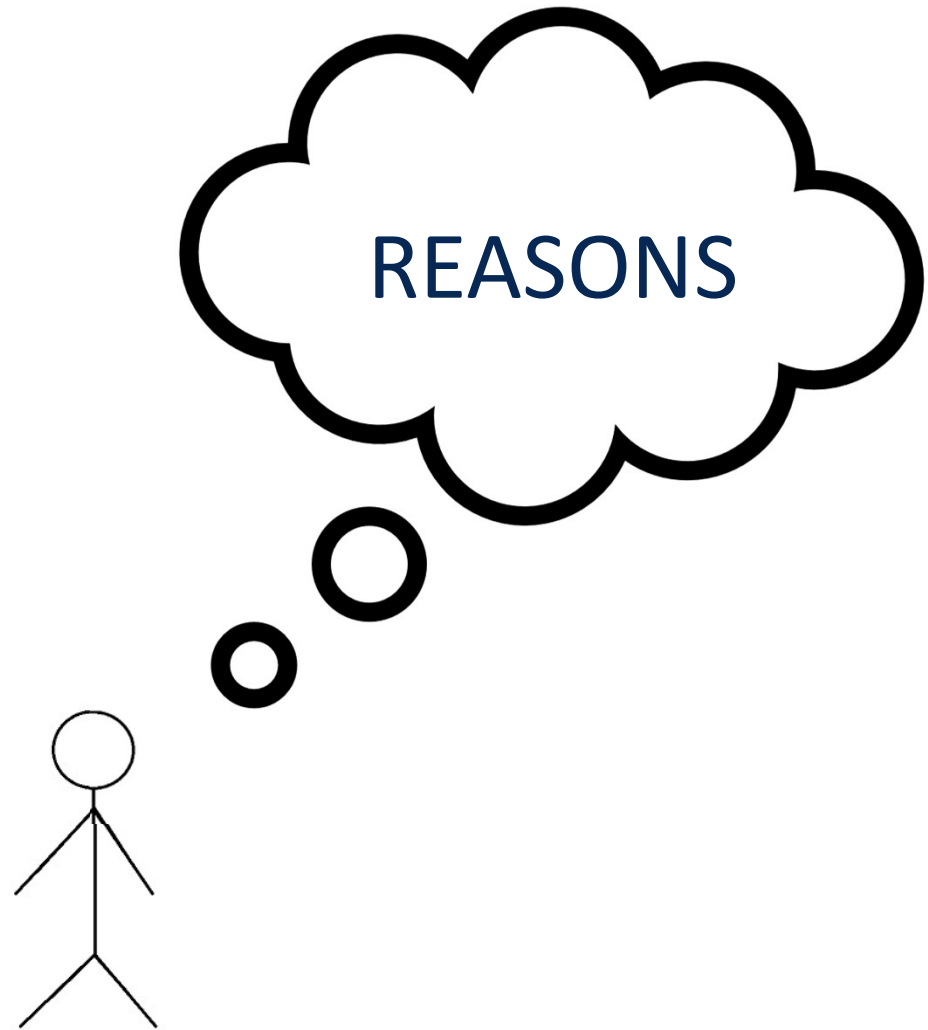
- Animals (humans as well) can make intuitive inferences
- **Represent external things in the mind**



- **Judgments about these internal representations**
- **Intuitively produce representations of representations i.e., *metarepresentations***

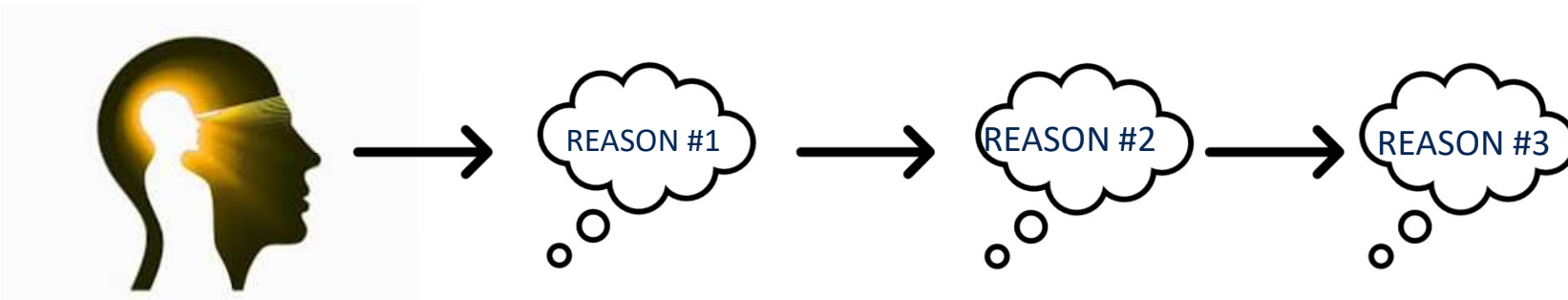
How we reason

- We can instinctively represent reasons in the mind
- Reasons are used to justify our intuitions
- We can evaluate the strength of reasons



Function #1: Justification

- Reason justifies intuitions, actions, opinions, and beliefs
- First, we have an intuition, then reason comes in to justify it





“what looked like pushing, what looked like knocking down, was a safety precaution.”

“I was trying to lead the way.”



“in a fire, you stay close to the ground.”



Function #2 Argumentation

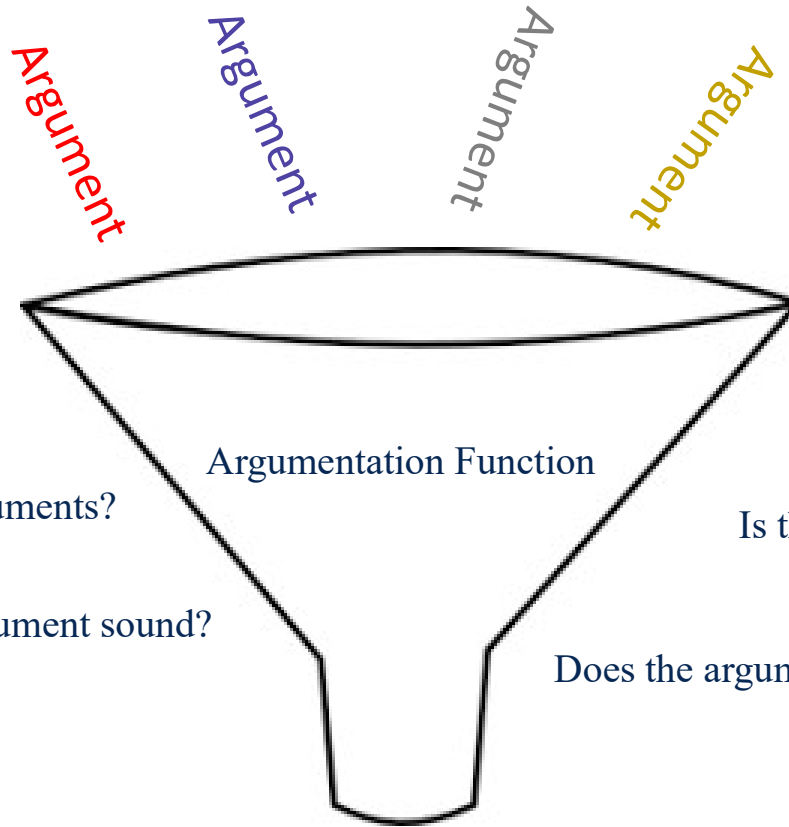
- We use reason to evaluate others' arguments
- Argumentation is **interactive**
- We can easily find flaws in other arguments (especially ones we don't agree with)



Results of Argumentation

1. Arguments are refined (better reasons are found)
2. The argument is abandoned





Argument

Argument

Argument

Argument

Argumentation Function

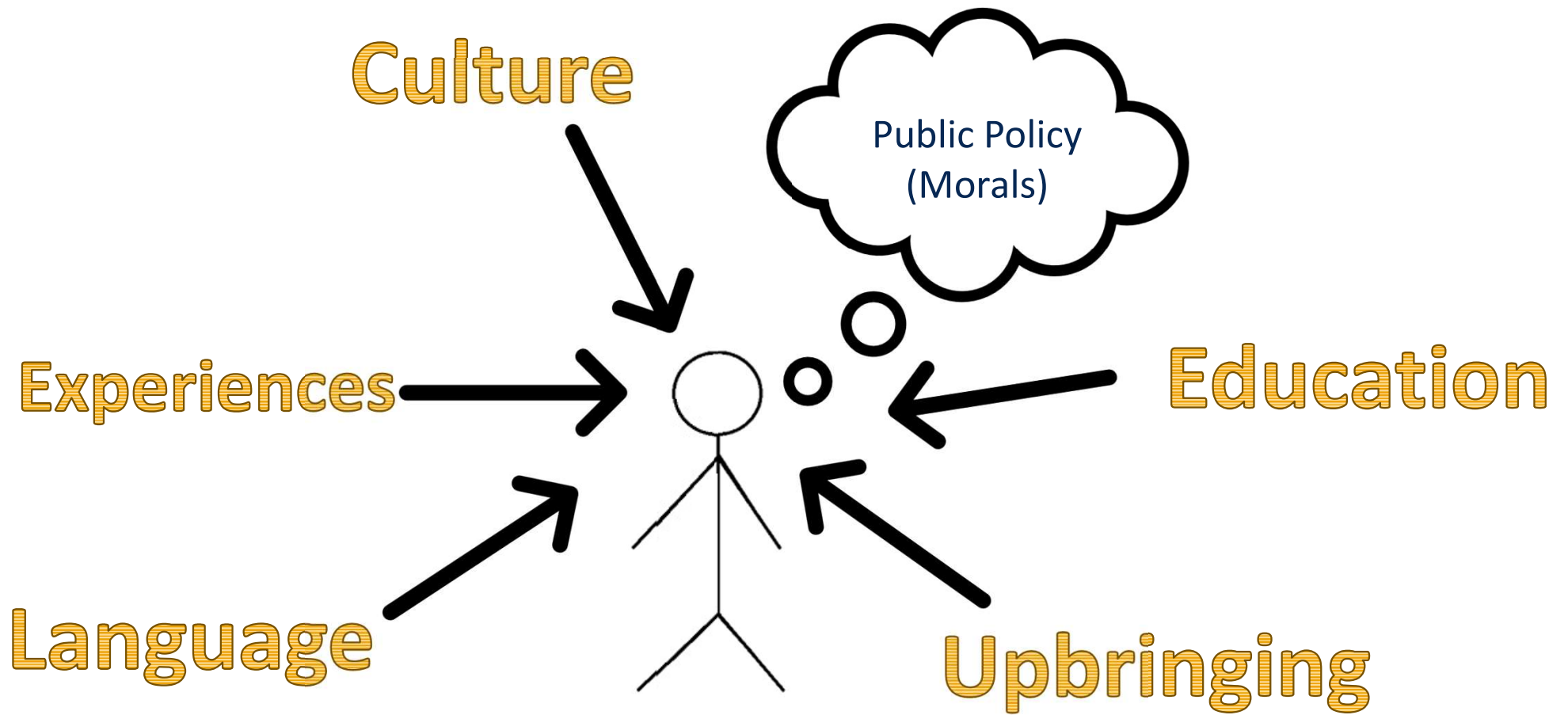
Possible counter arguments?

Is the argument sound?

Is the argument valid?

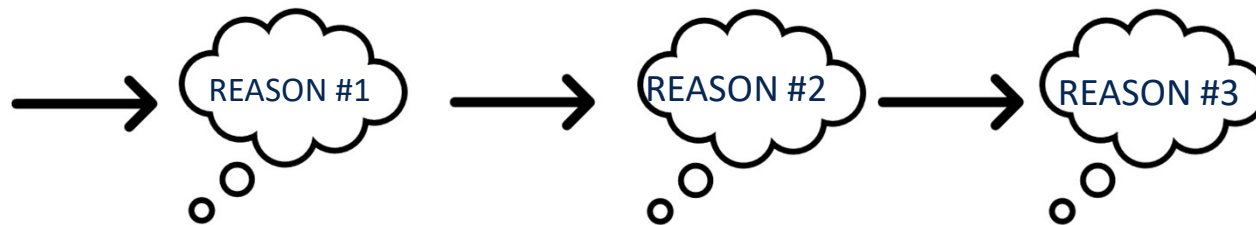
Does the argument have good reasons?

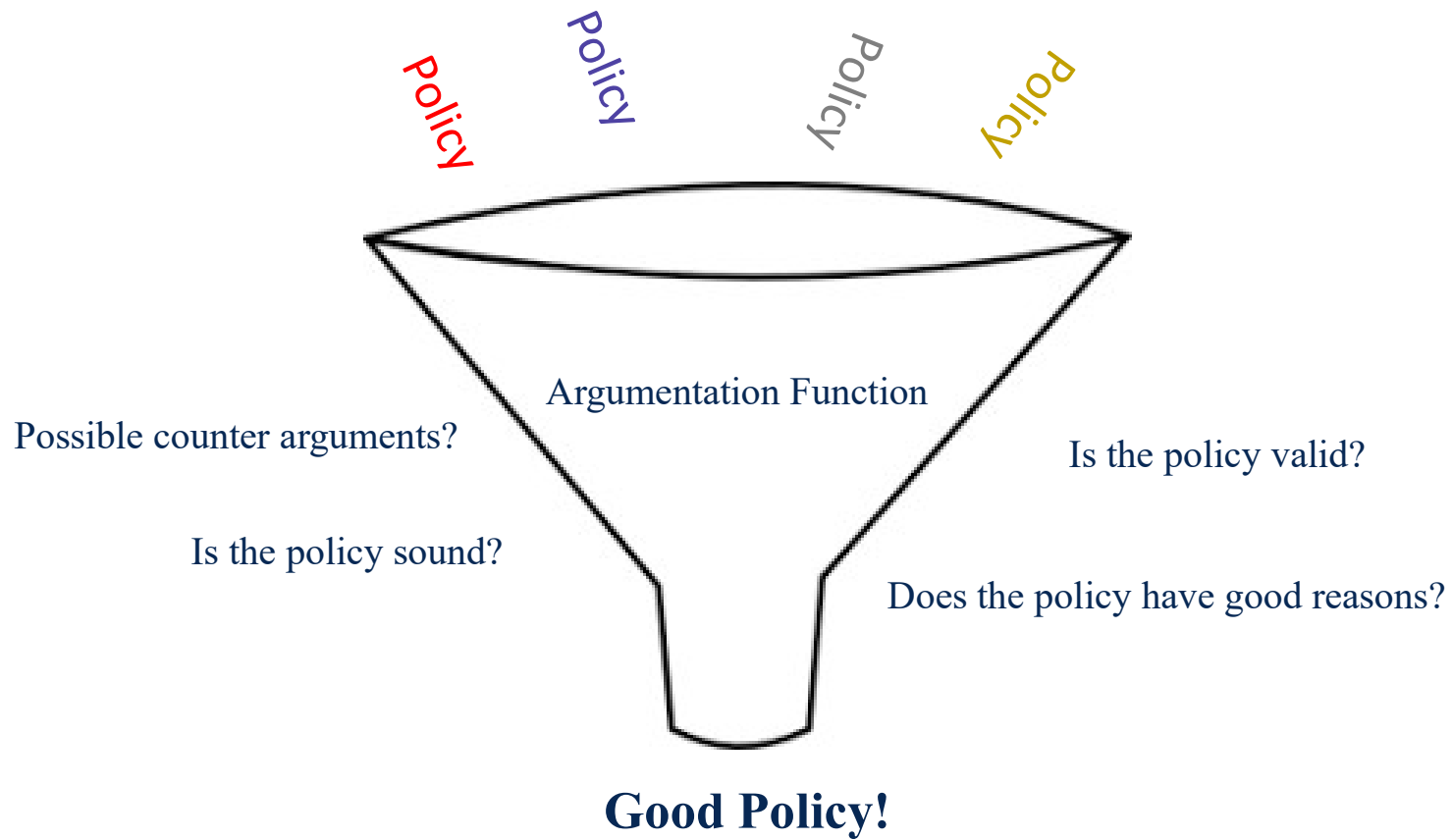
Good Argument!



Reason in Politics

- Reason justifies *political/moral* intuitions, actions, opinions, and beliefs
- First, we have a *political/moral* intuition, then reason comes in to justify it





INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF REASON

Confirmation bias:

Reason justifies the reasoner!

Often lazy in considering counter
Reasons/arguments



CONFIRMATION BIAS

I shouldn't
take the
vaccine

Made
too
fast

Not
Needed

Causes
Infertility

Has
tracker
chip

2020
election
was stolen


Sharpie
Gate

Mail-in
voting
fraud


Ballots
In
Suitcase

Dead
people
voting

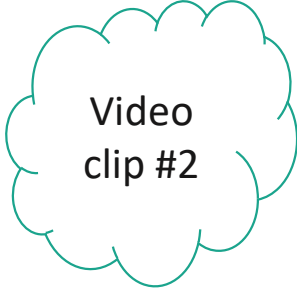
TUCKER CARLSON AND CONFIRMATION BIAS



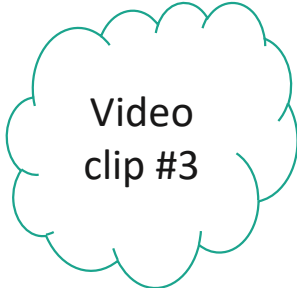
The
insurrection
on the U.S.
Capitol was
peaceful




Video
clip #1



Video
clip #2



Video
clip #3



Video
clip #4

Reasoning alone doesn't work that well

- Confirmation bias can make good quality reasoning difficult
- Reasoning in like-minded groups does not fix the problem
 - Less about quantity and more about quality
 - Group-think and echo chambers

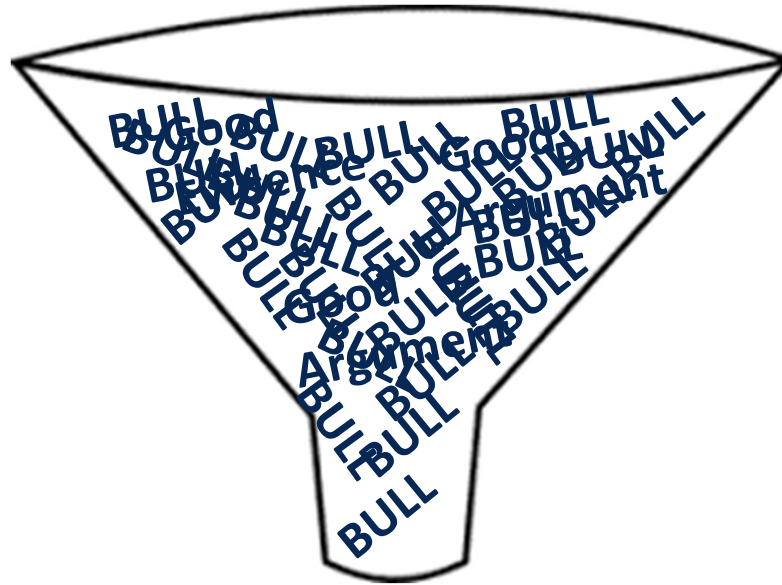
INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA PROBLEMS

1. Harder to find truths/good arguments/good evidence
2. Exacerbates confirmation bias
3. Produces group-think and echo chambers

Problem #1 Too much Bullcrap

- Too much bullcrap makes it difficult to find truths and good arguments
- Spread on the internet by radicals, trolls, internet amateurs, and foreign governments
- Can cause “epistemic helplessness”

Clogs our epistemic filter



Good Argument?
Good Evidence?

Exacerbation of Confirmation Bias

- Reason works to justify our beliefs
- We tend to seek information online that supports our beliefs
- Algorithms provide information/sites we are more likely going to agree with



Produces group-think/echo chambers



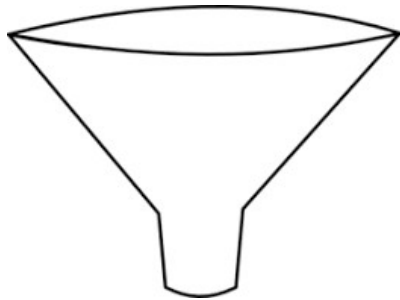
- Group-think: thinking or discussing without dissenting opinions
- Echo chambers: digital areas where users interact with information that reinforce their own beliefs
- Again, algorithms send users to sites and social media platforms with others like them.

Solutions

- Argue with others!
- Develop epistemic virtues
- Develop internet/social media navigation skills
- Following epistemic “rules” or “doctrines”

Solutions: Argue with others!

- Argumentation acts as a filter
- Remember, reason can:
 1. Justify
 2. Detect others' bad reasons



AMERICA'S TOWN HALL

**Five New Amendments:
Next Steps for
Constitutional Change**

Monday, March 27 | 6 p.m. ET

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

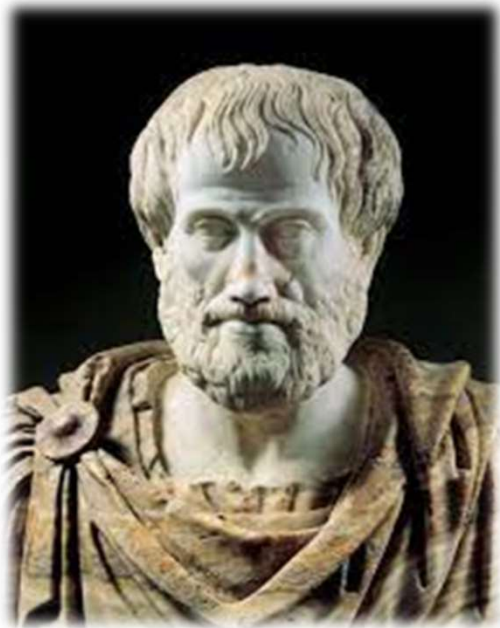
ASU Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law
Arizona State University
Center for Constitutional Design

Ilya Shapiro

Ian Wurhan

Caroline Fredrickson

Solution: Develop Epistemic virtues



- Curiosity
- Intellectual autonomy
- Intellectual humility
- Attentiveness
- Intellectual carefulness
- Intellectual thoroughness
- Open-mindedness
- Intellectual courage
- Intellectual tenacity

Solution: Develop internet/social media navigation skills

- Paying attention to the text and style of the headline
- Looking at the date of the article or post,
- Watching for spelling mistakes or poor grammar
- Browsing the web to see if major news networks are reporting on the same issue
- Looking where the information came from
- Self-reflecting on if there is more to the new report or story
- Visiting fact-checking websites
- Paying attention to how polls are conducted,

Solution: Epistemic “rules” or “doctrines”

Fallibilist rule: Everything can be questioned or doubted! Nothing is excluded from scrutiny

Empirical rule: The process from which the argument or belief was reached can be repeated by anyone

Conclusion

- Reason is not what we think it is
- Human reason is flawed
- There are old and new epistemological challenges
- But we can adapt to these challenges

Further Questions:

1. How will social media evolve?
2. How to educate the future generation?

- **Important to be more aware of reason's flaws and how to tailor human reasoning towards positive epistemological ends.**

Contact Info

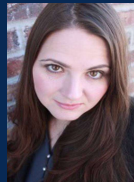
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