Polish-Lithuanian

ALLIANCE OF TRUTH

HANDBOOK

on critical thinking, rhetorical skills, basic logic, and eristic techniques

ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

The „Polish-Lithuanian Alliance of Truth" project focuses on combating disinformation and strengthening information resilience among youth from Poland and Lithuania. Disinformation poses a serious threat to international relations and democratic societies, particularly in a region with historical experiences of Soviet propaganda. The project aims to increase young people's awareness of the risks associated with media manipulation, develop critical thinking, and promote responsible use of digital media. In pursuit of this goal, through informal learning processes, participants from international groups worked on educational materials that served as the foundation for creating a guide on critical thinking. This electronic resource contains practical tips on critical thinking, rhetorical skills, basic logic, and eristic techniques.

RHETORIC

Rhetoric is the art of crafting artistic, persuasive oral or written statements, the study of this art, theoretical reflection on it, and knowledge about verbal, visual, and behavioral communication between the author of a statement and its audience.

The Principle of Organicity

The principle of organicity, also known as the principle of coherence, was formulated by Plato. He believed that a rhetorical work is akin to a living organism, comparable to an organism in nature. As he stated in Phaedrus, a speech cannot lack a head or feet; it should have a body and limbs that are well-suited to each other and conditioned by the whole. According to the principle of organicity, every work of rhetorical art should form a cohesive whole, based on internal order and a proper arrangement of its components.
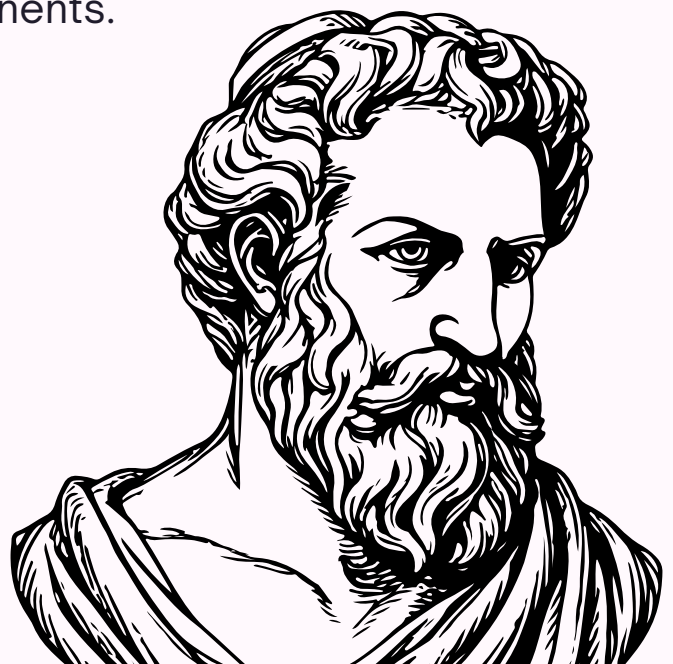
RHETORIC

The Principle of Appropriateness

The principle of appropriateness, also referred to as the principle of tact, pertains to the suitable selection of rhetorical devices based on the topic and audience. It was formulated by Aristotle and encompasses aesthetic, ethical, and stylistic considerations. Rhetorical manuals distinguished between internal and external appropriateness. Internal appropriateness involved the coherence of thought, word, and subject—ensuring that the right word is given to the right thing, often referred to as the coherence of words and things. External appropriateness concerned the alignment between the delivery of a speech and the audience's ability to receive it, depending on various circumstances of time and place.
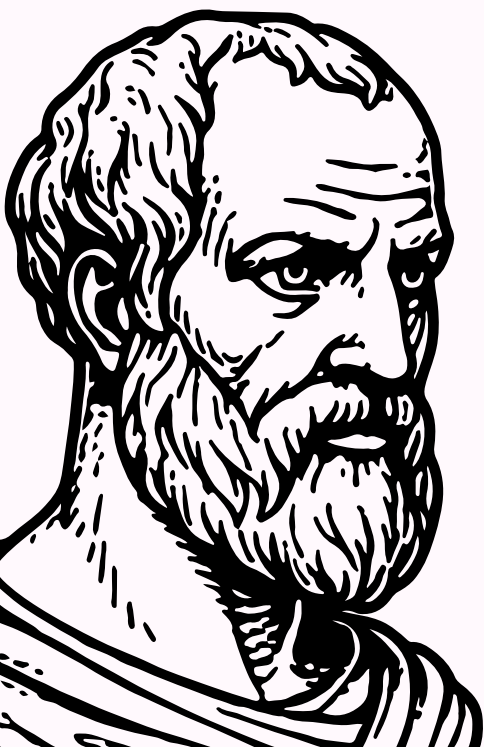
The Principle of Functionality

The principle of functionality, also known as the principle of purposefulness, views a rhetorical work as an act of intentional action. Its formulation is attributed to the Sophists. According to this principle, the creator must be aware of the intended goal and select rhetorical devices accordingly. In rhetoric, art is a derivative of functionalism, and this principle applies to both the intent and the choice of vocabulary and composition.

ERISTICS

"His guilt is indisputable because it has not been proven that he is innocent."

Eristics is the art of resolving disputes in one's favor, regardless of material truth. Below is a summary of dishonest discussion tactics (eristic dialectic):

- **Generalization (Instantia):** Extending the opponent's statement beyond its normal boundaries (a more general claim is easier to attack).
- **Use of Homonymy:** Exploiting a word used by the opponent with multiple meanings to expand their statement and then refute it.
- **Taking a Relative Statement as Absolute:** Treating a claim made in a relative sense as absolute or reframing it from a different angle to refute it.
- **Scattered Premises:** Presenting premises (including false ones) in a disjointed manner so the opponent doesn't realize the intended conclusion. Once they accept the premises, draw an unexpected conclusion.
- **Hidden Petitio Principii:** Assuming what you aim to prove by using altered terms or generalities at the start, which are easier to accept.
- **Asking Multiple Questions at Once:** Posing many broad questions to obscure the key point, making it hard for the opponent to follow the reasoning and notice flaws.
- **Unbalancing the Opponent:** Provoking the opponent (ideally subtly, to avoid detection by observers) to disrupt their composure, reducing their ability to think clearly and maintain confidence.

ERISTICS

"His innocence is obvious because it has not been proven that he is guilty."

- **Disrupting the Order of Reasoning:** Asking questions in a confusing order to make the opponent lose track of the argument.
- **Questioning Specific Cases:** Asking about individual cases, which the opponent answers correctly, then assuming they agree with a broader thesis that doesn't necessarily follow from those cases.
- **Choosing Favorable Words/Comparisons:** Framing terms to suit your needs. For example, if the opponent proposes a change, label it a "novelty" and contrast it with "established order"; if you propose a change, contrast it with "backwardness."
- **False Dichotomy:** Offering the opponent a choice between your thesis and an exaggerated antithesis (gray appears black next to white and white next to black).
- **Triumphal Declaration:** Proclaiming victory as if something was proven, even if the discussion doesn't support it (effective against timid opponents).
- **Presenting a Non-Obvious Truth:** Offering a valid but non-obvious statement. If the opponent rejects it (out of suspicion), prove its validity and claim victory; if they accept it, you gain an advantage as they've agreed with your point.

ARGUMENTATION

Argumentation is the main part of a statement, tasked with presenting the author's thesis and proving it through arguments. The theory of argumentation is a subject of rhetoric. The goal of argumentation is not to prove objective scientific or logical truth in terms of truth and falsehood, but **to achieve consensus ("agreement"). This consensus involves persuading the audience to accept the thesis being proven, meaning they adopt the stance, view, or opinion expressed by the author**. The classical model of proof is considered to be Cicero's persuasive theory of argumentation, which incorporates elements of rhetoric, logic, dialectic, eristics, and topics. This theory allows for the use of both non-artistic and artistic argumentation.

The foundations of the science of proof were formulated in the 4th century BCE by *Aristotle*. In his Analytics, he analyzed rhetorical argumentation based on syllogisms. In Topics, he discussed argumentation using examples and maxims. In On Sophistical Refutations, he provided a detailed analysis of enthymemes. In Rhetoric, he made the first attempt at a comprehensive systematization of rhetorical arguments, paying particular attention to the logical structure of proofs
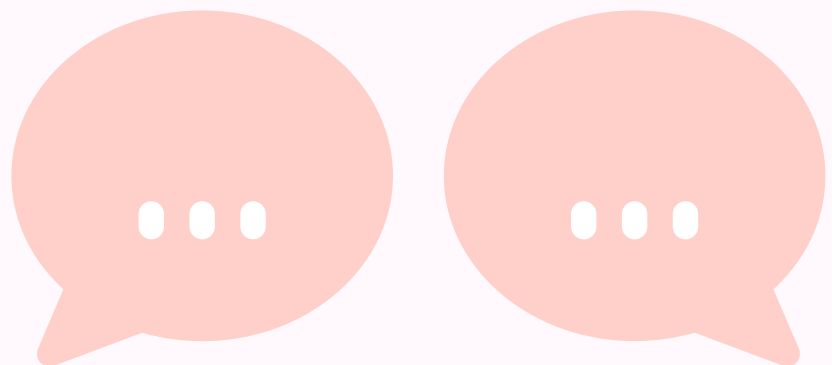
ARGUMENTATION

The creator of the widely accepted theory of proof, largely still relevant today, was Cicero in the 1st century BCE. This was referred to in manuals as Cicero's theory of argumentation. It was similar to Aristotle's systematization and involved combining logical and dialectical argumentation with typically rhetorical argumentation into a cohesive whole, described as persuasive or compelling argumentation. For Cicero, the basis of argumentation was not the correctness of its logical structure but its effectiveness in achieving the intended goal, namely persuading the audience to accept the thesis being proven.

STRUCTURE OF AN ARGUMENT

The structure of an argument is a key element that facilitates effective communication of ideas and persuasion of the audience. Argumentation is the process of presenting a claim supported by logical evidence and examples. The typical structure of an argument consists of three main components: the thesis, the justification, and the conclusion.

Thesis – This is the core claim or stance that we aim to prove or defend. It should be clearly formulated and easy to understand. The thesis serves as the "backbone" of the entire argument, so it must be compelling and well-directed.

Justification (Premises) – These are the arguments and evidence that support the thesis. Premises may include:

Facts – Verified information or data that strengthen the thesis.
Examples – Specific cases or situations that illustrate the thesis.
Authorities – Opinions of experts or references to credible sources of knowledge.
Logic – A chain of logical reasoning that leads to conclusions supporting the thesis.
Premises should be credible and relevant to make the argument convincing and coherent.

Conclusion – This is the process of logically deriving conclusions from the presented premises. The conclusion demonstrates how the premises lead to the support of the thesis. A well-formulated conclusion shows that all elements of the argument are interconnected and that the claim is logically justified.

TYPES OF ARGUMENTS

Non-Artistic Argumentation

Non-artistic argumentation relies on indisputable material evidence, such as common opinion, documents, credible witness testimonies, oaths, court rulings, etc.

Artistic Argumentation

Syllogisms: If every M is P, and every P is S, then every M is S. This is a form of reasoning where a conclusion is drawn from two premises.

Enthymemes: Deductive reasoning in which one premise is omitted. In reasoning where a necessary premise is left out, the conclusion does not logically follow from the conjunction of the accepted premises—this is referred to as enthymematic reasoning. The omitted premise is called the enthymematic premise.

Example: A good actor can take on various roles (M). Jan is an excellent actor (P) because he can play any role (S). This syllogism can be shortened in three ways.

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TYPES OF ARGUMENTS

Maxims: A maxim is a concise, expressive statement containing a general philosophical or moral thought, a guiding principle, or a life truth. For example, "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." A maxim serves as a premise (S) that, through reasoning from authority (ex auctoritate), allows for judgments about the subject (P).

Exempla: An example (Latin: exemplum) or model (Latin: model) in rhetoric and dialectic is an argument based on real or fictional events, forming part of a statement. In argumentation, an exemplum serves as a premise leading to a conclusion about the subject through similarity (Latin: similitudo) or comparison (Latin: comparatio).

A Persona: Gender (Latin: sexus)—for example, it is more likely that a robbery was committed by a man, while poisoning is more commonly associated with a woman.
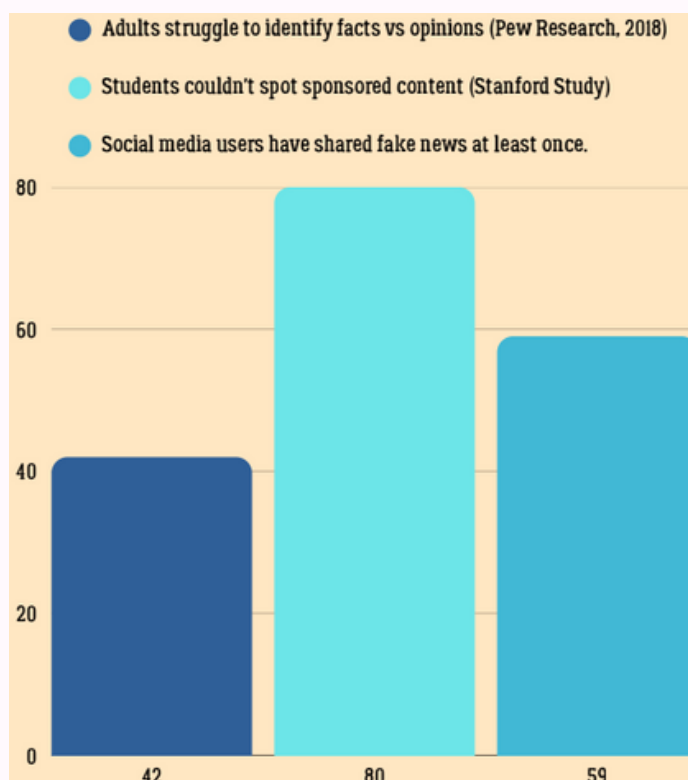
DEVELOPING THE HABIT OF CRITICAL THINKING

"Critical thinking is thinking about yourthinking while you're thinking, in orderto make yourthinking better." —

Richard W. Paul
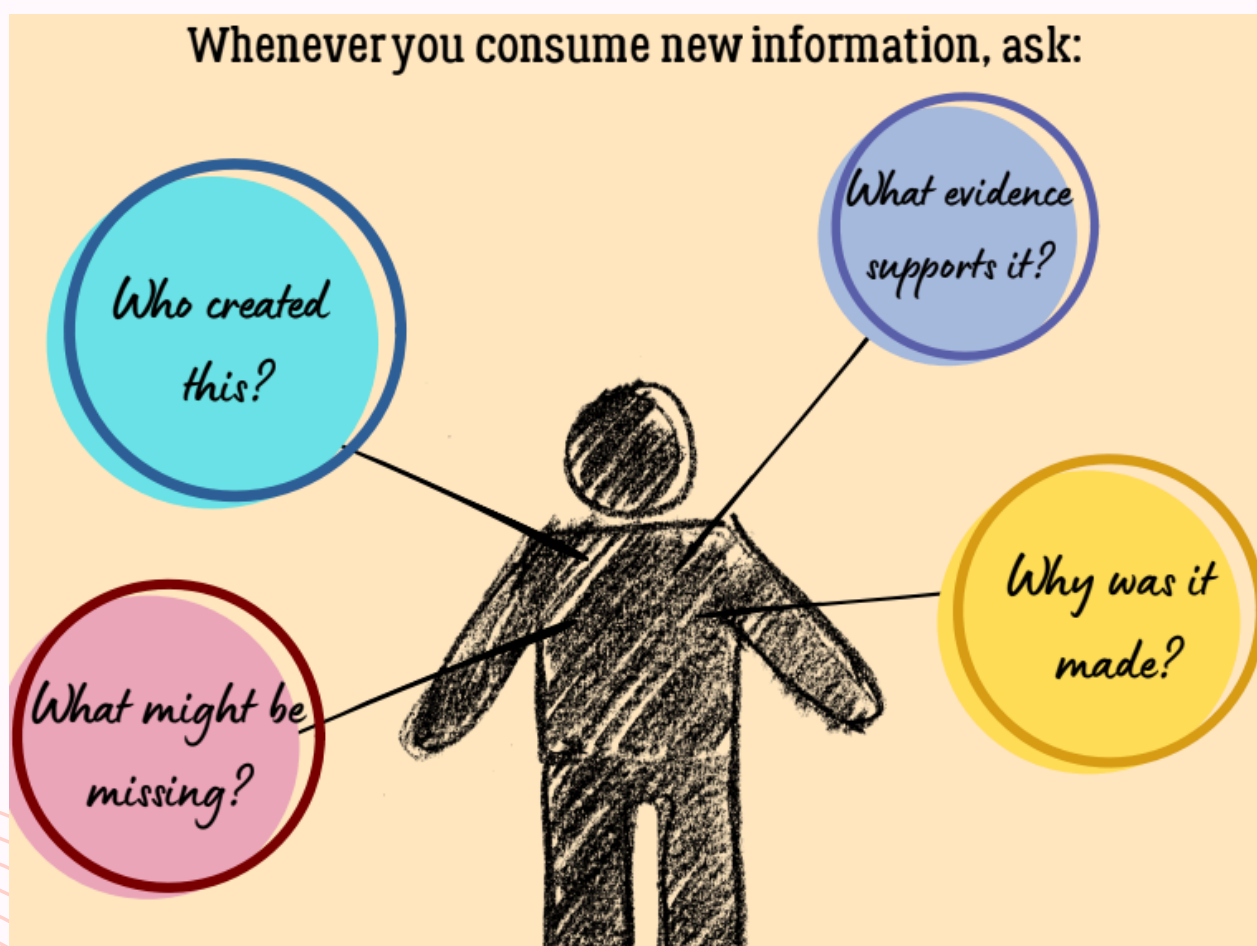
Why Critical Thinking Matters?

Critical thinking is essential in today's world filled with information overload. It helps you avoid manipulation, make sound decisions, and engage with complex issues thoughtfully.

"Critical thinking involves the ability to understand the logical connection between two or more ideas or concepts and to know that the solutions are temporary and could improve over time with new data.

- Adults struggle to identify facts vs opinions (Pew Research, 2018)
- Students couldn't spot sponsored content (Stanford Study)
- Social media users have shared fake news at least once.

80		
60		
40		
20		
0		
42	80	59

DEVELOPING THE HABIT OF CRITICAL THINKING

Asking the Right Questions

Whenever you consume new information, ask:

- Who created this?
- What evidence supports it?
- What might be missing?
- Why was it made?

DEVELOPING THE HABIT OF CRITICAL THINKING

Compare Multiple Sources

Relying on just one source can lead to bias. Always:

- Check multiple perspectives (left, right, neutral)
- Use tools like AllSides or Media Bias/Fact Check
- Summarize a topic afterreviewing 3 or more sources.

DEVELOPING THE HABIT OF CRITICAL THINKING

Quick Tips for Developing Critical Thinking

Play strategy - based games.
Ask questions - especially basic ones.
Challenge your assumptions.
Strengthen problem-solving and technical skills.
Explore creative solutions.
Be aware of yourthinking habits.
Reflect independently and consider otherviews.
Practice active listening.
Think through consequences before acting.
Learn from a mentor.

DEVELOPING THE HABIT OF CRITICAL THINKING

Make It a Daily Habit

Daily practice strengthens your critical thinking muscle:

- Question at least one news article
- Spot a fallacy in a conversation
- Compare two versions of a story
- Reflect on your own assumptions

HABITS