

Phil. 103: Introduction to Logic

Class Exercise: Varieties of Disagreements

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Directions: In each of the following interactions (1) state the fact at issue in emotively neutral language, and (2) identify the kinds of agreement or disagreement present.

1. John: The Robinson's talk is so boring--all they can talk about are plants and food.
Mary: They are delightful; they always have such interesting cooking and garden tips.

Fact at Issue: What do the Robinsons talk about? Notice that whether the talk is boring or delightful is a matter of attitude, not belief.

Belief: Agreement---John and Mary agree that the Robinsons talk about food preparation and horticulture.

Attitude: Disagreement---John's attitude is negative and Mary's is positive towards what the Robinsons talk about.

How Resolved: No need to find the facts since they agree in belief; at best the attitudes might be influenced by using appropriate techniques of rhetoric and persuasion.

2. John: Well, Mr. Robinson never tells the truth about how well he gardens.
Mary: Well, in my opinion, Mr. Robinson does not tell outright lies; he just uses highly creative descriptions.

Fact at Issue: Does Mr. Robinson talk about his gardening in an accurate manner? To say that the fact at issue involves whether

or not Mr. Robinson lies would be a question of attitude here because of the negative emotive significance of ‘‘lying.’’

Belief: Agreement---Both Mary and John agree that Mr. Robinson does not restrict himself to the literal truth when discussing gardening.

Attitude: Disagreement---John and Mary disagree somewhat in attitude towards Mr. Robinson’s talk about his gardening. John’s phrase ‘‘never tells the truth’’ is an overstatement and so is negative in effect, whereas Mary’s phrase ‘‘highly creative’’ is positive in emotive significance.

How Resolved: Rhetoric and persuasion might help to alter either John or Mary’s attitude toward the belief at issue.

3. John: And Mrs. Robinson is such a chatterbox; if I have to listen to her again, I’ll go bananas.
Mary: She is not! I think that she is refreshingly outgoing and stimulating.

Fact at Issue: Does Mrs. Robinson talk a lot? Note that whether or not she is a chatterbox is a matter of attitude, not belief.

Belief: Agreement--both Mary and John agree that Mrs. Robinson talks a good deal of the time.

Attitude: Disagreement---Mary’s phrase ‘‘refreshingly outgoing’’ is positive, and John’s phrase ‘‘chatterbox’’ is negative in emotive significance.

How Resolved: The facts are not in question, but since Mary and John differ in attitude, the use of rhetoric and persuasion might help them to come to closer agreement.

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