GOOD ARGUMENTS: AN INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THINKING, 4th ed.
By Connie Missimer. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005.
Pp. 212. ISBN 0131845705, US$50.60.

This textbook about how to improve your own argumentation is different from all other textbooks I have seen in this field. The subtitle presents it as an introduction to critical thinking. The reader finds here the criticisms of, say, Karl Popper combined with a thorough empiricist orientation.

Missimer addresses persons who cherish the hope of sharpening up their contributions to culture, science, teaching or politics, be it as journalists, instructors, or as students working towards a thesis or Ph.D. In other words, everyone who wants to present an argument in whatever field and who wants it to become as sound as the situation allows. No formalities, of whichever kind, are included. The author addresses you while you find yourself in this situation: sitting at your desk having this future paper of yours in mind. She wants to be your guide and companion in critical thought in the service of productive writing.

As I said, an ordinary textbook it is not: it contains no visible theory, but builds further on the experience and wisdom you already possess. Not surprisingly, it is dedicated to those who would rather browse its pages than read on from page 1 to page 212 at a stretch. In all likelihood they will not regret it: while browsing, they learn *new linguistic usages* of terms they already knew. They will learn usages that they need as critical writers, from selected short texts written by important and famous people. And the interest rises.

Debate is also considered. Should we ponder the pros and cons together or immediately start a debate? The chapter dealing with this topic could have been used as the introduction. An important theme in the book is joint deliberation with no winning or losing. Debating for the honour of turning up as the winner is only briefly dealth with. However, even in the sciences and other academic fields (barring philosophy), one operates to a considerable degree with winning and losing, in particular losing. The book emphasizes the presentation of arguments with an emperical content so as to prevent, or at least postpone, "loss."

More attention could perhaps have been given to the use of language in heavy political debate. The author does not really address you while you are engaged in criticism of the cruel and dangerous parts of life.

"A good argument"—what does that really mean? An analogy is drawn between a conclusion and the roof of a building, and another between the supporting arguments and supporting beams: conclusions and roofs all need foundations. A beam is "good" for the house if it helps to prevent a collapse of the building, "bad" if it contributes to a collapse. There are beams with different tasks. Of course, foundations often need foundations themselves, but this is not systematically dealt with. It is here that formalization comes to one's assistance, if one needs it.

Nevertheless, the book is free from babytalk. Good argumentation is elucidated in the light of interesting and understandable texts taken from various fields. Ethical problems concerning animals' rights are the object of a text by Peter Singer. Missimer constructs quite a different text and asks the reader to judge how far her arguments strengthen or weaken Singer's arguments. One finds texts taken from De Tocqueville, Norbert Elias, Bertrand Russell and Sissela Bok. One is in good company.

In other words, rational forms of language and thought are acquired through—among other things—mature examples of the use of actual argumentative linguistic forms in acknowledged texts. These linguistic forms are themselves printed in bold type and so are immediately brought into your focus without a chance to be overshadowed by the interesting topic in which they occur. One learns them visually without effort and without having to understand any theory or rules. One simply learns to use them.

Summing up: this is an understandable and probably quite effective collection of experiences and wisdom concerning good arguments. Chances are high that this approach (to one familiar situation, the situation of uncertain writers) will bring many a writer to a higher level of maturity. The book is probabbly not meant for the mature readers of this journal, but their students would fall under the intended readership.

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ARGUING: EXCHANGING REASONS FACE TO FACE
BY DALE HAMPLE. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005.
Pp. xiii + 369. ISBN 0-8058-4854-1. US $99.95 | Special Discount Price $39.95.

Arguments do not, and cannot, occur without people. They are not naturally occurring things like rocks or bumblebees that are simply out there in the world waiting to be discovered; they depend completely and entirely on humans for their existence. So much is incontestable. Once, however, we move beyond that rather uninteresting point of agreement we reach a wide range of differentiation. Some theorists, such as Willard (1976), claim that arguments cannot be understood in isolation from the actual, particular argument as it happens and where it happens. At the other extreme we have Johnson (2000) who sees written arguments as presented in an editorial or an essay as the "distillate" of argumentation (168). Between these two extremes there is vast continuum of positions regarding the degree to which arguments must be situated and viewed in context in order to be understood and properly analyzed.

Dale Hample, in his book, *Arguing: Exchanging Reasons Face to Face*, makes it clear in his sub-title where his position lies. Arguments are not only created by people who are arguing, but can only be understood in that context. While static arguments are by no means dismissed or discarded, it is the nature of arguing as it occurs in its natural setting that fascinates Hample. The roots of the very notion of argument are familiar to all of us: "An argument is a conclusion supported by reasons" (1), Hample writes on his very first page. So the traditional root notion of an argument as found, say, in informal logic is not challenged, though past that point the connections to the familiar become more strained. The focus of Hample's book is not so much argument structure, but the motivations we have for arguing, and the psychological and social tools we use for creating and editing arguments. Why do people argue? How do they create their arguments? How do they receive arguments?