

# CHPT. 12

## Evaluate Your Argument on the Issue

In this chapter you will learn how to identify and overcome errors in reasoning. This is a special step that applies only to issues because resolving issues involves finding the most *reasonable* belief.

Two broad kinds of errors are examined—errors affecting the truth of your ideas and errors affecting the quality of your reasoning. A step-by-step approach to evaluate arguments is also included.

Because your main objective in addressing an issue is not to find the most effective action but to determine the most reasonable belief, your main task in refining an issue is to evaluate your argument to be sure that it is free of error. Two broad kinds of error must be considered. The first affects the *truth* of the argument's premises or assertions. The second affects the argument's *validity*—that is, the legitimacy of the reasoning by which the conclusion was reached. A sound argument is both true and valid.

### Errors Affecting Truth

Errors affecting truth are found by testing the accuracy of the premises and the conclusion as individual statements. The first and most common error in this category is simple factual inaccuracy. If we have investigated the issue properly and have taken care to verify our evidence whenever possible, such errors should not be present. We will therefore limit our consideration to the more subtle and common errors:

- Either/or thinking
- Avoiding the issue
- Overgeneralizing
- Oversimplifying
- Double standard
- Shifting the burden of proof
- Irrational appeal

### Either/Or Thinking

This error consists of believing that only two choices are possible in situations in which there are actually more than two choices. A common example of either/or thinking occurs in the creationism-versus-evolution debate. Both sides are often guilty of the error. "The biblical story of creation and scientific evolution cannot both be right," they say. "It must be either one or the other." They are mistaken. There is a third possibility: that there is a God who created everything but did so through evolution. Whether this position is the best one may, of course, be disputed. But it is an error to ignore its existence.

Either/or thinking undoubtedly occurs because, in controversy, the spotlight is usually on the most obvious positions, those most clearly in conflict. Any other position, especially a subtle one, is ignored. Such thinking is best overcome by conscientiously searching out all possible views before choosing one. If you find either/or thinking in your position on an issue, ask yourself, "Why must it be one view or the other? Why not both or neither?"

## Avoiding the Issue

The attorney was just beginning to try the case in court when her associate learned that their key witness had changed his mind about testifying. The associate handed the attorney this note: "Have no case. Abuse the other side." That is the form avoiding the issue often takes: deliberately attacking the person with the opposing view in the hope that the issue itself will be forgotten. It happens with lamentable frequency in politics. The issue being debated may be, for example, a particular proposal for tax reform. One candidate will say, "The reason my opponent supports this proposal is clear: it is a popular position to take. His record is filled with examples of jumping on the bandwagon to gain voter approval." And so on. Of course, what the candidate says may be true of the opponent, and if it is, then it would surely be relevant to the issue of whether the opponent deserves to be elected. But it is not relevant to the issue at hand, the tax reform proposal.

Avoiding the issue may not necessarily be motivated by deceit, as the preceding examples are. It may occur because of unintentional misunderstanding or because of an unconscious slip to something irrelevant. But it is still error, regardless of its innocence. To check your reasoning, look closely at each issue, and ask whether your solution really responds to it. If it doesn't, make it do so.

## Overgeneralizing

Overgeneralizing means taking a valid idea and extending it beyond the limits of reasonableness. Here are some examples.

- Women who have abortions are poor and unmarried.
- Politicians are corrupt.
- Conservative Christians are intolerant.
- Men have trouble expressing their feelings.

Each of these statements could be true at times. That is, we could find examples of poor, unmarried women who have had abortions; corrupt politicians; and so on. Yet, in each case, we could also find examples that do not fit the assertion. That is what makes these statements overgeneralizations. (The fact that your overgeneralizations do not take the most extreme form—stereotypes, which we discussed in Chapter 3—should not make you complacent about correcting them. They still mar your arguments, usually significantly.)

To find overgeneralizations in your arguments, be alert to any idea in which *all* or *none* is stated or *implied*. (That is the case in each of the preceding four examples.) Occasionally, you will find a situation in which *all* or *none* is justified, but in the great majority of cases, critical evaluation will show that it is not. To correct overgeneralizations, decide what level of generalization is appropriate, and modify your statement accordingly. For example, in the four cases discussed, you would consider these possibilities:

Some Many Most All A specific number of	... women who have abortions are poor and unmarried.
Some Many Most All Certain types of	... politicians are corrupt.
Some Many Most All In certain cultural conditions	... conservative Christians are intolerant.
Some Many Most All In certain cultural conditions	... men are incapable of expressing their feelings.

## Oversimplifying

There is nothing wrong with simplifying a complex reality to understand it better or to communicate it more clearly to others. Teachers simplify all the time, especially in grade school. Simplification is only a problem when it goes too far: when it goes beyond making complex matters clear and begins to distort them. At that point, it ceases to represent reality and misrepresents it. Such over-simplification is often found in reasoning about causes and effects. Here are three examples of this error.

- The cause of voter dissatisfaction in the 2010 election was high unemployment.
- The American Nazi Party has a beneficial effect on the intellectual life of the country. It reminds people of the constitutional rights of free speech and assembly.
- A return to public executions, shown on prime-time television, would make crime less glamorous and thus, in time, make us a less brutal, more civilized society.

These statements contain an element of truth. Yet they do not fairly or accurately represent the reality described. They focus on one cause or effect as if it were the only one. In fact, there are others, some of them significant.

To find oversimplifications in your arguments, ask what important aspects of the issue your statements ignore. To correct oversimplifications, decide what expression of the matter best reflects the reality without distorting it.

## Double Standard

Applying a double standard means judging the same action or point of view differently depending on who performs the action or holds the point of view. It can often be recognized by the use of sharply contrasting terms of description or classification. Thus we may attack a government assistance program as a welfare handout if the money goes to people we don't know or don't identify with but defend it as a necessary subsidy if it goes to our friends. Similarly, if one country crosses another's border with a military force, we may approve the action as a "securing of borders" or condemn it as "naked aggression," depending on our feelings toward the countries involved.

Be careful not to confuse the double standard with the legitimate judgment of cases according to their circumstances. It is never an error to acknowledge real differences. Accordingly, if you find you have judged a particular case differently from other cases of the same kind, look closely at the circumstances. If they warrant different judgments, you have not been guilty of applying a double standard. However, if they do not warrant different judgments—if your reasoning shows partiality toward one side—you have committed the error and should revise your judgment to make it fair.

## Shifting the Burden of Proof

This error consists of making an assertion and then demanding that the opposition prove it false. This is an unreasonable demand. The person making the assertion has the burden of supporting it. Though the opposing side may accept the challenge of disproving it, it has no obligation to do so. Suppose, for example, you said to a friend, "There was widespread voter fraud in the last election," your friend disputed you, and you responded, "Unless you can disprove my claim, I am justified in believing it." You have shifted the burden of proof. Having made the assertion about voter fraud, you have the obligation to support it. To overcome this error in your arguments, identify all the assertions you have made but not supported, and provide adequate support for them. If you find you cannot support an assertion, withdraw it.

## Irrational Appeal

This error bases your position on an unreasonable appeal. The most common forms are the appeal to *common practice* ("Everyone does it"), the appeal to *tradition* ("We mustn't change what is long established"), the appeal to *fear* ("Awful things could happen"), the appeal to *moderation* ("Let's not offend anyone"), and the appeal to *authority* ("We have no business questioning the experts"). Of course, there is nothing necessarily wrong with defending common practice or tradition, warning about dangers, urging moderation, or supporting the views of experts. It is only when these appeals are used as a *substitute* for careful reasoning—when they aim at an audience's emotions rather than their minds—that they are misused. To correct irrational appeals, refocus your argument on the specific merits of your ideas.

## Errors Affecting Validity

Errors affecting validity do not occur within any individual premise or within the conclusion. They occur instead in the reasoning by which the conclusion is drawn from the premises. Therefore, to determine whether an argument is valid or invalid, we must examine the relationship between the premises and the conclusion. The logical principles governing validity are the substance of *formal logic*, the area of logic concerned with the various forms of argument. Since a detailed treatment of formal logic is beyond the scope of this book, we will focus on an essential error that commonly occurs in controversial issues: the *illegitimate conclusion*.

An illegitimate conclusion is one that does not follow logically from the premises preceding it. Before examining an illegitimate conclusion, let's first look at a *legitimate* one.

Anything that shortens people's attention span harms their concentration.  
Television commercials shorten people's attention span. Therefore, television commercials harm people's concentration.

This conclusion is legitimate because if anything that shortens people's attention span harms concentration, and if television commercials do shorten that span, they therefore must harm people's concentration. Commercials, after all, are a thing, so they fit in the *anything* specified in the first premise. When we are checking for the validity of the reasoning, remember, we are not checking for the truth of the premises or conclusion. That concern is a separate matter. Thus even a ludicrous argument could be technically valid. Here is an example.

Anything that gives people indigestion harms their concentration. Television commercials give people indigestion. Therefore, television commercials harm people's concentration.

Let's now look at some *illegitimate* conclusions and see what makes them so.

All people who take courses significantly above their level of competency will surely fail. Samantha is taking a course well within her level of competency. Therefore, Samantha will surely pass.

Even if it were true that all people who take courses well above their competency level necessarily fail, this would not eliminate the possibility of other reasons for failure, reasons that apply to the competent as well as the incompetent. In other words, the first premise does not imply that *only* the incompetent will fail. Samantha may be extraordinarily proficient and still fail because she cuts classes and does not submit the required work.

Here is another example of an illegitimate conclusion.

People who care about the environment will support the clean air bill now before Congress. Senator Boychik supports the clean air bill. Therefore, Senator Boychik cares about the environment.

The first premise of this argument says that people—all people\*—who care about the environment will support the bill. However, it does not say that no one else will support the bill. Thus it leaves open the possibility that some who do not care will support it, perhaps for political reasons. Which group Boychik belongs to is unclear. Therefore, the conclusion is

illegitimate.

\*Though the premise says *people*, rather than *all people*, the sense of *all* is clearly conveyed. Usually, when no qualifying word or phrase—such as *some*, *many*, *the citizens of Peoria*—is present, we presume that the universal *all* is intended.

Illegitimate conclusions also occur in hypothetical (if-then) reasoning. Of course, not all hypothetical reasoning is faulty. Here is an example of a *valid* hypothetical argument:

*If a person uses a gun in the commission of a crime, then he should be given an additional penalty. Simon used a gun in the commission of a crime. Therefore, Simon should be given an additional penalty.*

The first premise sets forth the conditions under which the additional penalty should be applied. The second presents a case that fits those conditions. The conclusion that the penalty should apply in that case is legitimate.

Here, in contrast, is an *illegitimate* conclusion.

*If a person uses a gun in the commission of a crime, then he should be given an additional penalty. Simon was given an additional penalty for his crime. Therefore, Simon used a gun in the commission of the crime.*

Here the first premise sets forth one condition for an additional penalty. It does not exclude the possibility of *other* conditions carrying additional penalties. For this reason, we have no way of knowing whether Simon's additional penalty was for using a gun or for some other reason.

The following is another example of an *illegitimate* conclusion.

*If a person has great wealth, then he can get elected. Governor Mindless got elected. Therefore, Governor Mindless has great wealth.*

The first premise of this argument specifies one way of getting elected. There may be others, including endorsements from influential groups and skill in telling people what they want to hear. In which way did Governor Mindless get elected? We can't be sure from the information given, so the conclusion is illegitimate.

Occasionally, an illegitimate conclusion in hypothetical arguments takes a slightly different form: the reversal of conditions. The following argument illustrates this.

*If the death penalty is reinstated, then the crime rate will drop. Therefore, if the rate of crime is reduced, the death penalty will be reinstated.*

The error here is reversing what is not necessarily reversible. The clear implication in the first premise is that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the reinstatement of the death penalty and a drop in the crime rate. To reverse that relationship makes the effect the cause, and vice versa. Such a reversal does not logically follow.

## A Special Problem: The Hidden Premise

The expression of an argument in ordinary discussion or writing is not always as precise as our examples. The sentence order may vary; the conclusion, for example, may come first. In place of the word *therefore*, a variety of signal words may be used. *So* and *it follows that* are two common substitutes. Sometimes, no signal word is used. These variations make the evaluation of an argument a little more time-consuming, but they pose no real difficulty. There is, however, a variation that can cause real difficulty: the *hidden premise*. A hidden premise is a premise implied but not stated. Here is an example of an argument with a hidden premise. (Such an argument is known in logic as an enthymeme.)

Argument with Premise Hidden	Same Argument, Premise Expressed
Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.	Liberty means responsibility. Most men dread responsibility. Therefore, most men dread liberty.

There is nothing necessarily wrong with having a hidden premise. It is not an error. In the preceding case, the hidden-premise argument is from the writing of George Bernard Shaw. In either of the forms shown, the argument is perfectly valid. The only problem with hidden premises is that they obscure the reasoning behind the argument and make evaluation difficult. Accordingly, whenever a premise is hidden, it should be identified and expressed before the argument is evaluated.

Here are several more examples of hidden-premise arguments. Note how much easier it is to grasp the reasoning when the hidden premise is expressed.

Premise Hidden	Premise Expressed
Prostitution is immoral, so it should be illegal.	Everything immoral should be illegal. Prostitution is immoral. Therefore, it should be illegal.
Newspapers are a threat to democracy because they have too much power.	All agencies that have too much power are a threat to democracy. Newspapers have too much power. Therefore, newspapers are a threat to democracy.
If Brewster Bland is a good family man, he'll make a good senator.	If a person is a good family man, he'll make a good senator. Brewster Bland is a good family man. Therefore, Brewster Bland will make a good senator.
AIDS is a costly and often terminal disease. Therefore, health insurance companies should be able to suspend coverage when people contract AIDS.	Insurance companies should not have to provide coverage for costly terminal diseases. AIDS is a costly and often terminal disease. Therefore, health insurance companies should be able to suspend coverage when people contract AIDS.
Many celebrities believe that a 35,000-year-old spirit entity known as Ramtha speaks through channeler J. Z. Knight. Therefore,	If many celebrities believe something, it is by that fact worthy of respect. Many celebrities believe that a 35,000-year-old spirit entity known as Ramtha speaks

this belief is worthy of respect.

through channeler J. Z. Knight. Therefore,  
this belief is worthy of respect.

## Recognizing Complex Arguments

Not all arguments can be expressed in two premises and one conclusion. Many are complex, involving a network of premises and conclusions. Moreover, some of these premises and conclusions may, like the hidden premises we have discussed, be unexpressed. Consider, for example, this argument.

The communications and entertainment media have more influence on young people than parents and teachers do, so the media are more responsible for teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, violence, and academic deficiency.

At first glance, only one premise may seem to be missing from this argument. Actually, it is a complex argument, and more is missing. Here is how it would be expressed if nothing were omitted.

The agency that has the greatest influence on young people's attitudes and values bears the greatest responsibility for the behavior caused by those attitudes and values. The media now have a greater influence than parents and teachers do. In addition, the messages disseminated by the media tend to lead to impulsiveness and the demand for instant gratification and to create or aggravate such problems as teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, violence, and academic deficiency. Therefore, the communications and entertainment media bear greater responsibility than parents and teachers for these problems.

Here are two more examples of complex arguments. In each case, the argument is first expressed in the abbreviated form often used in everyday conversation and then in its complete logical form.

1. **Abbreviated:** The government wastes billions of tax dollars, so I'm not obligated to report all my income.

*Complete:* The government wastes billions of tax dollars. Wasting tax dollars increases every individual's tax burden unnecessarily. I am a taxpayer, so the government is increasing my tax burden unnecessarily. Furthermore, when the government increases the taxpayers' tax burden unnecessarily, the taxpayers are not obligated to report all their income. Therefore, I'm not obligated to report all my income.

2. **Abbreviated:** People who lack control over their sexual urges are a threat to society, so homosexuals should be banned from the teaching profession.

*Complete:* People who lack control over their sexual urges are a threat to society. Homosexuals lack control over their sexual urges. Therefore, homosexuals are a threat to society. Furthermore, people who are a threat to society should be banned from the teaching profession. Therefore, homosexuals should be banned from the teaching profession.



Recognizing that an argument is complex and, where necessary, expressing it more completely is a necessary step in argument analysis. But such recognition and expression do not complete the analysis. In other words, in each of our three examples, we now know what the complete argument is, but we do not yet know whether it is sound—that is, whether its premises are true and the reasoning from premises to conclusion is valid.

## Steps in Evaluating an Argument

The following four steps are an efficient way to apply what you learned in this chapter—in other words, to evaluate your argument and overcome any errors in validity or truth that it may contain.

1. State your argument fully, as clearly as you can. Be sure to identify any hidden premises and, if the argument is complex, to express all parts of it.
2. Examine each part of your argument for errors affecting truth. (To be sure your examination is not perfunctory, play devil's advocate and *challenge* the argument, asking pointed questions about it, taking nothing for granted.) Note any instances of either/or thinking, avoiding the issue, overgeneralizing, oversimplifying, double standard, shifting the burden of proof, or irrational appeal. In addition, check to be sure that the argument reflects the evidence found in your investigation (see Chapter 8) and is relevant to the pro and con arguments and scenarios you produced earlier (see Chapter 9).
3. Examine your argument for validity errors; that is, consider the reasoning that links conclusions to premises. Determine whether your conclusion is legitimate or illegitimate.
4. If you find one or more errors, revise your argument to eliminate them. The changes you will have to make in your argument will depend on the kinds of errors you find. Sometimes, only minor revision is called for—the adding of a simple qualification, for example, or the substitution of a rational appeal for an irrational one. Occasionally, however, the change required is more dramatic. You may, for example, find your argument so flawed that the only appropriate action is to abandon it altogether and embrace a different argument. On those occasions, you may be tempted to *pretend* your argument is sound and hope no one will notice the errors. Resist that hope. It is foolish as well as dishonest to invest time in refining a view that you know is unsound.

To illustrate how you would follow these steps, we will now examine two issues.

## The Case of Parents Protesting Tv Programs

You have read a number of articles lately about protests over television commercials and programming. The protesters are mostly parents of school-aged children. They have spoken out either individually or through organizations they belong to, expressing concern that the values taught by school and home are being undermined by television. Specific complaints include the emphasis on sex and violence in television programming, the appeal to self-indulgence and instant gratification in commercials, and the promotion of “if it feels good, do it”

in both programming and commercials. The protestors are urging concerned citizens to write to the companies that sponsor programs and threaten to boycott their products unless these offenses are eliminated.

Let's say you identify the main issue here as "Are parents justified in making such demands on companies?" After considering the matter and producing a number of ideas, you decide that the best answer is "No, they are not justified" and state your argument as follows:

Only those who pay for television programming and advertisements are entitled to have a say about them. The companies alone pay. Therefore, the companies alone are entitled to have a say.

You examine your argument for validity errors and find that it contains none. Then you examine it for errors of truth or relevance. Playing devil's advocate, you ask, "Do the companies alone pay?" "How exactly is payment handled?" Not being sure, you ask a professor of business and learn that the sponsorship of television programs and other advertising are part of the overall product budget. You also learn that these costs, along with other costs of raw materials, manufacturing, packaging, warehousing, and delivery, are reflected in the price of the product.

"Wait a minute," you reason. "If programming and other advertising costs are reflected in the price of the product, that means consumers are paying for every television show and every commercial. And if that's the case, parents (and other consumers) are entitled to have a say, make demands, and threaten boycotts." And so you revise your argument accordingly:

Those who pay for television programming and commercials are entitled to have a say about them. Consumers pay. Therefore, consumers are entitled to have a say.\*

\*Such a formal, logical ( $a + b = c$ ) statement of your argument is essential when you are evaluating your reasoning. However, it is seldom appropriate for a central-idea statement in a piece of writing. In this case, your central-idea statement might be "Because consumers pay for television programming and commercials, they are entitled to make demands and threaten boycotts."

In elaborating this argument you would, of course, address the important questions that flow from it, including this one: What guidelines does fairness suggest consumers follow in making such requests? Your answers to this and related questions should also be evaluated for reasonableness.

## The Case of the Mentally Impaired Girls

This case is one we encountered earlier, in Application 2.6c. The parents of three girls with severe mental impairments, you may remember, brought court action seeking the legal right to make the decision to sterilize the girls. The larger issue here continues to be controversial. Let's say you express it as follows: "Should anyone have the right to make such a significant decision for another person?" After investigating the issue and producing a number of ideas, including the major pro and con arguments and several relevant scenarios, you state your argument thus:

Those who have the child's interest at heart can be expected to judge wisely if they

are properly informed. Most parents or guardians have the child's interest at heart. Therefore, most parents or guardians can be expected to judge wisely if they are properly informed. Furthermore, knowing whether the child will ever be able to meet the responsibilities of parenthood constitutes being properly informed. A qualified doctor can tell parents or guardians whether the child will ever be able to meet the responsibilities of parenthood. Therefore, a qualified doctor can properly inform parents.

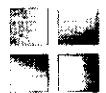
You examine your argument (a complex one that cannot be expressed adequately in two premises and a conclusion) and decide that though it is valid and essentially true, it raises a serious question that should not be ignored. That question is "Would such a system provide sufficient protection for the child?" You address it by imagining a variety of situations that might easily arise, notably the following ones:

1. The parents are obsessed with the fear that their child will bring shame on them. They pressure the doctor to certify that their child will never be able to fulfill parental responsibilities even though that is not really the case. The doctor, though qualified to make an appropriate diagnosis, is unscrupulous and therefore willing to certify anything for a fee.
2. The parents are responsible and the doctor is not only qualified but above reproach morally. The decision is made to sterilize the child at age four. Several years later, medical science finds a way to overcome the child's mental impairment. The child becomes normal, but the sterilization cannot be reversed.

To prevent the first situation from occurring, you revise your argument to specify that certification be made by a board of physicians rather than a single physician. You might also decide the composition of the board. (All surgeons? One or more psychologists? An authority on mental retardation?) Unfortunately, there is no way to ensure that the second situation will not occur, but you decide there is a way to lessen the risk considerably. To that end you add to your argument the stipulation that no sterilization should be permitted before the onset of puberty.

Both this case and the case of parents protesting TV programming are offered to illustrate the *process* of evaluating your positions on issues rather than to promote the arguments contained in them. What is important is not that you agree with these arguments but that you recognize the importance of evaluating your own.

## Warm-Up Exercises



12.1 Willy Joe and Joe Willy are having a conversation of sorts:

*WILLY* There's no such thing as reality, man.

*JOE*:

*JOE* No way ... like, I mean ... it makes no sense that way.

*WILLY*: No, there's no way.

*WILLY* OK, man, you say there's a reality. So describe it to me.

*JOE*:

*JOE* Um ... ah ... uh...

WILLY:

WILLY You can't describe it, so it can't exist. Case closed.

JOE:

How would you answer Willy Joe? Explain your thinking carefully.

- 12.2 One thing, at least, is indisputable about rock music: it produces groups with very creative names. But perhaps you can do even better. Think of as many creative names as you can for a rock group, names you've never heard before.
- 12.3 In Strangeville it was decided that the local barber should shave all those, and only those, who did not shave themselves. Did the barber shave himself? Explain your thinking thoroughly.

## Applications



- 12.1 Evaluate the three arguments presented in the section of this chapter entitled "Recognizing Complex Arguments"—that is, the arguments about media influence on young people, reporting income for tax purposes, and homosexuals in education. Decide whether each argument is sound, and explain your judgment.
- 12.2 Check each of the following arguments to be sure that it contains no hidden premises and, if it is a complex argument, that all parts are expressed. Revise each, as necessary, to make the expression complete. Then evaluate the argument and decide whether it is sound. Explain your judgment.
- Having great wealth is a worthy goal because it is difficult to attain and many famous people have pursued it.
  - Low grades on a college transcript are a handicap in the job market, so teachers who grade harshly are doing students a disservice.
  - The Bible can't be relevant to today's problems; it was written many centuries ago and is filled with archaic phrasing.
  - It is dishonest to pretend to have knowledge one does not have, so plagiarism is more virtue than vice.
  - The credit card habit promotes careless spending, particularly among young people. Therefore, credit card companies should not be permitted to issue credit cards to anyone under age 21.
  - No one who ever attended this college achieved distinction after graduation. Marvin attends this college. Therefore, Marvin will not achieve distinction after graduation.
  - Drug dealing should not be a crime because it does not directly harm others or force them to harm themselves.
  - A mature person is self-directing, so parents who make all their children's decisions for them are doing their offspring a disservice.
  - There's no point in attending Professor Drone's class; all he does

- is lecture in a boring monotone.
- j. Power must be evil because it can corrupt people.
  - k. If the theory of evolution is true, as scientific evidence overwhelmingly suggests, a human being is nothing more than an ape.
  - l. Rock musicians are contributing to the decline of language by singing in a slurred, mumbling manner.
  - m. If emphasis on error paralyzes effort, this college is paying my English professor to make it impossible for me to learn English.
  - n. Nuclear power is a threat to world peace. Nuclear energy stations generate nuclear power. So nuclear energy stations are a threat to world peace.
  - o. Lew Fairman is the best candidate for governor because he is in favor of the death penalty.
  - p. All religious authorities are concerned about the dangers of nuclear war. All politicians are concerned about the dangers of nuclear war. Therefore, all politicians are religious authorities.
  - q. The government should undertake a comprehensive censorship program because censorship eliminates undesirable books and films from the market.
  - r. If the Social Security system is further weakened, the elderly will have to fear poverty. Therefore, if the Social Security system is not further weakened, the elderly will not have to fear poverty.
  - s. Challenging other people's opinions is a sign of intolerance, so debating courses have no place on a college campus.
  - t. It's ridiculous to think that there will be fewer deaths if we ban handguns. Handguns don't kill people; *people* kill people.
  - u. The antiabortionists say that the fetus is human, but they have not proved it. Therefore, they have no reasonable basis for opposing abortion.
  - v. We must either defeat communism or be defeated by it. To be defeated by communism is unthinkable. Therefore, we must defeat communism.
  - w. There is no way that anyone can ever deserve to live better than her or his neighbors, so capitalism is an immoral economic system.
  - x. If an expectant mother drinks, smokes, takes drugs, or fails to get proper rest, she may damage her unborn child. Therefore, if an expectant mother does these things and her child is born with a defect or ailment that can be traced to them, the mother should face criminal charges.
  - y. Custom is a form of folk wisdom. In some parts of the world, it is customary for "bride buyers" to buy (or sometimes kidnap) young women from their parents and sell them to men looking for wives. Even though we might find this practice distasteful, it would be morally wrong for us to object to others' practicing it.

12.3 Identify, investigate (as necessary), and resolve each of the following issues. Be sure you do not just accept your reasoning uncritically. Evaluate it by using the approach explained on pages 217–218. Then modify your argument as necessary and decide how you could most effectively

demonstrate its soundness.

- a. Radar detectors give speeders a warning so that they can slow down in time to avoid getting a ticket. Some people believe the detectors should be banned because they help people break the law. Others disagree, arguing that they should be able to protect themselves from the sneaky practices of highway patrols.
- b. One proposal for combating the drug problem is government seizure of the property (cars, homes, etc.) of convicted drug dealers. One objection to this proposal is that such seizure could violate the rights of innocent parties, such as spouses and children.
- c. Since smoking is not permitted at one's desk in many companies, significant time is presumably lost in unauthorized smoking breaks in restrooms or outside of buildings. A company could save itself that time, and the money it represents, by establishing a policy of hiring only nonsmokers. Of course, some people would consider such a policy discriminatory.
- d. Psychiatrist Thomas Szasz wrote: "If he who breaks the law is not punished, he who obeys it is cheated. This, and this alone, is why lawbreakers ought to be punished; to authenticate as good, and to encourage as useful, law-abiding behavior. The aim of the criminal law cannot be correction or deterrence; it can only be the maintenance of the legal order." Is this viewpoint reasonable?<sup>1</sup> Consider other possibilities, make your decision, and then explain your view and your reasons for holding it, taking care to anticipate and respond to possible objections to it.

## Issue for Extended Analysis

Following is a more comprehensive thinking challenge than the others in the chapter. Analyze and respond to it, following the instructions for extended analysis at the end of Chapter 1. Also, review "The Basis of Moral Judgment" and "Dealing with Dilemmas" in Chapter 2.

### The Issue: TSA Security Procedures

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created not long after 9/11. At first a division of the Department of Transportation, it was later transferred to the Department of Homeland Security. Its function is to ensure the safety of U.S. travel, particularly air travel. Airports can elect to use private firms to conduct screening, but the great majority use TSA. Although travelers grumbled over the ban on fingernail clippers and liquids, such rules were generally considered necessary for security. In 2010, however, when travelers were forced to submit to full-body scans or pat-downs, controversy erupted.

### The Essays

If You Don't Like It, Don't Fly  
By Brian Costello

We'll Never Win Playing Catch Up  
By Joshua Levy

No one enjoys waiting in security lines, emptying pockets, removing shoes, and the rest of the airport routine, including body scanning and pat-downs. But sensible people accept the procedures as necessary in the age of terrorism. They regard the inconvenience as the price of safety.

The full-body scans and pat-downs used by TSA officials at airports are an outrage. They treat everyone in a way no court of law would—as guilty until proven innocent. Ironically, that is the very kind of regime that terrorists would like to impose on us. We have let fear change America for the worse.

Alas, not everyone is sensible. Many people are so obsessed with their rights, imagined as well as real, that they can't appreciate that the scanning procedures protect them. They worry more about people seeing beneath their clothes or putting their hands too close to their private parts than about being blown to bits at 40,000 feet. That's beyond paranoia. It's insanity.

If my opposition to TSA procedures seems extreme, consider this: many members of Congress hold similar views, notably Representative John Mica, who was instrumental in creating the TSA. He believes the TSA has become both bloated and ineffective. As a result, he claims that while screeners have been casting a suspicious eye on grandmothers, nuns, and children, real terrorists have slipped past them, unnoticed.

Ironically, if there were no such procedures and terrorists caused a plane to crash, those same nuts who are now protesting about invasions of privacy would be the first ones to blame Congress and the President for not protecting them.

It's bad enough that TSA screening wastes innocent people's time and assaults their dignity. Worse is that they are reactive rather than proactive. Someone carried liquid explosives, so TSA banned liquids. Someone else put a bomb in a shoe, so TSA made us all remove our shoes. A third person hid a bomb in his underwear, so TSA started more intrusive searches. The next strategy for terrorists, experts warn, is to carry explosive materials in body cavities or in implants. I shudder to think of how TSA will respond to that.

Instead of assuming the worst about the TSA and the entire Homeland Security Agency, we ought to acknowledge that everything they do is based on information that has not been made public—intelligence reports about the latest terrorist tactics and even specific threats to security. The body scanners and pat-down procedures were not designed to create pornographic images or provide sexual gratification, as some critics claim, and there is not the slightest danger that they will be used in that way. After all, the procedures take place in full view of other travelers. No, the new procedures were designed to protect our lives. TSA has its priorities right, for without life, "liberty and the pursuit of happiness" are meaningless.

What we desperately need is a more intelligent and effective approach. We needn't invent it—it already exists. El Al, the Israeli airline, developed what it calls "behavioral profiling," not to be confused with ethnic or racial profiling. They train their agents to detect people who seem nervous or suspicious and subject just those people to searches and in-depth interviews. By adopting that approach,

we'd both preserve our liberty and increase our safety.

## Class Discussion

REBECCA: I get tired of all the criticism of our government. I say we should let the TSA do its job.

NIGEL: If TSA was doing its job, I'd agree. But they are wasting time and money, offending people, and *not* detecting terrorists.

REBECCA: What else can they do? I don't like the Israeli approach because it profiles people.

NIGEL: No it doesn't. It ignores travelers' race and ethnicity and focuses on their behavior. As I understand it, there are certain behavioral characteristics that can't be disguised. When security staff observe those characteristics, they conduct in-depth interviews with the individuals and do thorough searches of them and their belongings.

REBECCA: Doesn't TSA do the same thing in a different way?

NIGEL: No. TSA focuses on finding objects, weapons or bomb materials. The Israelis focus on people's behavior. Big difference.

REBECCA: That may work in a small country, but would it work in one as large as the U.S.?

NIGEL: Perhaps it would have to be modified, but I believe it would work better than our system.

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