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## Give them an argument: logic for the left

Ben Burgis understands that in order to persuade people to join a political movement, he must master rigorous argumentation techniques. He masterfully exposes cheap sophistry to right-wing philosophy and shows why there is still a place for logic and reason in political discourse. This is a crucial manual for those who want to crush and destroy Ben Shapiros in the world. Nathan Robinson, Editor, NewsMany serious left have learned not to entrust themselves to the talk of logic and logical errors associated with the right logicbros. It's a serious mistake. Unlike neoliberal technocrats, who can point to social problems and tell people to trust us, the serious left must learn to argue and convince. In Give them an argument, Ben Burgis arms his reader with essential knowledge of formal logic and informal errors. Backorder (temporary from stock) Description Ben Burgis understands that in order to convince people to join a political movement, you will have to master rigorous argumentation techniques. He masterfully exposes cheap sophistry to right-wing philosophy and shows why there is still a place for logic and reason in political discourse. This is a crucial manual for those who want to crush and destroy Ben Shapiros in the world. Nathan Robinson, Editor, NewsMany serious left have learned not to entrust themselves to the talk of logic and logical errors associated with the right logicbros. It's a serious mistake. Unlike neoliberal technocrats, who can point to social problems and tell people to trust us, the serious left must learn to argue and convince. In Give them an argument, Ben Burgis arms his reader with essential knowledge of formal logic and informal errors. Price \$16.95 \$15.59 Publisher Zero Books Publish Date May 31, 2019 Pages 128 Dimensions 5.4 X 0.4 X 8.4 inch | 0.3 pounds English Type Paperback EAN /UPC 9781789042108 Ben Burgis has a PhD in philosophy from the University of Miami. He is a science fiction writer whose work has appeared in publications such as Tor.com and Prime Books. Burgis now teaches at Rutgers University, New Jersey. We Own the Future: Democratic Socialism-American Style VIEW LIST (16 BOOKS) Give them an argument: Logic for the left (from now on LfL) is in many ways a fun, frolicsome book, written with an attractive combination of pugilism and genius. Burgis has a flair for discussing philosophical issues in a non-alienating manner; His humor and chattines do much for the sugar pill book almost inevitably pettifoggey-invoking the subject, manual logic. And, indeed, much of the book is given over to the nitpicking misbegotten skewers of the right logicbros, which apparently like to invoke hoary Latin names for logical errors when they kill libtards. For anyone who had exposure to dark, unhygienic online lairs that these fraternity house castouts lurk in, it will be luridly intriguing, in some anthropological way, to see a brilliant light on some of the onanistic pedantry that transpires in it. , especially when picking up is carried off with some panache. LfL falls directly into the category of smart, but not taxaminingly deep, light, but not jejune, academy-adjacent, but no academic fare that one has come to expect from Zero Books. The first half of itfl (chapters 1-3) is spent examining and eviscerating a bunch of poorly constructed arguments on the right. (This bears noted that most of these are, at the root, expressions of dissatisfaction with orthodox liberal PC multiculturalism and with the capitalist state, with which Marxists have, or should have, their own distinctive grievances.) Chapter 4 laughs at Ayn Rand's pompous use of logical terminology in the Atlas Shrugged section (Non-Contradiction, Or and A is A) and critiques with sympathetic sympathy the incomprehensible critique of Trotsky's formal logic. Chapter 5 aims to some shoddy (centrist, pro-Hillary, technocrat) statistical reasoning. Chapter 6 reads as a desultory blog post. Its purpose, as far as it can be discerned, seems to be to urge people to put on their cap of thought and figure socialism: Figuring all this means billions of people around the world who are accustomed to taking orders from bosses and owners and learning politicians to run their own jobs and communities [...]. Much of this project will have to involve all these learning people to motivate carefully and accurately with each other about their common tasks. This means, among other things, learning exactly where reasoning can go wrong, so that we can learn together to do better, Burgis predicts. After that, there is a postscript with generic tips about being rational (carefully consider disanalogies, learn to rephrase arguments in their own words, and so on) and a glossary of logical terms that uses some left-leaning (e.g. pro-Bernie, anti-Fox-News, etc.) illustrative examples. With the exception of Trotsky's chapter 4 treatment, to which we shall return, Burgis' comment is dressed in such a topical costume that the book will probably have a short shelf life. Readers in 2020 will already feel the chronological distance of the persiflags of Burgis' current events, much of which feels like a return to BT 2016 by Trump), when it might have seemed appropriate and appropriate to complain about, for example, the statistical crap that Nate Silver Silver's FiveThirtyEight blog to cheer for the Clinton campaign. But there is a more serious problem than ephemerality: namely, that it is hard to understand what the LLM takes itself to be achieving in giving Shapiro and their comeuppance ilk. To help identify what goes wrong in the various sofistries he surveys, Burgis gradually introduces an elementary vocabulary of logical concepts, which includes formal and informal errors, as well as basic epistemological ideas, would be The Inference to the Best Explanation, Inference vs. Induction, Hume's Law (according to which one should not be derived from an is) and some other Philosophy 101 chestnuts. One is uncertain if in this exposure the priority is meant to rest. Are the egregious arguments not-left trotted out to help introduce abstract philosophical content that is supposed to be intrinsically interesting and independently important? Is this just a logic manual written for a niche clientele? Or is the logical apparatus trotted out to help and encourage a concrete political initiative, that of discovering the covert falaciousness of some superficially tempting arguments against which the left must be inoculated? Is this it: is this logic for the left or is it Logic for the left? If the latter, we might wonder why Burgis assumes that the left (anyone that specifically includes this umbrella term) would appreciably benefit from being equipped with the logician scalpel – or rather, benefit from being re-equipped with them; because, according to Burgis, the socialist left [is] composed disproportionately of a quasi-privileged layer of urbanplanners educated in college, and sufficient universities require a kind of introductory logic or critical reasoning class that many Jacobite readers and Chapo listeners [...] have had the experience of learning to distinguish valid and invalid forms of argument and identify short passages as examples of Ad Hominem Begging for the question, and other faults. Is it the thought that the current marginality and impotence of the current socialist left can be blamed, at least in part, on the left, forgetting what their teachers have taught them about building the tables of truth? If the point of LLM is to reject some seductive prophylactic, truly pernicious political reasoning, which might otherwise, according to Burgis, let people head along – then you might also wonder why Burgis bothers with the blatantly flawed, manifestly sub-rational performance of a huckster like Shapiro, let alone solecisms even more embarrassing of epithelial basement Shapiro-housing , some of whose trolltweets Burgis quotes at length. After Even Burgis acknowledges, it is deeply unlikely that any left-wing reader of [Shapiro's book] would debate the left-handed and destroy them. ever felt particularly destroyed. Agree - but then why spend most of a monograph says left (who else would have read LfL?) how much philosophical fraud and a fake shapiro seller is? Is it just for the pious ecstasy of ritualistic (but entirely symbolic) sacrifice or, even less appetizing, the complacency comfort of lefter (and thus smarter)-than-your smugness? These are weak consolation prizes, to be sure, for any Marxist living behind the historical failure of Marxism as a political project! Beneath the surface of the burgis affable humor can detect what can be considered as a fundamental bourgeois-liberal impulse to portray any ideology to one's right as a form of stupidity or a breakdown of rational faculty itself. This is an easy fiction to maintain if the accent did not veers from unlettered charlatans, it would be Shapiro. But there is, in fact, a formidable and explicitly argumentative literature of cultural criticism emanating from (small-c conservative, Western Civ, often large Catholic C) right that might at least be theoretically worth it for the left to spend some time and effort dissecting. Such an undertaking would be instructive, not only because there are conservative thinkers out there who are sophisticated and erudite enough to intellectually reward some philosophical poking and prodding, but also because there have been a lot of non-mad conservative-contrarian criticism, recently, of (identitarian, awakened, unathered,a-cultural, radlib, puritanical-libertine contradiction, contradictory anarchist-statist, etc.) the sensitivity of contemporary social-activist movement. The right was getting a frightening number of things right in its dispeptic railings against (liberal reactivity at) our socially disordered moment, much more than much of the left would care to admit. But rather than sparring with any strong right - red-right grouch reaction, such as Heather McDonald, Thomas Sowell, Pope Benedict or Roger Scruton - Burgis is largely content to pull the other-right fish into an online barrel. Deeper though, isn't it really left that the left should be learning to argue more successfully, and with more adherence to the strictest rules of rational engagement? In many or more respects, the left is the greatest enemy of the left. It itself is the greatest impediment to its only possible significant task: the establishment of a socialist anti-capitalist party of the working class, which will capture political domination in advanced industrial nations, establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and preside over the birth ingering of society's transition to communism. It's not like right and centrists are keeping left down – the left isn't enough of a force to require any kind isolation protocols. Anyone who agrees with will agree that the most useful and interesting part of the is the internecina, left-on-left side of it, where Burgis defends (the very notion of) formal logic against a Trotsky attack makes it into the 1939 pamphlet entitled A petty-bourgeois opposition in the Socialist Workers Party. In short – too much recapitulation would steal Burgis' thunder – Burgis points out that Trotsky makes a complete hash of his dialectical critique of formal logic, largely because Trotsky mistakenly thinks of dialectical logic and formal logic as two species of the same genre and as incompatible options between which one is forced to choose. Nothing could be further from the truth; in fact, Burgis correctly suggests, formal logic can be used profitably to clarify the types of statements that dialectic thinkers, such as Hegel and Marx, are concerned with promoting. This is the only section of the LfL where one feels that Burgis is making a case that really needs to do. A commitment to something called dialectical logic - usually, incidentally, an ostentatious, bauble-like commitment that is expressed in a characteristically tortured jargon and which is invoked decoratively rather than to make any real philosophical work - as against formal logic is a put, in fact, experiencing some regularity among left-handed, almost always left-wing, who had some (but not enough) exposure to capital-T theory. It is not a respectable view, and it is not made more respectable that a careless reader can reap from a quick skimming of the dialectic enlightenment. In the vulgarized form that she usually takes, she falls slightly into the familiar pomo hogwash: unfounded suspicion towards anything relishing the mathematics, crass celebration of rank ambiguity and easygoing tolerance for, or just the abject failure to understand the cognitive and metaphysical significance of the formal contradiction (not at all what Marx and Hegel mean by contradiction), all this is , is self-evident, incompatible with the strict categorizationstructure and the alleged rigorous analysis of Marx's works. All this to say that Burgis is doing the Lord's work in combating this misprision. Perhaps Burgis could write LfL again, this time training his goals on left positions that reliably sabotage left's prospects and ambitions. There is a real cornucopia of bad left-handed ideas in circulation. So Moishe Postone once said memorably, It's not an important word for the left. He meant that the left needs more practice by saying no to itself, it needs to rein in its own delusional fantasies (about its own relevance, about whether the revolution is near, about its possible constituencies and their possible ways of political representation, etc.) and its own quasi-praxis. But the left doesn't have to say no to, because the left doesn't have to pay attention, late neocon-esque neocon-esque personalities, would be Shapiro or, to take a much more strange and colorful example, that the beloved Heideggerian lunkhead from the northern tundra, Jordan Peterson. This game - sparring with anti-democratic dunces that confuses with anti-Marxist philosopher-kings - is certainly not worth the candle, and in any case, any energy spent doing the fight with Peterson et al. would undoubtedly be better spent taking a good long look in the mirror. 28 July 2020

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