

Do you like to be right? To persuade with passion? Learn Rhetoric!

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Joachim Dehais



PhD, PMP, TOGAF

Leadership Coach and Trainer,
Enterprise Architect

Agenda

- Ethos-Pathos-Logos
- Practical Persuasion Tools
- Argumentative Structures
- Style
- Scruples ? Who said scruples ?

Before we start

Your debate

- Take a sheet of paper and a pen
- Write down the topic on which to persuade
- List your audience and opponents
- Clarify temporality
 - Time given to speak
 - Talk structure or sequence
- Core ideas



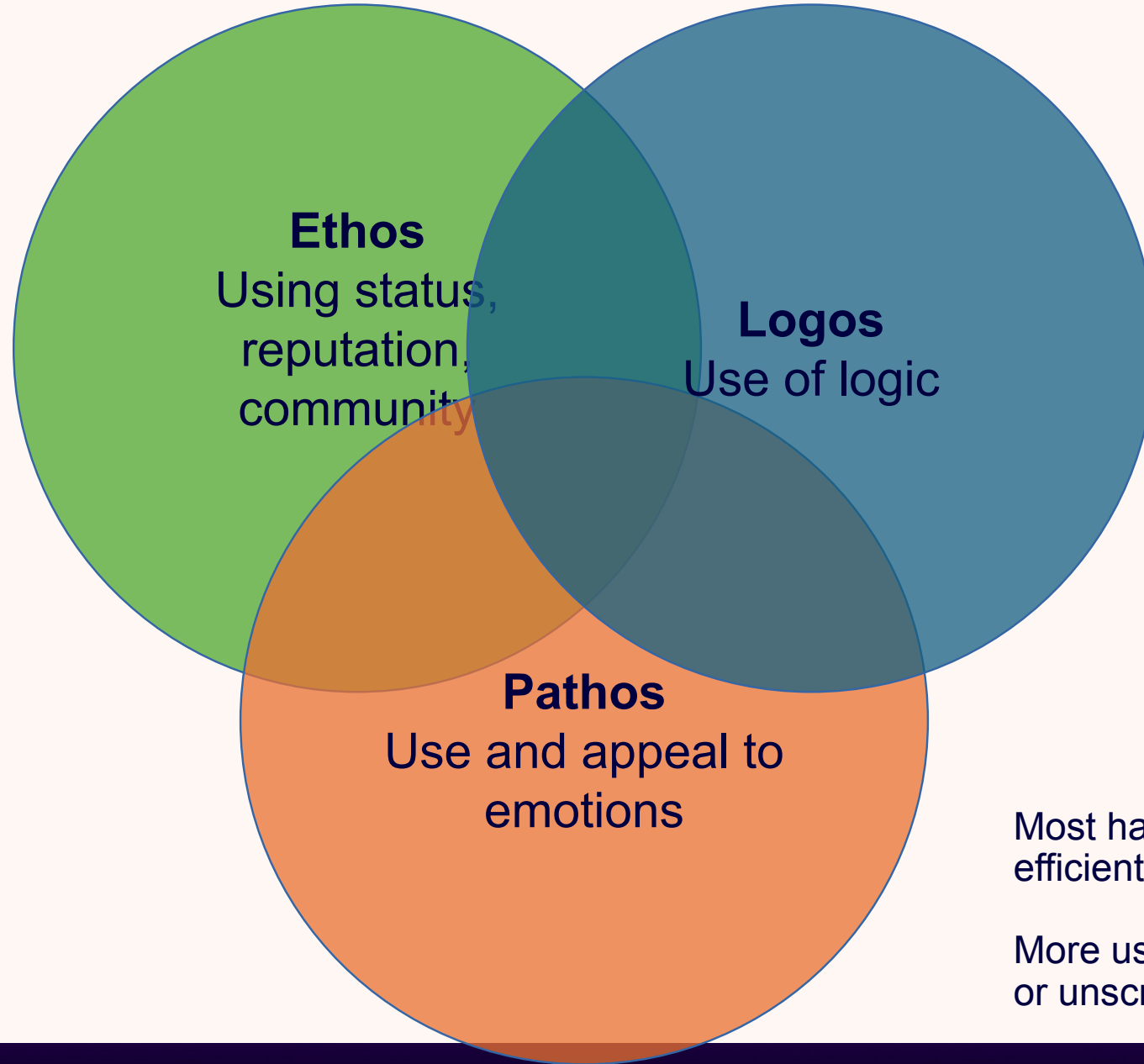
Why, Why not ?

- Tough competition
- Complex work
- Difficult socio-economic situation
- Complex competence
- Social risk (in learning, in being good)

Ethos, Pathos, Logos

Most ignored and discreet,
hardly controllable.

More used by those with
status or by parties.



Most common and accepted.
Easy to control but
ineffective.

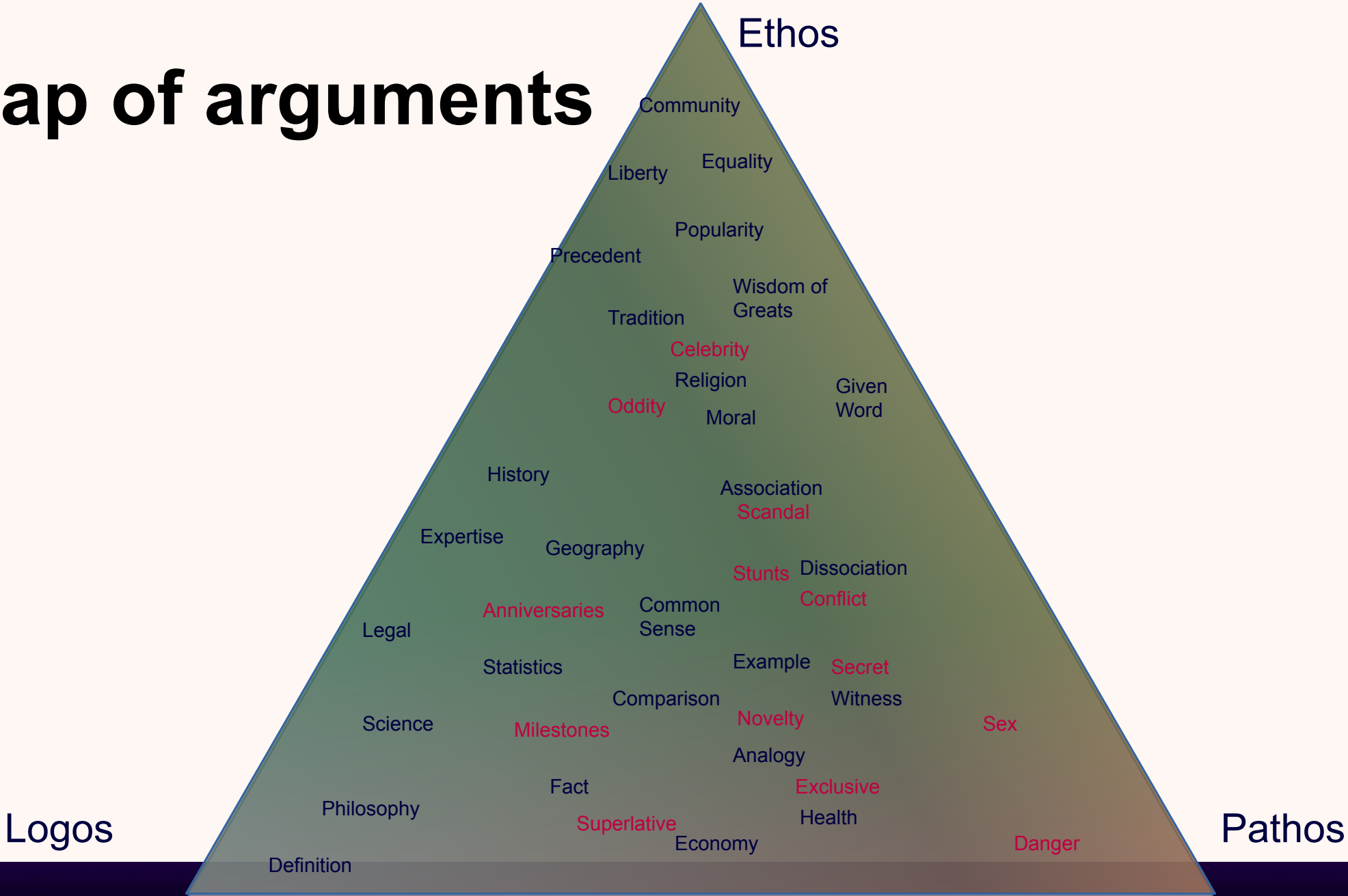
More used by the qualified.

Most hated yet most
efficient in small doses.

More used by unqualified
or unscrupulous.

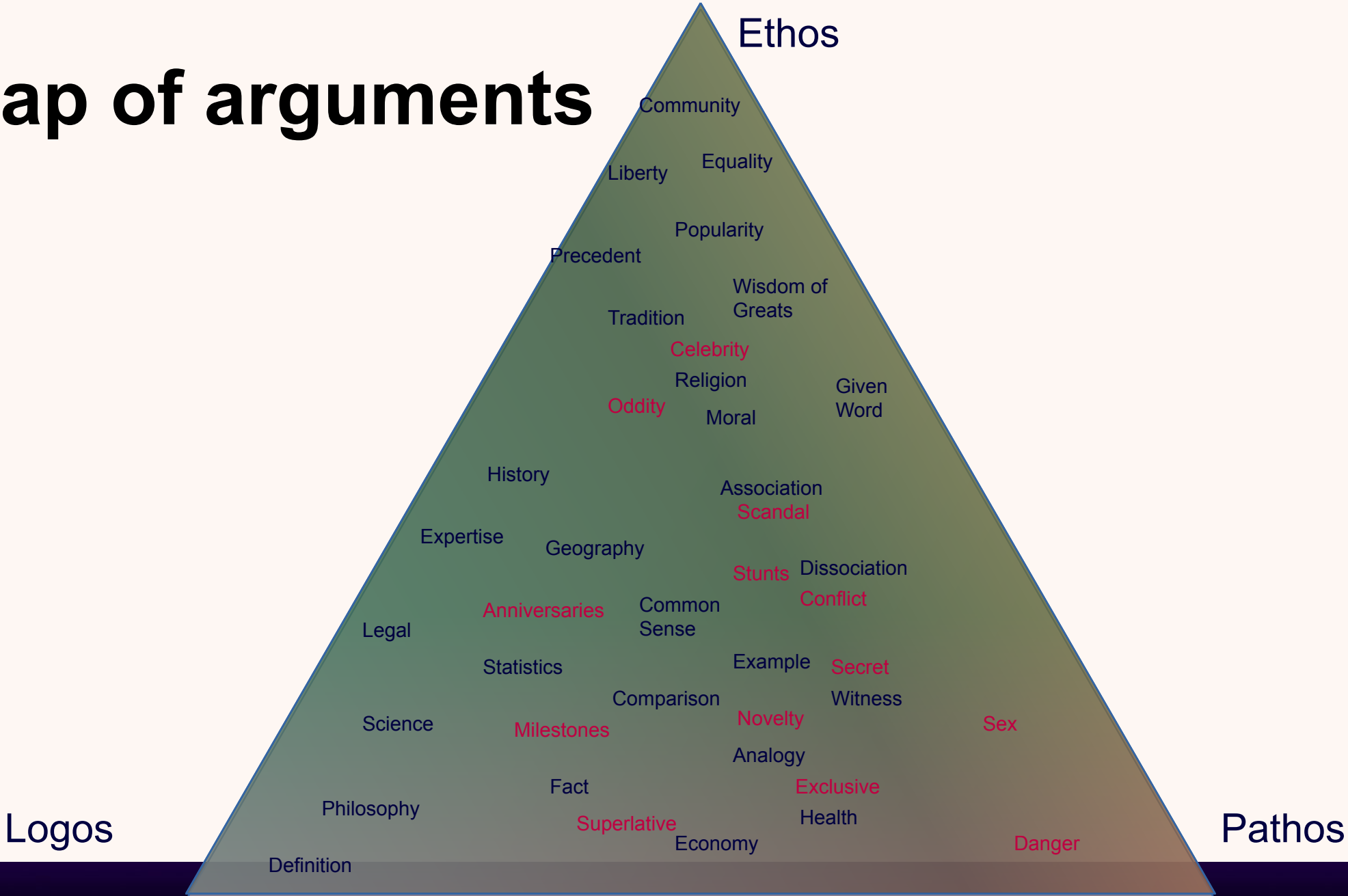
Practical tools: Arguments

Map of arguments



Argument name	Examples	Argument name	Examples
Fact	“The last project on this died” (so don’t try)	Religion	“The bible tells us to” (We shall follow it)
Legal	“GDPR gives fines” (so let’s not do it)	Morals	“That is what real men do” (do as expected)
Economy	“The job market is slowing down” (Let’s boost public spending)	Wisdom of the Greats	“Alexander the Great chose conquest” (Let’s expand our market)
Health	“Cigarettes cause cancer” (so we increase taxes on them)	Popularity	“Most PM would do X” (Follow a safe choice)
Philosophy	“Schopenhauer said life is stuck between suffering and boredom” (Let us better manage expectations)	Given Word	“You told us X” (and if you are inconsistent, we won’t listen)
Statistics	“75% of projects are late and cost too much” (So let’s setup a PMO)	Equality	“So as to not discriminate” (We will choose a suboptimal solution)
Definition	“According to PMI, a project is [XXXX]” (So your idea is not one)	Liberty	“It will reduce flexibility for our employees” (Good for compliance, bad for morale)
Association	“The industry standard is X” (So we should go harder or are better)	Community	“It creates two classes of users” (and risk conflict)
Dissociation	“Our competitors are doing X and failing” (so we do something else)	Witness	“He saw it with his own eyes” (So it must be true)
History	“This country never did X X” (And we will not start)	Expertise	“The CIO thinks so” (We follow his knowledge)
Geography	“Our neighbours have gotten a new garden gnome” (And so should we)”	Science	“Scientists agree” (so no need to think)
Comparison	“X is in our situation, and they got out with X” (so let’s do it)	Example	“My father did it and it went swell”
Precedent	“We did it so last time” (and we will continue)	Common sense	“You know as well as I do that to to be relaxed you should drink before a presentation”
Tradition	“We have always done it like this” (and so it shall be)		

Map of arguments



Your debate

Define your tolerance for:

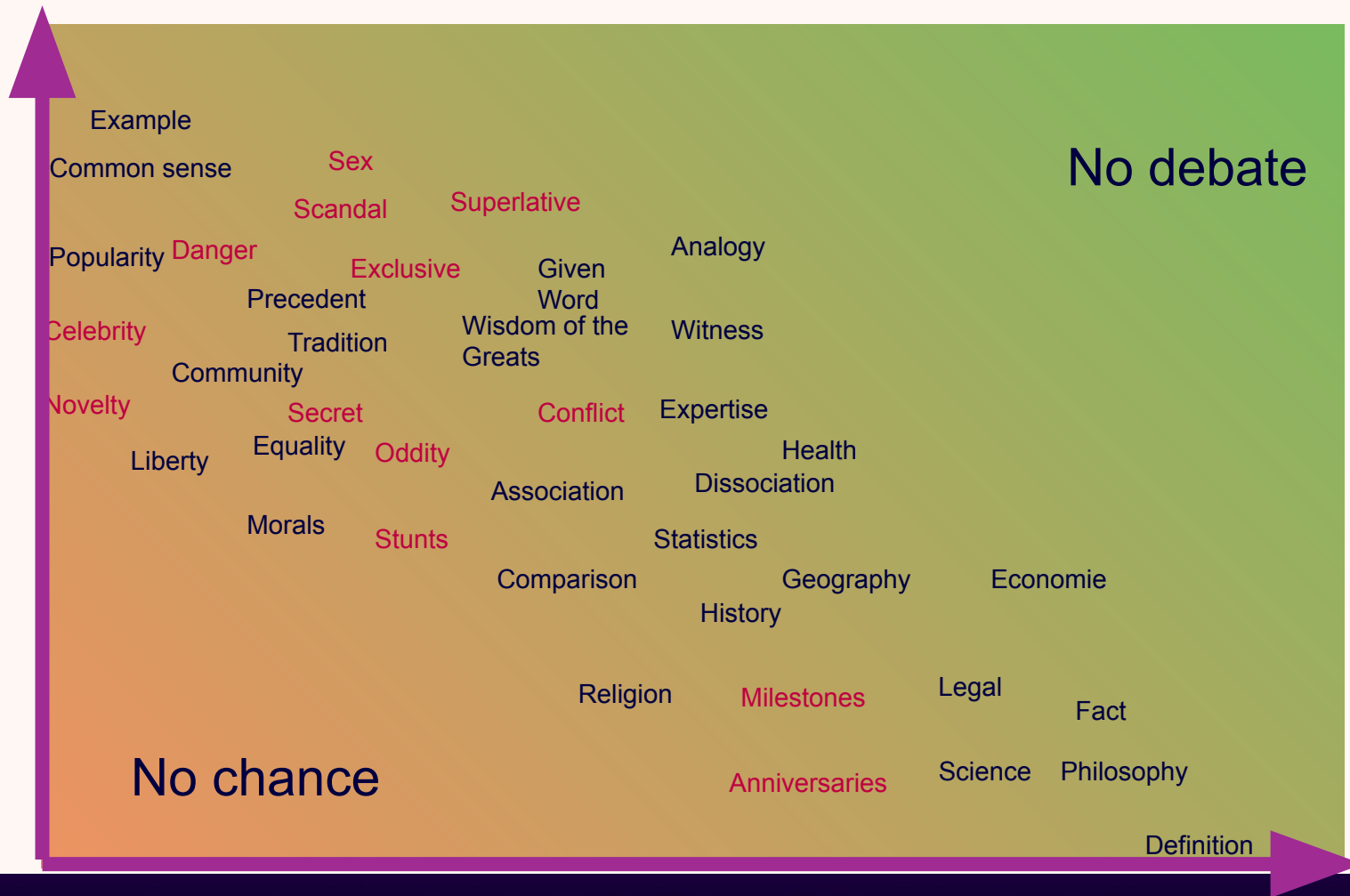
1. Rigor (1-5)
 - a. From childlike wonder to scientific pedantry
2. Use of emotions
 - a. From cold Spock to TV drama
3. Use of reputation (effort)
 - a. From young upstart to powerful magnate

Compromise



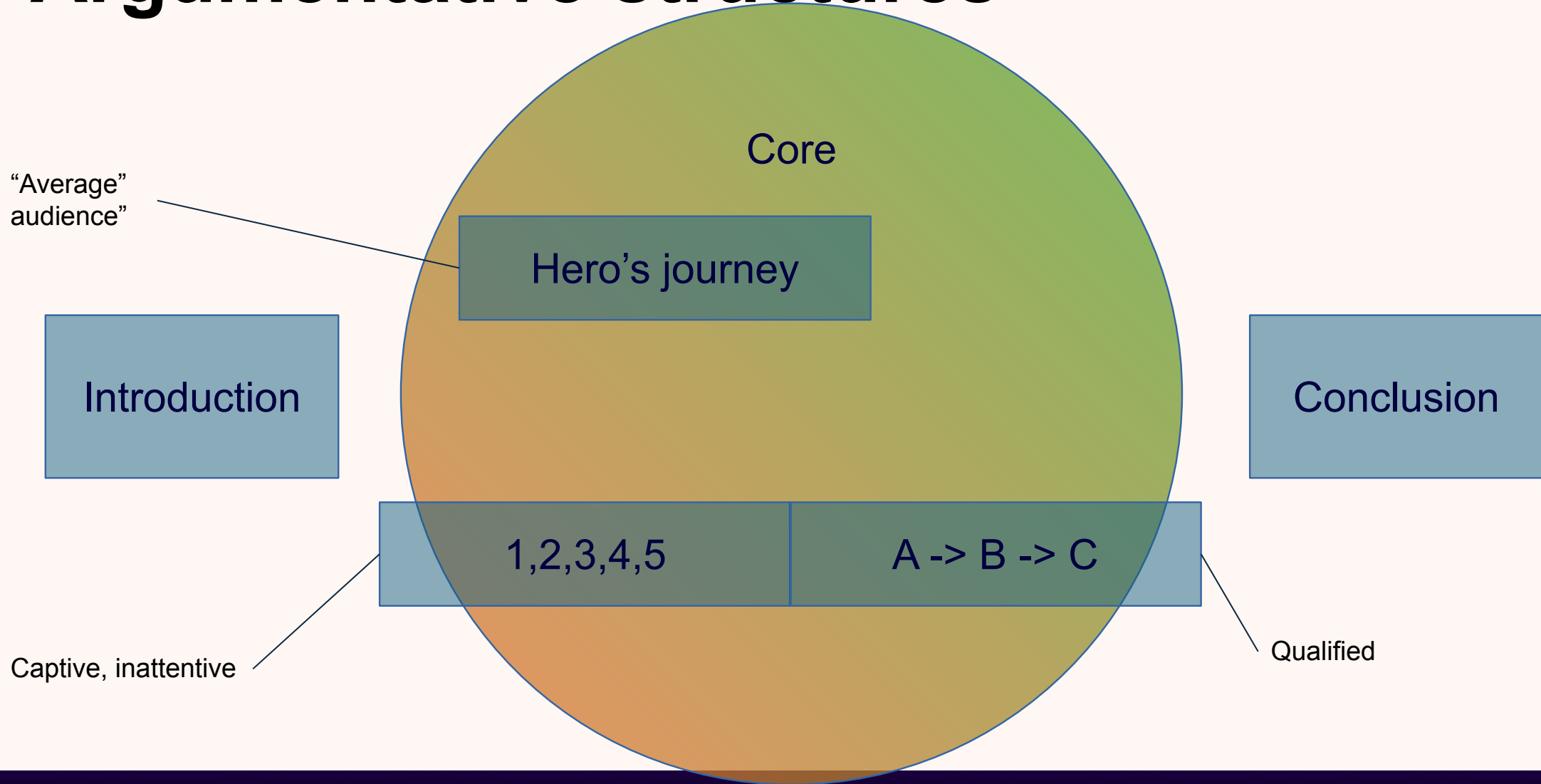
Argument selection

- List your arguments
- Mark your arguments:
 - Rigor
 - Effectiveness
 - Personal conviction



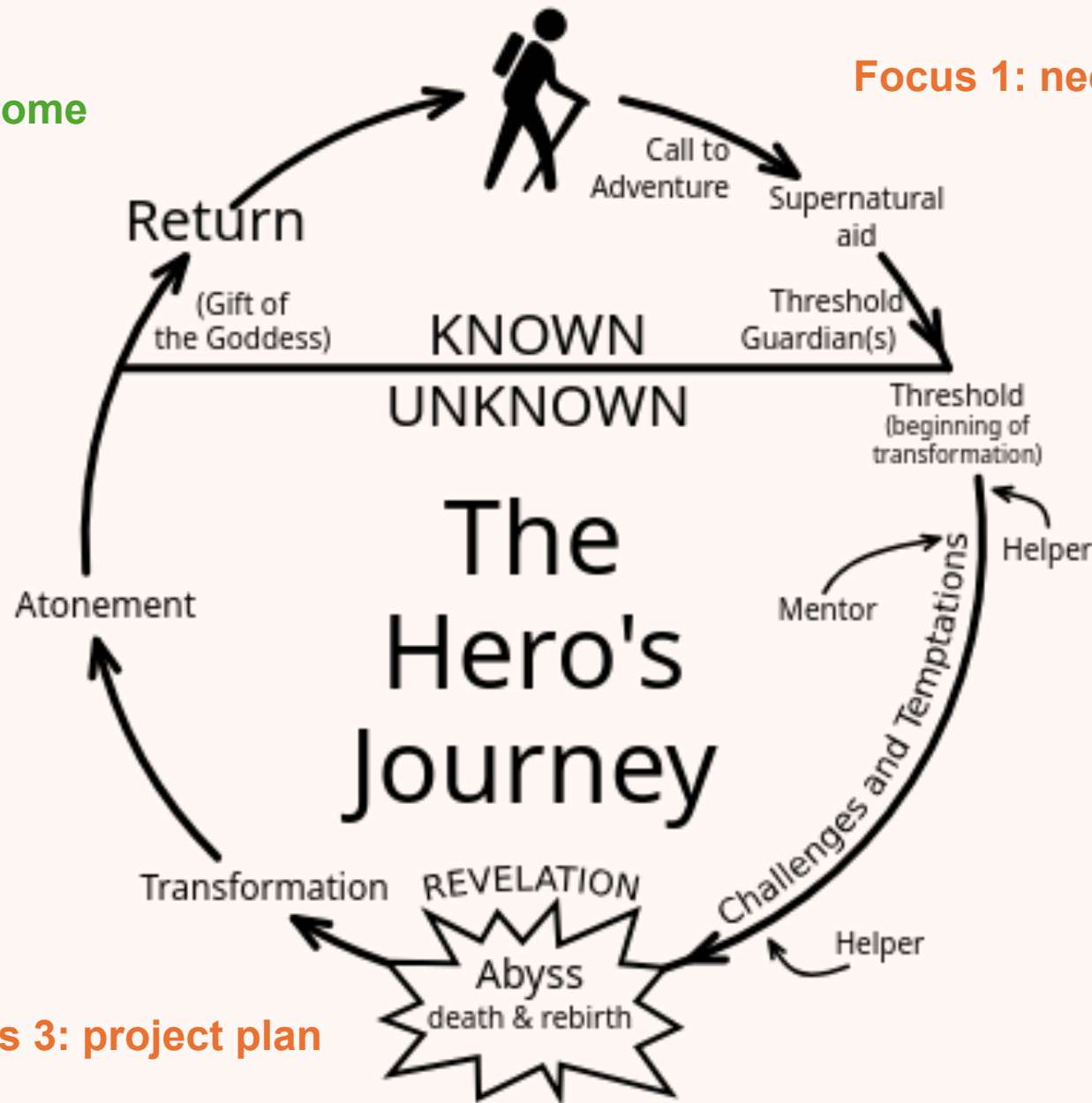
Structures

Argumentative structures



Focus 4: outcome

Focus 1: need or problem



Focus 2: yourself as helper

Focus 3: project plan

Your debate

- Choose whether to tell a story, build logic, or flood
- Write down the time needed per argument
- Select those short, with maximum effectiveness, and rigor

Style

Style

- Denotation, connotation, modulation
 - Erase negatives, take positive control on your side, and the reverse.
 - We have made mistakes, but it worked -> There were issues but we saved it.
 - Post-mortem -> lessons learned -> retrospective -> preventive actions
- Incantations, assonances, métaphors
 - “Project management is a discipline, project management is a tool, project management is the tool of your success!”
 - “With the care of our competent colleagues, we completed this project cleanly.”
 - “Project management ? It is the accountant of your success!”

Your Debate

- Choose one argument
- Paraphrase it to its most negative, neutral, positive, imposing
- Write a catchphrase for your idea: incantation, assonance, or métaphor

Objections, Disqualifications

- Types

- Ad datum: question data
- Ad rem: question logic
- Ad hominem: question your coherence and argumentation
- Ad personam: question your morals

- Response

- **Disqualify** by ignoring it: risky but highly efficient for minor points.
- **Defend** and demonstrate rigor : unassailable but slow, perceived weakness. For key points.
- **Change** the topic: « you attack X because you cannot defend Y, which is much worse ». Useful if weak or far from the core topic.
- **Reveal** the technique: useful for ad hominem and ad personam. Shows the weakness of your opponent and avoid new attacks.
- **Attack** in escalation: rarely useful, can be used after multiple personal attacks. Sets the opponent back in their place and avoid new attacks.

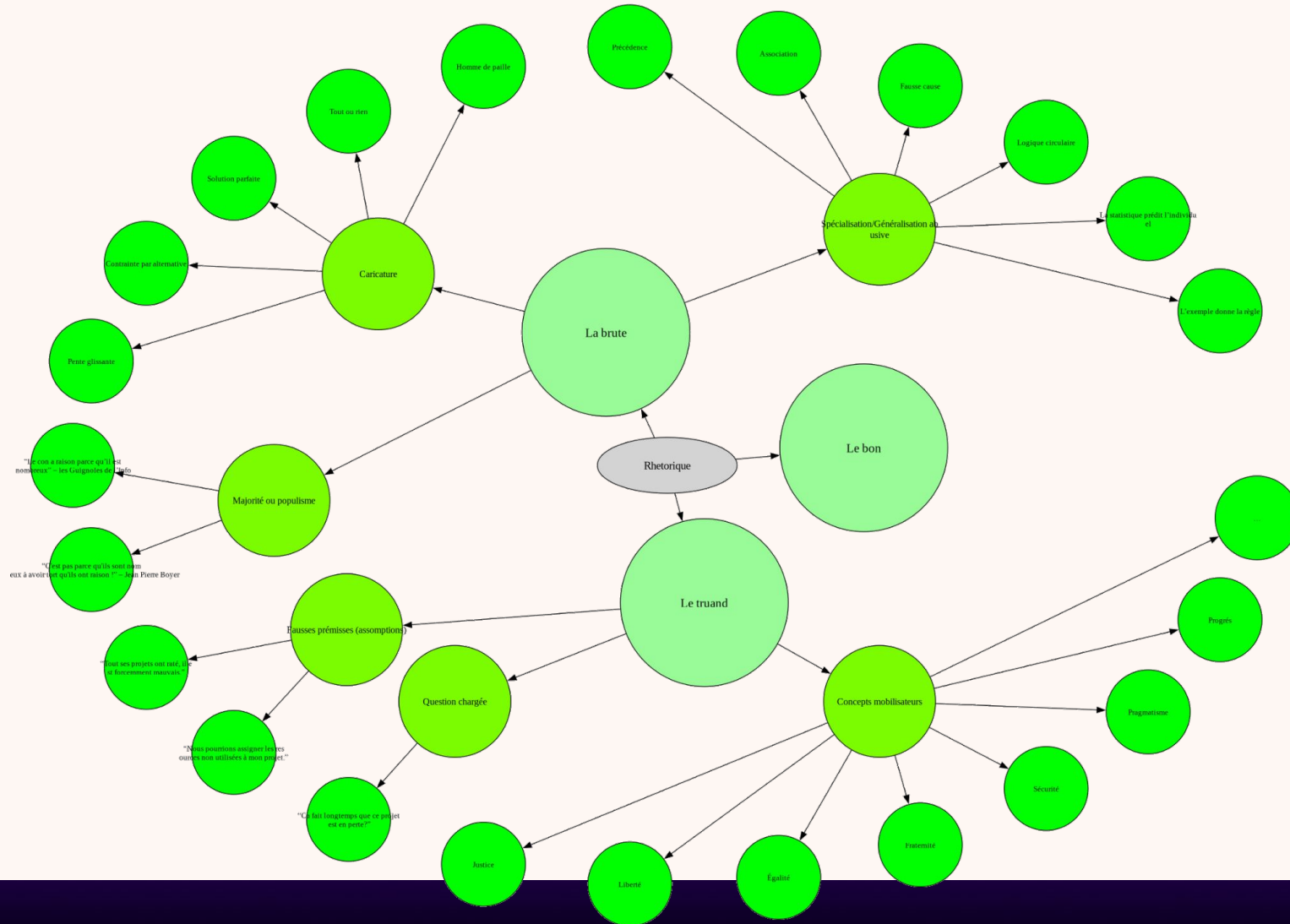
Your debate

On your map of arguments, add:

- Your opponents' arguments
- Audience questions
- Potential taboos
- Your personal weaknesses

Scruples?

Scruples ? Who said scruples ?



Catégorie #1	Catégorie #2	Catégorie #3	Exemple	
Abusive specialisation or generalisation	Example as the rule		My Swiss friends eat raclette, must be all the Swiss.	
	Aggregate and individual		The average swiss household earns 10kCHF/month, noone should worry about inflation.	
	Circular logic	A <-> B but pretend A -> B		A real PM has a PMP, if you don't have a PMP you are not a real PM.
		A -> B -> C -> A		You do have anger issues, look at you, you are getting angry just because I said it,
	False cause	Correlation is causation		The more ice cream you eat, the more you risk a sunburn.
		Precedence is causation		Since Kevin arrived, nothing works.
	Association	Guilt by association		Many manager manipulate, he is a manager, therefore a manipulator.
		Validity by association or expertise		He's from the same program as the CEO, he must be brilliant.
		Identity politics/Expert fallacy		You are not IT/ too young / not from here, you can't understand.
	Precedence	No proof means proof of the contrary		Since you have no data supporting your idea, it must be bad.
		No precedent means impossible		We have never done it, it can't be done.
		Blocking precedent		We have always done it so, no reason to try something else
		Etymological fallacy		Doctor from Latin « Instructor »
		Sunk cost fallacy		It cost too much to put in place, we should not remove it.
Caricature	Strawman		We need new KPIs -> You want to change the entire organisation..	
	All or nothing		You can't explain this exception so your point is moot / it's only an exception to my rule.	
	Perfect solution		This solution does not resolve all our needs, so we will not take it.	
	Constrained by alternatives		In your situation, you can only go for X,Y,Z	
	Slippery slope		If we offer this for a low price, we will become low-level providers.	
Populism			« The idiot is right because he is many ». Many people disagree so you must be wrong.	
Loaded questions			Has this project been failing for a long time? How often do you clash with stakeholders?	
« Mobilising » concepts	Security		If we go like this, GDPR will hit us, think about the risks!	
	...			

Your debate

Write down on your argument map :

- Objections, disqualifications, or fallacies of your opponents.
- For each, find a response.

References

- Le Pouvoir Rhétorique (Rhetoric Power), Clément Viktorovich
- Petit Manuel de Mauvaise Foi (Little Manual of Bad Faith), Isabelle Chataigner, Charles Haroche, et Guillaume Prigent
- How to be a Spin Doctor, Paul Richards
- The art of Always Being Right, Schopenhauer
- Influence, Robert Cialdini
- The 48 Laws of Power, Robert Green
- The Psychology of Selling, Brian Tracy
- Getting to Yes, William Ury
- Il Principe, Machiavelli

Conclusion

- Complex, risky, but oh so valuable competence.
- Simple tools:
 - Objectives, List, Impact-assessment, Priorisation, Narration, Formulation, Défense.
- Tools to foresee and detect attacks.
- Armed response.
- Connected competences:
 - Redirection, Negotiation, Sales.
- But also:
 - Competitiveness vs agreeableness, Extroversion, Sneakiness.

Joachim Dehais



PhD, PMP, TOGAF

PMI Switzerland VP Members and
Volunteers until 02/2026

joachim.dehais@pmi-switzerland.ch

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