

Summary. Johnson's aim is to set out the criteria by which arguments ought to be evaluated. His view of the nature of arguments is that they are attempts at rational persuasion, i.e. persuasion by the force of the better reasons, and nothing else; on this view, *good* arguments are those that fulfill their purpose of rational persuasion (181, 189). Johnson also holds that in order to achieve the purpose of rational persuasion, arguments must have both an illative core (a premise-set, together with its conclusion, which constitutes a positive case for the conclusion) and a dialectical tier (a separate part of the argument where known or anticipated objections and criticisms are met) (206). Good arguments have good illative cores and dialectical tiers, so a complete theory of evaluation will involve a set of illative criteria and a set of dialectical criteria by which arguments are evaluated. I am concerned here with the criteria for the illative core, and in particular, with one of Johnson's criticisms of Hamblin's arguments against the truth criterion.

The four criteria that Johnson identifies for the illative core are the following. First, the premises of an argument must be individually rationally *acceptable*, which is to say that they must either be supported with good reasons, or else they must be offered without support but they are such that the arguer has good reason to think that the audience has good reason to accept them (194). Second, the premises must be *relevant* to the conclusion (either individually or taken together (201)), which is to say that they must bear on the truth (or acceptability (204)) of the conclusion. Third, the premises must be *sufficient* for the conclusion, which is to say that there must be enough support of the type that is offered, and also a sufficient variety of support (e.g., when selling a house, it is not enough to show the potential buyers a wealth of evidence that the neighbourhood is safe; one must also show them that the electricity functions properly, etc.) (204-205). Fourth, the premises must be true (on some yet-to-be-specified conception of truth – truth might best be understood, for the purpose of argument evaluation, in (e.g.) relativist terms) (197-198).

Johnson gives a positive argument in favour of including truth in the set of evaluative criteria, as well as a response to Hamblin's objections to doing so (that is, Johnson's case for truth as a criterion of premise adequacy includes both an illative core and a dialectical tier). What I am concerned with is his response to Hamblin's example of an argument with a true premise that is not acceptable, which (Hamblin claims) shows that truth is neither necessary nor sufficient for premise adequacy. The premise in Hamblin's example is that oranges contain dietary supplements. Hamblin's claim is that, to an ancient Roman, this premise would not be acceptable; so, despite the fact that it is true, it is not a good premise to use in an argument. Johnson argues that Hamblin has misdiagnosed the problem with this premise: ancient Romans would be justified in rejecting it because they would not *understand* it (trading, as it does, on the concept of dietary supplements, which they did not have available to them). Johnson gives several other criticisms of Hamblin's argument, but that criticism is the one that I want to discuss.

Reflection. I'd like to propose another example of a premise that is perfectly intelligible to the audience, and is also true, but is not acceptable to the audience, and it is therefore not a good premise to use in an argument. We can grant Johnson that Hamblin has misdiagnosed the ancient Roman example, in other words, but still think of better examples that will get across the same point. The example I have in mind is "the sun does not move around the earth." This claim, used as a premise in an argument with most medieval thinkers, would be entirely unacceptable, even though they could understand it, and we know now that it is true. Because it is an unacceptable premise to a medieval thinker, it is not a good premise to employ with such a

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person, despite the fact that it is both true and intelligible to him.