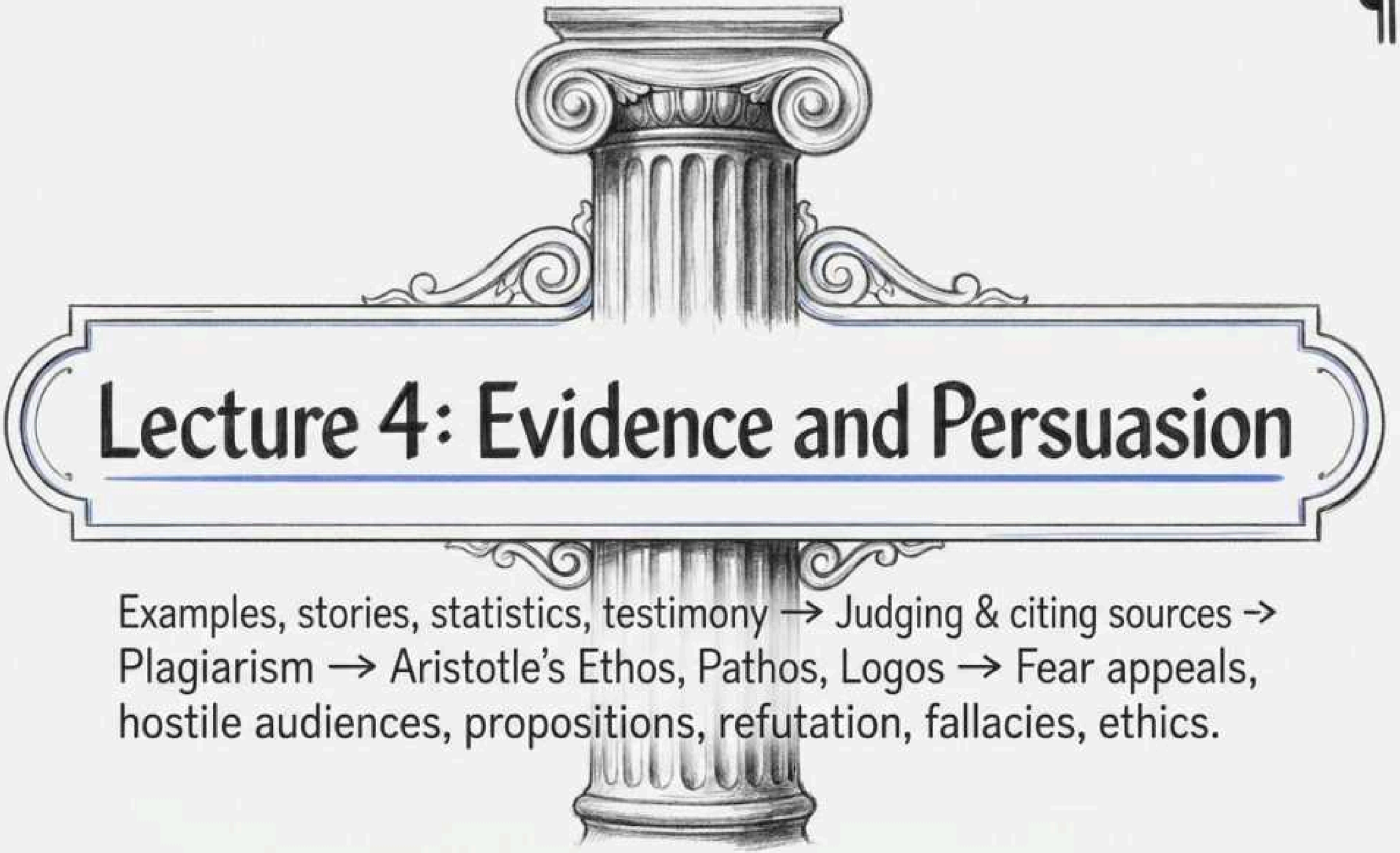


Lecture 4: Evidence and Persuasion

Examples, stories, statistics, testimony → Judging & citing sources → Plagiarism → Aristotle's Ethos, Pathos, Logos → Fear appeals, hostile audiences, propositions, refutation, fallacies, ethics.

Claim – Support = Opinion

Claim + (Examples + Stories + Statistics + Testimony) = Trust

This is the longest lecture in the course because it is the one that decides whether people trust you.

¶ 4.3



Example (Brief, Extended, or Hypothetical)
→ Illustrates a point.



Story (Narrative)
→ Puts the idea in a human setting.

Supporting Material



Statistic
→ Summarizes many cases in a number.



Analogy
→ Unfamiliar
≈ Familiar

Testimony
→ Quotes someone else (expert/witness)



Using a mix keeps the audience interested and makes your case stronger.

Handling Statistics with Care

DO ✓

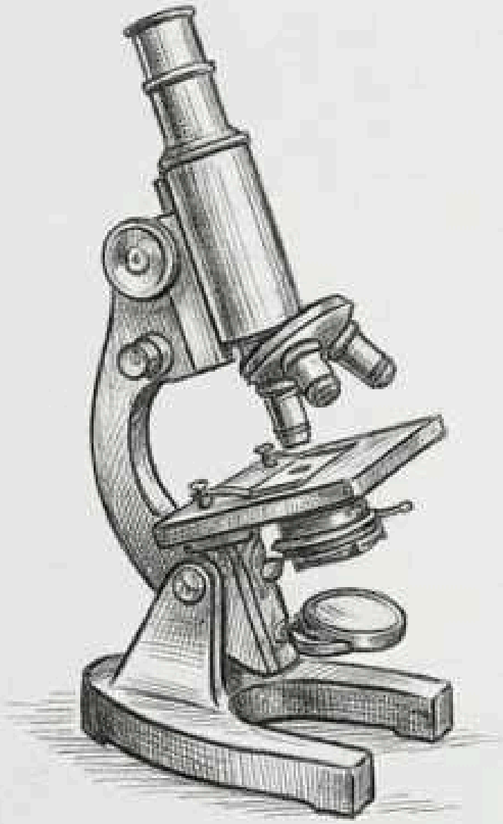
- Round numbers (e.g., Nearly 1 in 3).
- Compare data to make it meaningful.
- State origin.
- Explain meaning (A number heard once and not explained is soon forgotten).

DON'T ✗

- Numb the audience.
- Use raw, complex decimals (e.g., 31.7%).

¶4.5

The Two Faces of Testimony



Expert Testimony	Lay Testimony
Draws on Authority & Knowledge (e.g., a physician on a health question).	Draws on Experience & Ordinary Life.



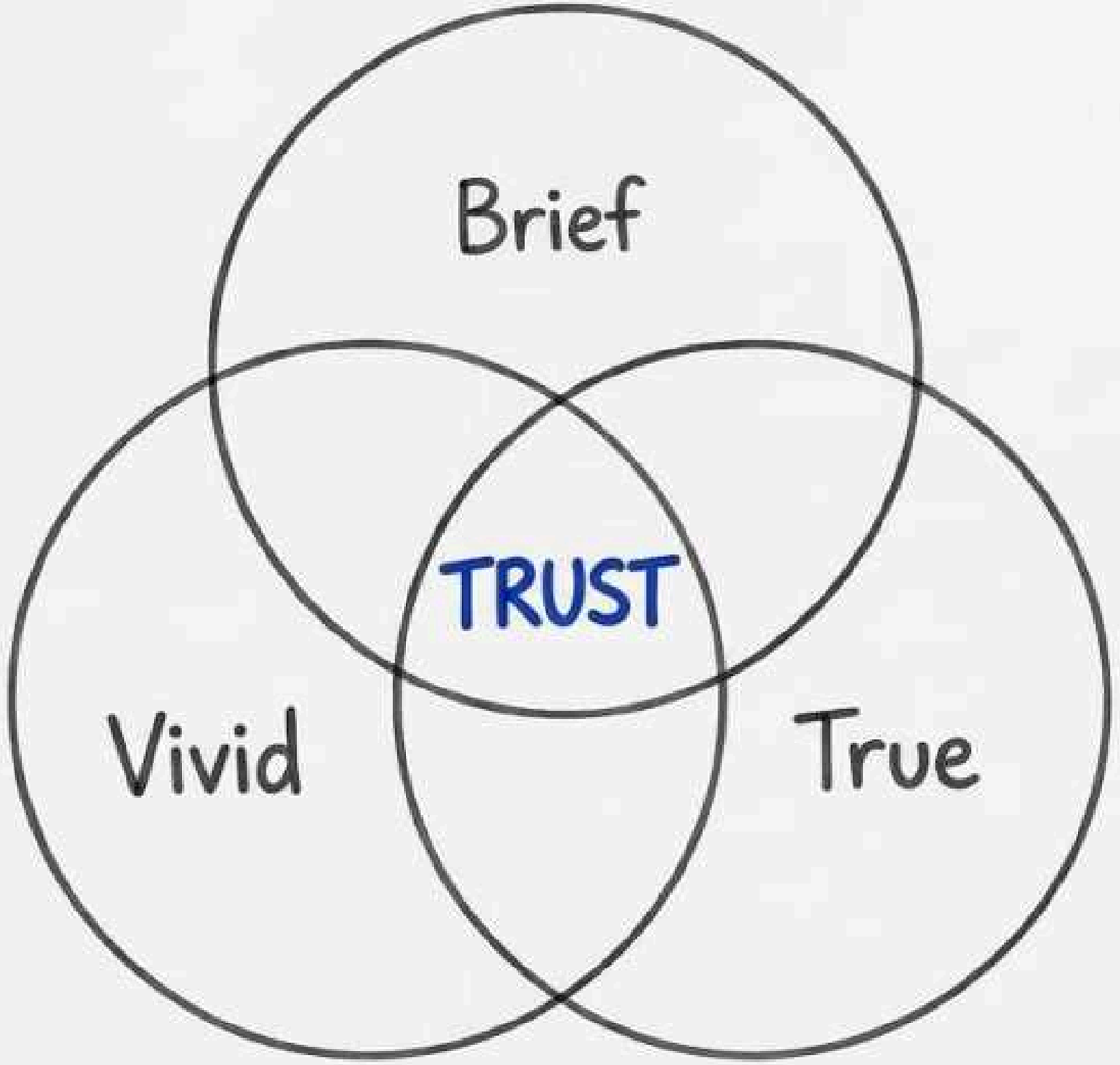
Quote accurately in context. State who they are and why they matter.

DANGER: Never trim a quotation so it says the opposite of what the speaker meant.

The Anatomy of a Powerful Story

People remember stories far better than lists.

A short narrative makes an abstract point feel real.



If it is invented, declare it. A made-up story presented as fact destroys trust the moment someone discovers it.

The 5-Point Source Diagnostic

¶ 4.7



- ☐ Authority: Does the author have the standing to speak?
- ☐ Accuracy: Can the information be confirmed elsewhere?
- ☐ Currency: Is it recent enough for the topic?
- ☐ Objectivity: Is the source unbiased, or does it have an interest in a specific conclusion?
- ☐ Proximity: Primary (the study/document) vs. Secondary (reports on the primary)?

AI Tools: Check any source they give you. They can invent citations that sound real.

Oral Citations & Plagiarism

According to...

↓

[Source: e.g., 2023 CDC Report]

↓

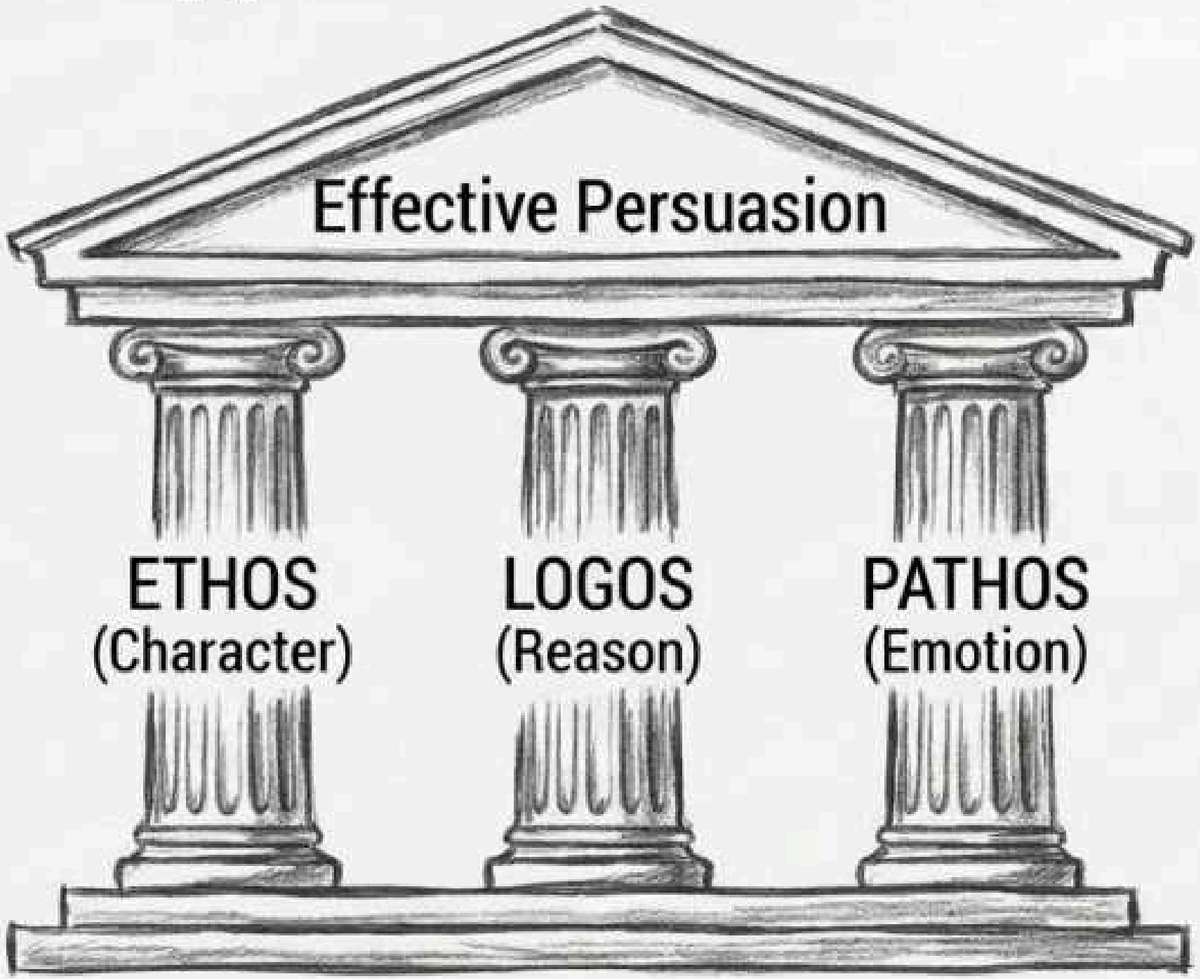
Results in: Credit + Credibility

Close Paraphrase ≠ Your Idea (If Uncredited)

Plagiarism is dishonest but easily avoided with notes kept from the start.

Aristotle's Three Appeals

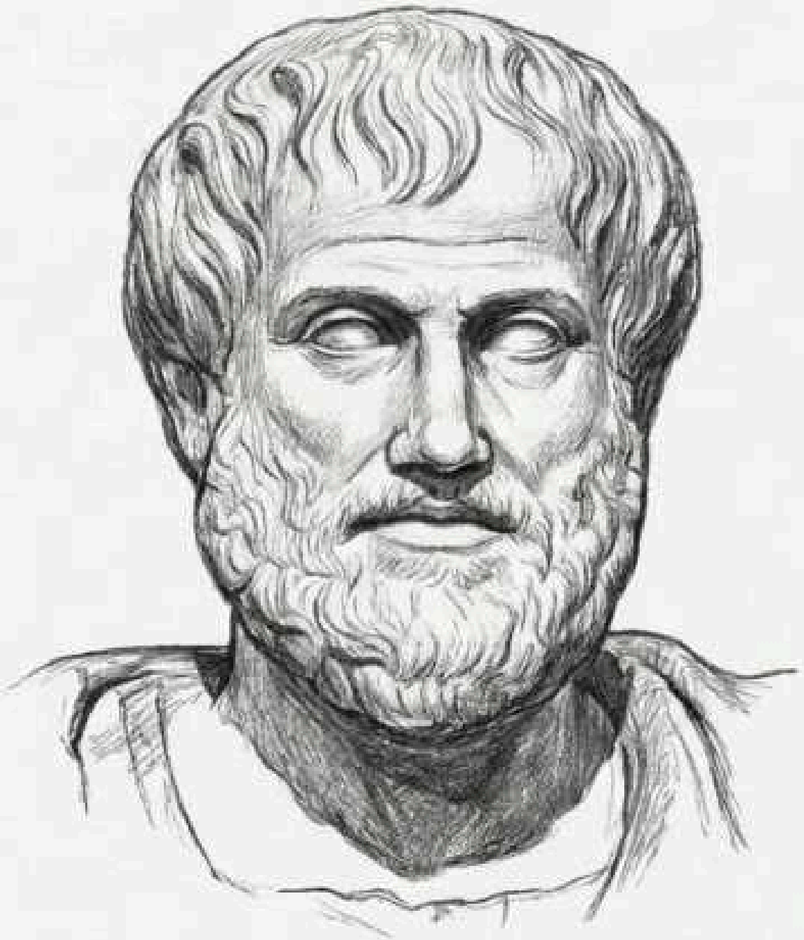
¶ 4.9



From Aristotle's Rhetoric. A lopsided speech relies on only one. Effective persuasion requires all three working together.

Ethos: The Appeal to Character

¶ 4.10



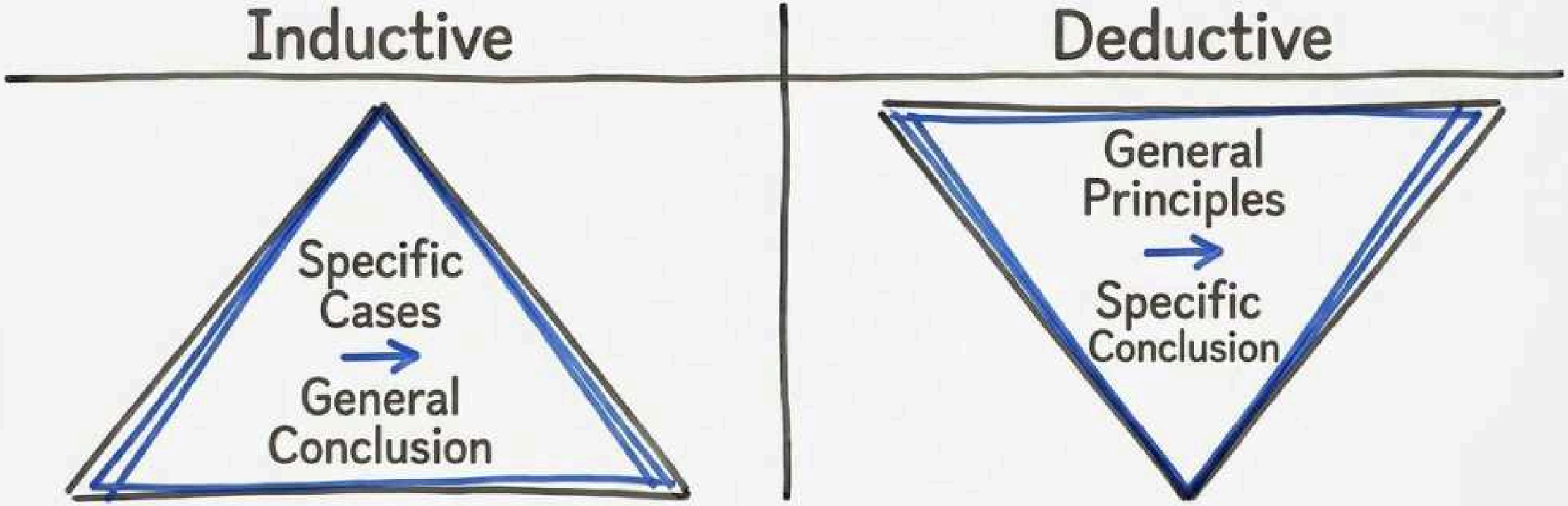
Ethos = Competence + Character + Goodwill

[Know your subject (Competence).]
[Be honest about what you don't know (Character).]
[Give credit to others (Character).]
[Care about listeners over winning (Goodwill).]

Starts before you speak with your reputation
→ Can be lost in a single act of dishonesty.

Logos: The Appeal to Reason

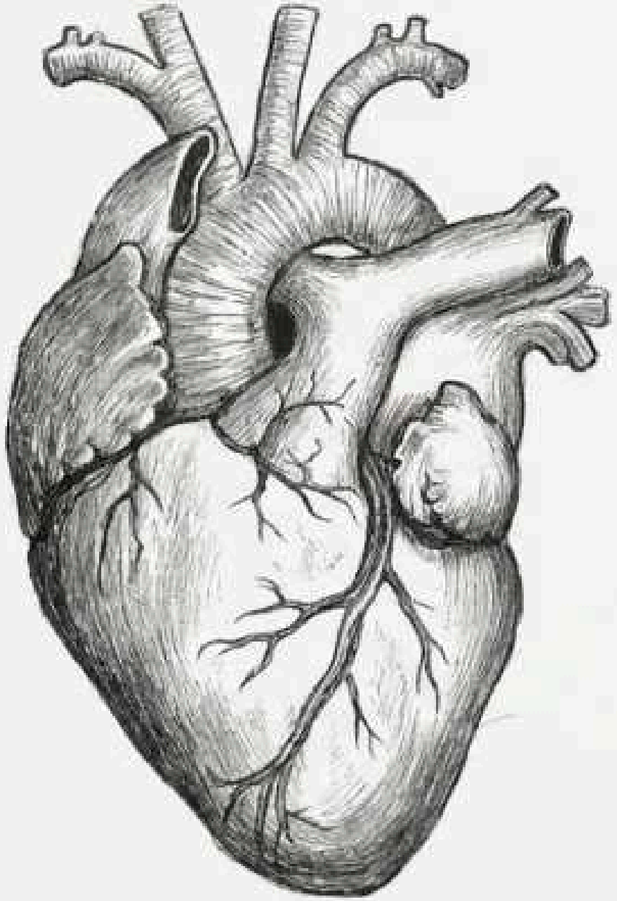
[Evidence] → (Reasoning links the two) → [Claim]



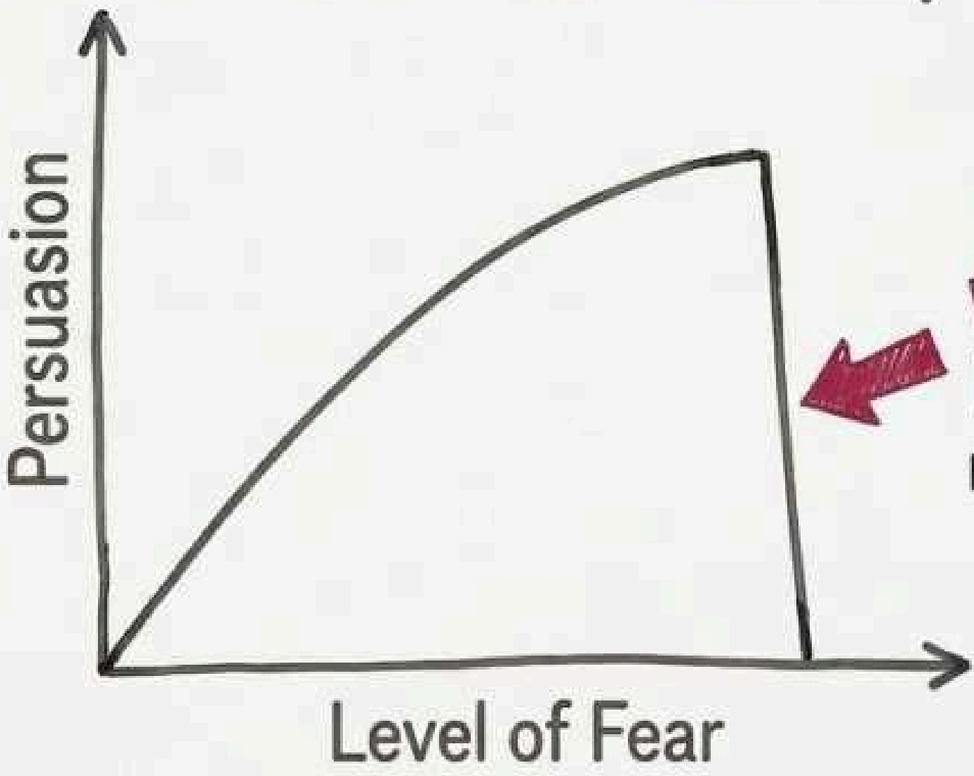
Ask of every claim: What is the evidence, and does it really support it? (Explored further in Philosophy 102 B: Logic).

Pathos: The Appeal to Emotion

Legitimate when the emotion fits the facts (e.g., a vivid story of one patient makes a statistic of thousands real). Must never replace reason.



The Fear-Remedy Curve



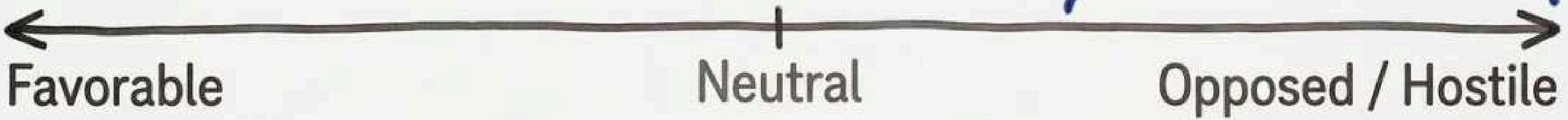
Persuasion crashes if Workable Remedy = 0. Fear without a remedy makes people tune out.

Navigating Audience Stances

¶ 4.13

Do not expect 10-minute conversions.

Step 1: Find common ground.
Step 2: Show you understand their view.
Step 3: Ask them to consider one point.



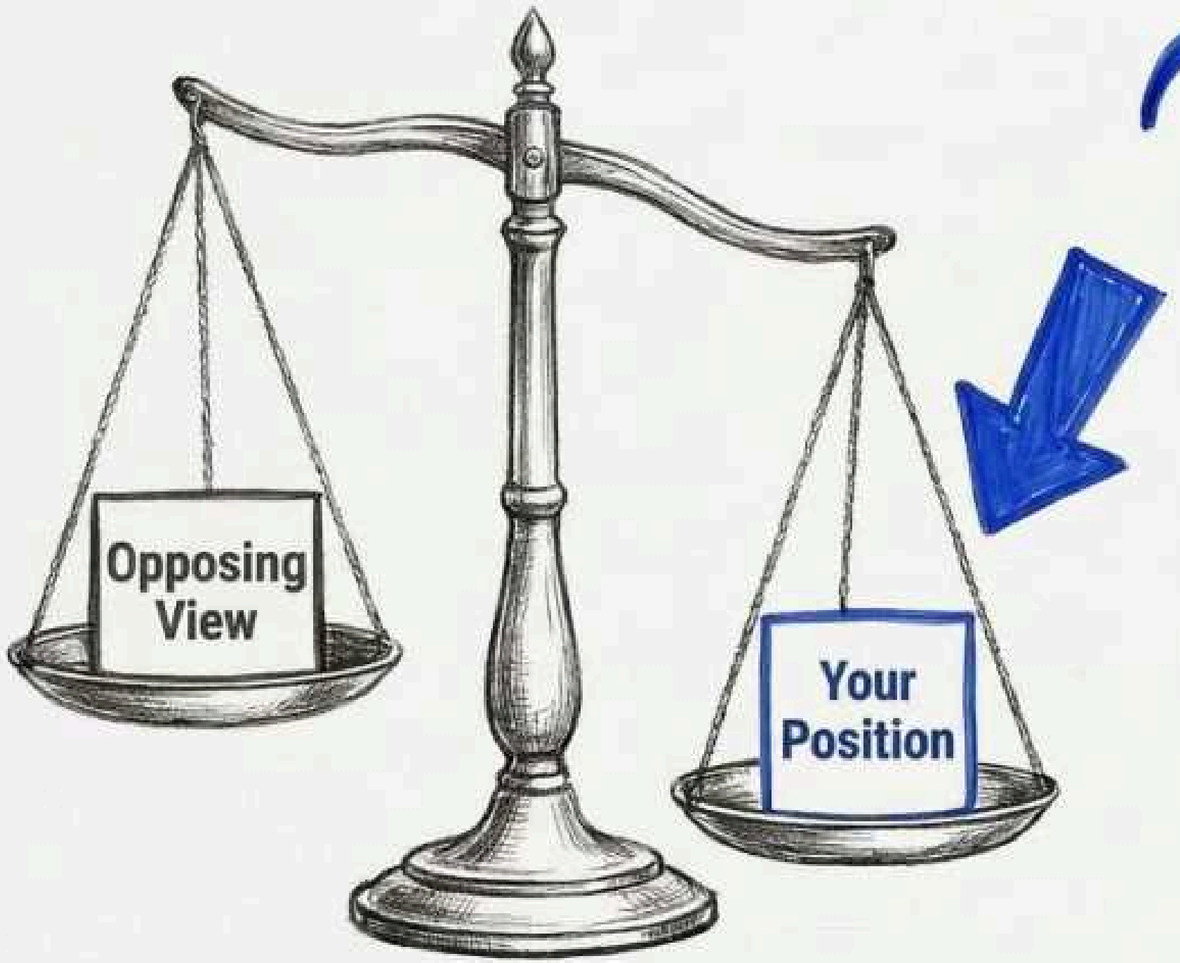
Persuasion is gradual. Moving someone a little is a real success.

Three Propositions of Persuasion

FACT	VALUE	POLICY
Question: Is it true or false?	Question: Is it good or bad, right or wrong?	Question: What should be done? **Burden of Proof:** **Problem + Plan +** **(Benefits > Costs)**

The Power of Refutation

¶ 4.15

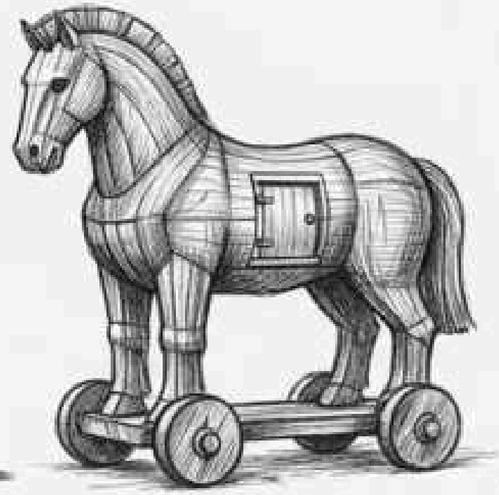


1. State opposing argument in its strongest form (NO caricatures).
2. Answer it fairly.
3. Explain why you still hold your position.

(Highly persuasive for informed or opposed audiences).

Confidence + Fairness = Respect

Spotting Common Fallacies



Ad Hominem	Attacks the person instead of the argument.
Straw Man	Distorts the opponent's view to easily knock it down.
False Dilemma	Pretends there are only two options.
Bandwagon	Argues something is right because many believe it.
Slippery Slope	Claims (without evidence) that one step leads to disaster.

The Ethics of Rhetoric

¶ 4.17

Could you state your methods openly to the audience?

YES

Honest Persuasion: Gives good reasons. Respects the listener's freedom to think and say no.

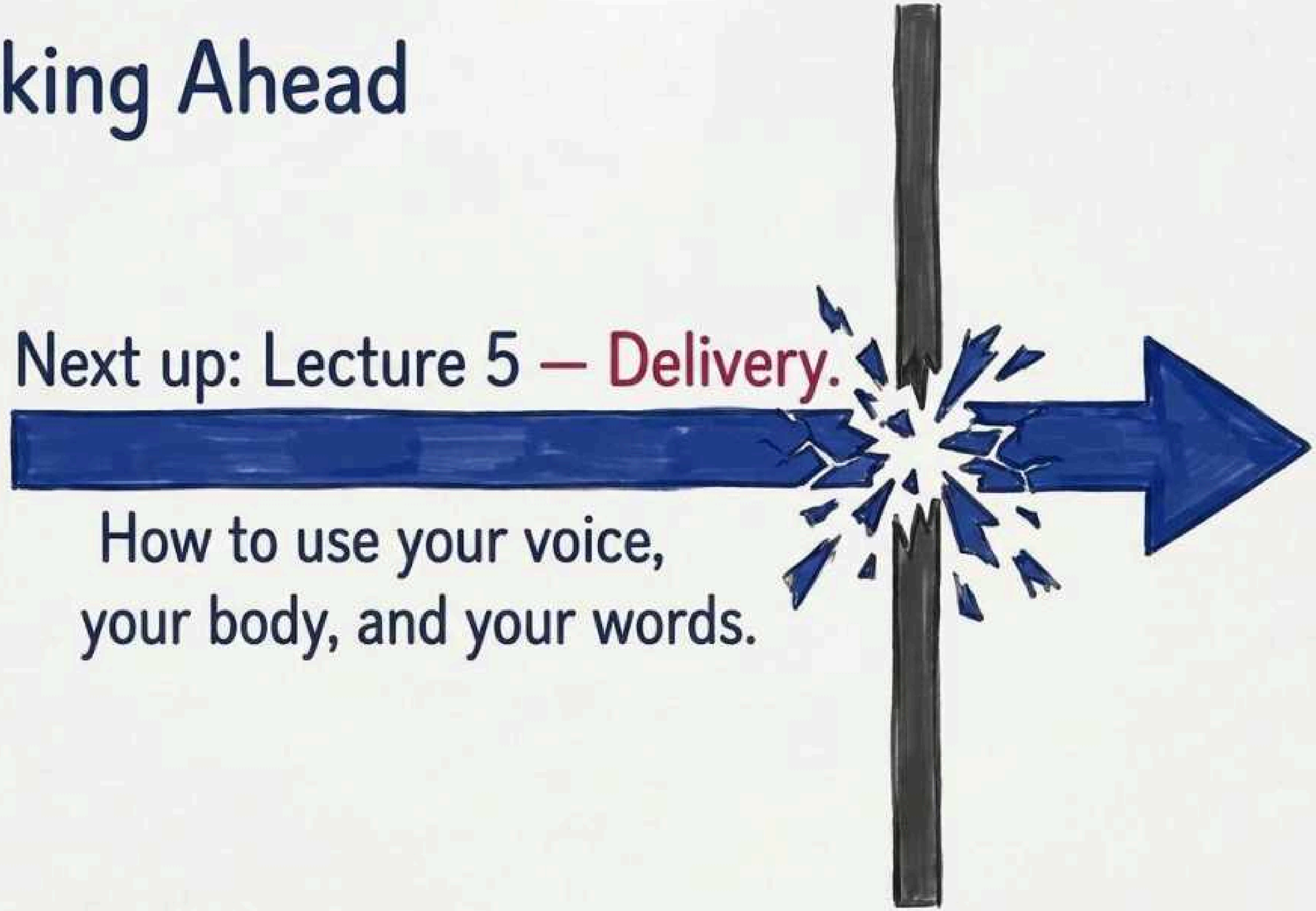
NO

Manipulation: Uses deceit, hidden motives, or pressure to bypass freedom.

Task: Choose a claim you believe. Write down 2 pieces of evidence for it, and the strongest objection to it.

Looking Ahead

Next up: Lecture 5 — Delivery.



How to use your voice,
your body, and your words.