

Intervju

INTERVIEW WITH BO BENNETT

Author of *The Ultimate Collection of Over 300 Logical Fallacies*

Interview by: Ana Galić



Photo: Bo Bennett, with kind permission of Mr. Bennet

Thank you sir for this great opportunity to have you in our Journal, especially knowing that our current issue's theme is Critical Thinking in the Teaching process. Welcome!

First of all, can you tell us „your story“, or just introduce yourself to our readers, not just logic lovers, but also to our wider audience?

I grew up with a wonderfully fascinating mother who

was a major believer in anything and everything mystical and magical. Although not much of that rubbed off on me, I did hold on to my religious (Catholic) beliefs until my mid-thirties. About that same time, I began to question my religious upbringing and started a debate website to evaluate views from both believers and non-believers. It didn't take me long to shed my supernatural beliefs, but I was troubled by how good the theistic arguments appeared

to be. It was then when I got sucked into the world of logical fallacies—the non-supernatural yet still magical quirks of reason that trick us into thinking bad arguments are good arguments. Over the next three years, I collected these logical fallacies and compiled them into a single resource. *Logically Fallacious*, the website, the book, and the course were born.

Now, can you tell us: why is being reasonable so important? Is it much more important today than in previous times, or is it always has been that way for human?

If we define reason as *the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments by a process of logic*, then it becomes clear that it has always been important, from the days of our ancestors deciding to pet the pretty tiger or not to today deciding if we should get the COVID vaccine or not. Reason is and has always been, literally, a matter of life and death. Although reason has always been important, in today's world of science reason has become even more important, and continues to become more important as we replace our superstitions with empirical evidence produced by the scientific method.

You collected 300 logical fallacies. On first, readers can think: Boy, that is so huge number! But again, when we read your book, we realise that maybe there is even more fallacies and that you are really right when you collected such amount not just theoretical, schooling fallacious and their definitions, but you supplied us with so much examples. Is there some background for doing such a tremendous job?

First, thank you for the compliment :) The biggest challenge was a problem of demarcation, that is, having to draw the line between a “logical fallacy” and a cognitive bias, a persuasion or manipulation technique, a lie, or just being wrong. There is certainly a subjective element to this classification, and I did my best to be consistent with my own rules for what qualifies as a fallacy. At the end of the day, we have the number we do.

At the end of almost every fallacy you give us a tip. There are a lot of tips where you tell us to find mistakes in our own thinking in our common everyday concluding and everyday life. Do we really make so much logical

fallacies not even knowing that we do? Was Socrates right when he said that only thing he knows is that he knows that he does not know nothing?

Yes, we commit errors or reasons consistently—even the best of us. The challenge is being able to identify when do, and under what situations we are more likely to abandon reason (e.g., on topics where we have a strong ideological commitment). As for Socrates' saying, and all truisms that can be stated in a sentence, I think the truth is a bit more nuanced—but his point is well taken.

Can you now make connection, for our readers, between logic and critical thinking, and also tell why is it so important for someone who is thinking critically to make his/her's clame following rules of logic?

“Logic” can be defined as *reasoning conducted or assessed according to strict principles of validity*. As we have seen with the fictional character “Spock” on *Star Trek*, logic, devoid of critical thinking, would not return the best results. This is perhaps the main issue with the development of AI—it is easy to teach a machine the rules of logic, but not the rules of reason and critical thinking, which incorporate the human condition in the form of emotional and subjective assessments. By breaking the fundamental rules of logic, one is likely to be wrong far more often than if they consistently followed the rules of logic. Likewise, the failure to think critically is far more likely to produce poor results—“poor” in the sense of being factually incorrect as well as subjectively “bad.”

Would you say that critical thinking in education is something we achieved, or that we should think about it for our present or future generations? Have you had some experience of yours?

It has been a mixed bag. Without doubt, the educated, as a group, are far better at thinking critically than the uneducated, as a group. However, there are some disturbing trends in higher education such as being unable to question certain doctrines—at least without social or even academic retribution, being taught what to think rather than how to think, and uncritically adopting certain ideas out of fear or desire for social credit.

We must ask, and this not very popular question for us, philosophers, do you think that humanity will no

loger need logic, since now we have some new skills like media literacy?

No, we will always need logic along with new skills like media literacy.

At the end, what message can you send to our younger generations that is attached to logic, critical thinking and school?

Don't confuse being a "rebel" with being logical, reasonable, or a good critical thinker. There is a trend to distrust authority as a heuristic in determining truth. For example, if the government supports X, then X must be a lie. Sometimes horrible people are right. Sometimes wonderful people are wrong. Evaluate arguments on their own merit and be courageous enough to hold beliefs that are not in line with your clan, even if it means being a social outcast. Don't be loyal to ideologies; be loyal to reason. Do this, and you will find yourself on the right side of truth far more often than not.

Thank you for your answers, we most definitely will read and learn from your book. Thank you!

In Banja Luka, On September, 28th 2021.
Ana Galić, editor-in-chief