



M.Sc Design & Technology Futures

School of Engineering

Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering

**Identifying opportunities to make online discussions and participation meaningful
and productive:**

Rethinking the comment section and its purpose.

**Veebiarutelude osalemise sisukaks ja produktiivseks muutmise võimaluste
väljaselgitamine:**

Kommentaari osa ja selle eesmärgi ümber mõtestamine.

Key words : argumentation, debate, online discussions, digital spaces, comment section.

MASTER THESIS

Student: Farhad Tahmazov

Student code: 184699MADM

Supervisor: Prof. Martin Pärn

Author applies for a degree of Master of Science in Engineering (MSc.)

Tallinn, 2021

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

Hereby I declare, that I have written this thesis independently.

No academic degree has been applied for based on this material. All works, major view points and data of the other authors used in this thesis have been referenced.

"....." 2021

Author: /signature /

Thesis is in accordance with terms and requirements "....." 2020

Supervisor:

/signature/

Accepted for defence

"....." 2021

Chairman of theses defence commission:

.....

/name and signature/

Abstract.

The way people communicate with each other, and the scale at which we do it has dramatically changed with the introduction of the internet. The internet allows us to stay connected despite the differences in location, language, time-zone, it also became one of the leading ways of communication of news and other information. Comment sections have become new environments for conversations between people. However, not all comments are equal or abide by the same rules. Most of them even have different demographics attached to them. This is partially caused by the designs of such platforms.

As the design of the platform greatly affects the ongoing conversations in their respective environments, the motivation to of choosing a more intellectually honest approach to conversing online is sometimes being influenced by the way the platform works. Most comment sections are very ineffective in communicating and promoting thoughtful conversations.

The aim of this thesis was to determine elements which would promote intellectually honest conversations and debates online, with the use of motivational incentives, rewards for contributions, visual representations of dialogue and establishment of roles within a discussion. I propose DigiAgora for people who value intellectually honest contributions online, who are willing to engage in an honest manner to discuss important global, social and political issues, by taking them out of informational silos and demonstrating a constellation of arguments for and against. With this I aim to improve understanding of complex political issues for people, as well as to create a more honest representation of opposing views for more thoughtful deliberation and discussion.

Chapter 1. Introduction.	6
Chapter 2. Theoretical framework.	8
2.1 Argumentation theory.	8
2.1.1 Introduction to the basics of argumentation.	10
2.1.2 Understanding persuasion online.	11
2.2 Human flourishing through reason.	12
2.3 Social interaction through the internet.	12
2.4 Argumentation online.	13
2.5 Socrates Questioning method for improved learning and critical thinking.	15
2.6.1 Applying Socratic questioning as a part of distance learning.	17
2.7 Asynchronous discussion forums.	18
2.8.1 Defining Agonism.	19
2.8.2 Algorithmic obligations.	20
2.9 Digital nudging.	20
2.10 Connecting the dots.	21
Chapter 3. Problem space.	22
3.1 Brain and thinking. Flaws in reasoning.	22
3.2 Problem summary.	23
3.3.1 Debates are scattered over the internet.	24
3.3.2 Arguments are made in silos	25
3.3.3 No structure.	25
3.3.4 Off topic comments can get rewarded.	25
3.3.5 Wrong incentives.	26
3.3.6 Out of context.	26
Chapter 4. Analysis of existing solutions with a similar aim.	27
4.1 Platform for online discussions in good faith:	27
4.1.1 Platform: "Letter".	28
4.1.3 Platform: Argunet.	29

4.1.4 Platform: ChangeMyView on Reddit.	29
4.1.5 Platform: Kialo.	31
Chapter 5. Solution space.	32
5.1 Modern view at argumentation.	32
5.2 Opportunity analysis.	33
5.2.1 Problem: Limitations of human brain.	33
5.2.2 Problem: Accessibility.	34
5.3 Argumentation playground.	35
5.4 Intended outcome.	37
5.4.1 Teaching argumentation.	38
5.4.2. Teaching fallacies.	38
5.4.3 Making discussions accessible to new joiners.	38
5.4.4 Empowering the users.	39
5.4.6 Developing ongoing discussions.	39
5.4.7 Making discussions visible.	39
Chapter 6. Pre-Design.	40
6.1 Stakeholders:	40
6.1.1 Users/Contributors/Commenters.	40
6.1.2 Readers	41
6.1.3 Admins/Moderators	42
6.2 Technology.	43
6.3 Dominant features.	44
6.5 Final design.	45
6.5.1 Platform description. DigiAgora.	46
What is the platform?	47
Chapter 9. Conclusion.	50
Submission Rules on reddit Changemyview.	51
Bibliography.	73

Chapter 1. Introduction.

My motivation to write about this topic comes from being an active participant in various formal and informal discussions on the internet, trying to understand all perspectives and being exposed to different formats of such discussions. Designs and formats of these discussions in some cases yielded a more productive, constructive and overall healthy learning experience for all participants. For the most part, since such conversations have to follow the untold realities and formats of the media they are in, which was not necessarily built to promote constructive discussions, quite often they dwell into chaos and unproductiveness.

Despite the fact that the internet allows communities worldwide to communicate with each other, learn, get new ideas, follow the news, collaborate, etc., it also became a space which facilitates people to stay in 'opinion bubbles' by making it very convenient to find such spaces and stick to them. This can be observed in the comment sections of social media which share opinions or news about a certain topic which can be perceived by different groups of people in a polarizing way. In some scenarios, it boils down to argumentative discussions in the comment section, which for the most part can not be classified as constructive online discussions. On the other hand, participants on all spectrums believe in their truth and use available means to convenience the other group of why they are right or wrong. Because of the format and nature of social media, such discussions happen in, the end result is usually not optimal.

Enabling those, who are knowledgeable about their intellectual stance and are willing to share their views with others in a constructive and informative manner, will promote openness to new perspectives as well as enable people to relate and understand each other better. Thereby improving the collective perception of any given topic by acknowledging views of people on the whole spectrum by providing them with a playground to 'disagree' with each other, a counter-intuitive, but positive effect can take place.

Such utopian view on conversations, knowledge sharing and debates online might not yet be realistic, however, I believe that more environments should be present online that would facilitate and help those individuals to get out of their bubbles and meet those whose views they oppose, in an intellectual and constructive form.

The Internet is an amazing tool that has a potential to accommodate the same types of discussions which were used by ancient Athenians on amphitheatres and agoras to debate, participate in public life, share ideas and make important decisions. Creating a similar environment conducive to the exchange of various viewpoints or competing ideas should also be considered in the context of modern society and the internet, as this is the medium humans experience on daily basis.¹

The topic of collective reasoning and argumentation for new ideas and learning started off by looking into political debates that we see on television, news portals and the internet in general. However, a very similar type of rhetoric takes place under the YouTube comment section, Reddit forums, Facebook, Twitter, and many more social media outlets, that allow users to express themselves and publicly disagree with each other.

One of the things that stand out, and in some cases are obvious, even for a person who is not very familiar with the concept of intellectually honest debates, is that there are various tactics that make one party more favourable in the eyes of the observer, than the other one. In some cases such tactics are used intentionally, in others they are a product of environment, where certain argumentation tactics are prevailing their respective digital space. In other words, it can be considered an optimal approach to use unfair debate tactics to convince a vast group of people to agree/disagree with a certain opinion. Such tactics, thereby would produce a skewed perception of the idea in mind of the reader.

According to Cambridge dictionary, argumentation is a reason or reasons why one supports or opposes an idea or suggestion or process of explaining these reasons; it also means, that arguments are the reasons for one's opinion about the truth of something, or explanation of why one believes something should be done ("ARGUMENT | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary", n.d.). There are many definitions of that word and it can be used in various contexts, but the aforementioned definitions imply an action towards knowing, believing or acting towards the most truthful or correct action or opinion.

It is not always viable to stick to the proper argumentation rules which were historically and philosophically defined. Many people simply are not familiar with the concept and rules of

¹ "Concentrating minds: how the Greeks designed spaces for" 11 Jan. 2016, <https://www.democraticaudit.com/2016/11/01/concentrating-minds-how-the-greeks-designed-spaces-for-public-debate/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

intellectually honest, formal debate or argumentation. In addition, linguistically, argumentation can mean many different things to different people, therefore it is crucial to have a similar understanding and purpose of the debate, to produce a meaningful discussion. Creating an environment that would foster such discussion frames therefore would add another meaning to how people will be able to interact online.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework.

2.1 Argumentation theory.

According to the definition by Van Eemeren - "Argumentation is a verbal, social, and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint" (Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004). Reasoning - the drawing of inferences or conclusions through the use of reason². As can be seen, the technical definition of argumentation is rather different from everyday use of the word. In the case of reasoning and argumentation, the element linking them together would be the argumentation theory.

The field of logic researches ways in which people reason formally through argument. There is a direct link between correct thinking and valid argumentation. Latter can be framed as an expression of correct thinking, while valid argumentation as an internalization of correct reasoning (Hintikka, 2008)³. Or in other words, correct argumentation matches principles of correct thinking. It developed into a formal discipline, using foundational exemplar of the exact method of proof used in mathematics, in the mid-nineteenth century (Austin, 1960).

The benefits of proper argumentation as a tool that helps humans to make important collective and personal decisions, as well as figuring out responses to particular issues, but it does not end there. It is also a prerequisite for a free and democratic society. While some would say that the defining symbol of democracy is free elections with secret voting, having

² "Reasoning | Definition of Reasoning by Merriam-Webster."
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reasoning>. Accessed 18 Dec. 2020.

³ "Argumentation and reasoning."
https://scholars.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/christaasterhan/files/argumentationreasoning_elsevierhandbook.pdf. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

an open and accessible debate gateway amongst the actors within a democracy is just as crucial. It also follows that to have such a system in place, society needs to be familiar with argumentation skills.⁴

Taking an example from ancient Athens, which had a feature of not having a large number of elected offices to represent people. Instead, many leaders were picked by a lottery. They had an assembly, where all the eligible citizens could participate, hear other peoples' opinions, share their thoughts, and then vote. This approach even had its own name, isegoria - meaning that everyone should have a say, and should be able to participate on an equal basis. Despite the obvious shortcomings of the aforementioned approach, it still made access to city-wide decisions more open and transparent. No longer small and privileged group of people could decide city policies in secret behind closed doors.⁵

The same approach would not work in modern settings for variety of reasons, such as educational background, internet accessibility, number of people, making individual opinions heard, and information distribution on the internet. In smaller groups, however, the same methods apply and in some cases work well (ex. Classroom environment).

2.1.1 Introduction to the basics of argumentation.

Argumentation has a unique, multidisciplinary scope. Since Argumentation involves a diversity of spheres of sciences and knowledge, it is a complex subject to study, precise terms of which have not yet been defined in some areas (Drid, 2016). In a broad view, argumentation language can be divided into seven general features: social activity, intellectual activity based on reason, must involve the use of language, refers to a subject which people hold opposing ideas about, serves a purpose of justifying or disproving an opinion, consists of a constellation of statements or arguments (Drid, 2016).

Logic, argumentation, premise and reason are interconnected. The field of logic studies various methods of formal reasoning through argumentation (Hintikka, 2008). According to the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, a premise is a statement that an argument claim

⁴ "Why Study Argument? - Higher Education | Pearson."
<https://www.pearsonhighered.com/assets/samplechapter/0/2/0/5/0205943721.pdf>. Accessed 9 Dec. 2020.

⁵ "Why Study Argument? - Higher Education | Pearson."
<https://www.pearsonhighered.com/assets/samplechapter/0/2/0/5/0205943721.pdf>. Accessed 9 Dec. 2020.

will justify a conclusion (AUDI, 1999). The argument is a collection of premises that intend to support or infer a conclusion/claim (McKeon, n.d.).

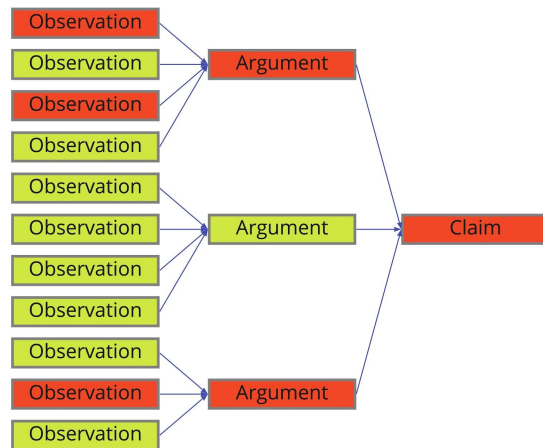


Image 2.1 Argument map.

Image 2.1 shows a basic argument map, in which the claim can be invalid because 2 out of 3 arguments that supported the claim are incorrect. The root of the problem, in this particular case, is in the first principles, the smallest intellectual items, further which deduction is impossible. The cascade effect, through false of the basic principles, affects the ultimate claim.

There are many types of reasoning and even more types of fallacies. The combination of most common ones will be analysed further down the research when the focus on the most effective types of reasoning, as well as the most common online fallacies, will be established.

2.1.2 Understanding persuasion online.

Changing someone's opinion is one of the aspects of social interaction. The process is very difficult to study, because of the sheer volume of variables that come into play and it is hard to know how certain opinion has been formed, and how to shift formed opinions. The research made by (Tan, Niculae, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil & Lee, n.d.) looks into "ChangeMyView" Reddit community. It is an online platform that provides users with the

environment where they can present their opinions and reasoning behind them, and invite others to challenge them in their view.

Their work aims to understand the mechanisms behind online persuasions. Various variables such as the participants' entry order and nuances of conversation were observed. In addition, comparison of similar counterarguments with same opinions was made, proving that language factors (such as the language used by the opinion holder and that of the counterargument), play a vital role in persuasion. Even in such a regulated setting, changing someone opinion was very unlikely. The quantitative study suggested that stylistic choices used by the participants showed a high degree of predictability of the final result (Tan, Nicolae, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil & Lee, n.d.).

The mentioned study proves that despite the effort to conduct an intellectually honest platform to share and disagree on opinions, people rarely shift from their initial viewpoint. This means, that further research should be done in that area, to determine what the optimal regulatory strategy for collective discussions and argumentations online is viable.

2.2 Human flourishing through reason.

Aristotle was the first, formal logician who demonstrated the principles of reasoning by using variables to show the logical form of an argument, and had a great influence on the Western thought (Smith & Zalta, 2000). According to Aristotle, the reason is a characteristic of human nature. He believed in Eudaimonia, which is the pinnacle of human excellence and happiness, which can be achieved through one character of nature, which is exclusive to humans - reason. In his view, Eudaimonia is attainable through a complete and ideal exercise of reason in life (Grech, 2010).

The concept of Eudaimonia has a lot of criticism for various reasons, the strongest one being, that the perception of human excellence and happiness can be inconsistent amongst the people. The fact that Eudaimonia lacks consistent measurement and is not easily defined also poses problems in defining the 'kinds of happiness' it refers to⁶. Despite

⁶ "Full article: Reconsidering happiness: the costs of"
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17439760802303044>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2020.

criticism, the idea of approaching every human function with reason is still considered an interesting approach to change our lives for the better (Grech, 2010).

Aristotle's notion of politics can be summed up as discourse and debate between peers, in a collective pursuit of happiness through eudaimonia. In his views on liberalism, he argues that it is one's obligation to follow a path to eudaimonia. As people are rational, political and social animals, a complete life is lived in accordance with these basic aspects of existence. These principles include living a life of reason, using one's ability to reason and think to discover the meaningful goals and finding proper ways to achieve them. This holds for both, individualistic and social approach to political life.⁷

2.3 Social interaction through the internet.

We live in the information age, where every imaginable question one might have can be looked up online. We can learn anything online through the internet. However, there is a unique problem, which comes with the ever-increasing number of users. The ease, with which internet helps us to socialize with others, makes it also just as easy to share our opinions, no matter how wrong or right they are. Ability to speak your mind freely has always been a positive thing, but it also floods reasonable discussions with opinions which are usually not based on any particular premises, or in most cases do not follow any particular structure that would support formal argumentative discussions, making it more difficult to lead a conversation about certain topics. In other cases, there no prior thought given to the posted statements, making them intellectually dishonest, and often driven by emotions or false narrative. There is so much information out there, so many people sharing their opinions about things, so many people telling what the right thing to do is, which often contradicts to what other people are saying. Despite all the disagreements about claims, conclusions and actions, the majority of such conversations do not transform in the form of constructive reasoning and argumentation.

At the moment, there are only a few forums and websites which are thoroughly moderated, to meet standards of intellectually honest debate, which encourage sound reasoning and discourage fallacies, which will be discussed further in this work. Most of such attempts, unfortunately, did not produce self-sustaining and long-run communities with an exception

⁷ "immanent politics, participatory democracy, and the pursuit of"
https://cdn.mises.org/-3-16_2.pdf?token=V-xB4Qc1. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

of r/changemyview forum on Reddit. Since the paths taken to achieve the goal of having and intellectually honest, collective debates online were different, each of them produced invaluable design inspirations and in some cases decent solutions to smaller, composing problem elements. Intellectual honesty and reasoning are vital, especially for future generations who will be the main consumers of the content and discussions produced on the internet.

2.4 Argumentation online.

Whenever one person is trying to make another person to do or believe in something, he is using arguments. People tend to argue passionately, creatively and tend to spiral into endless conversations about the topics, that they are enthusiastic about discussing. Even the most debate-averse people find themselves involved in an online argument, trying to come up with counterpoints to prove the validity of their view and false of the opponent's.⁸ In an online setting such interactions happen asynchronously (people are responding at different time, from different parts of the world), anonymously, and in most cases without any mediators to the discussion. All in all, for the most part, debates online happen randomly, with random people, who have varying levels of familiarity with proper debate rules or etiquette.

Vast majority of people do not really know what a good argument is and how to use it. Instead, we focus on other strategies, such as stating our point more loudly or confusing a good argument with a witty comeback. People involved in an argument, do not necessarily try to convince the opponent they are arguing with to change their mind at all, but are engaged in an "act" for like-minded people who are the viewers of public discussions. Such behaviour, in general, is socially acceptable and even produces a whole genre of popular videos dedicated to that on YouTube. Such examples can be easily found on the internet, in the amateur political discourse niche, which ends up with one party being verbally humiliated and not being offered a strong argument to change their opinion. Ultimately, such exchanges do not actually provide good food for thought for all viewpoints, rather focusing on one, that made it more 'noticeable' in a give platform of choice, where the engagement was happening.

⁸ "Why do we argue online? - The Irish Times." 24 Jul. 2015, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/tv-radio-web/why-do-we-argue-online-1.2295986>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.

The main purpose of the offered arguments in such case loses its intended meaning, as now whatever words and actions bring more views in the frame of political debate, are being more favourable amongst the content creators. Such trend uses argumentation and pseudo reasoning as a debate tactics to get a larger amount of views online. However, it also affects how people view these sorts of intellectual confrontations and builds a framework in which they continue to happen. How many times have you seen, someone changes their minds by arguing in the YouTube comment section, or on Facebook? Many people try to avoid arguing online, because of the stigma, of it being an ineffective waste of time.

Digital environment following the aforementioned trend is neither sustainable nor efficient. The role of reasoning and argumentation is to find arguments to convince others and evaluate presented opposing arguments. Such an exchange is intellectually honest and ultimately will make the understandings of the topic of the argument richer. The shift to a more thought-out framing of online discussions could have already begun, and a variety of platforms which attempt to address it indicates that.

2.5 Socrates Questioning method for improved learning and critical thinking.

The foundation of the Socratic approach is based on the Socrates' theory that enabling participants of discussion to think for themselves is more beneficial than simply sharing the 'correct' answer.⁹ One of the most common and influential teaching strategies that can be used to direct students to produce insightful questions and thus promote their critical thinking skills is Socratic questioning (Maiorana 1990-91; Paul 1993). Socratic method does not provide direct answers, instead, it stimulates the minds of students by analyzing the subject using questions (Paul 1993). As a result, by collaborative exchanges between instructors and students and among students, Socratic questioning will encourage the CT skills of students by exchanging ideas and points of view, giving new meaning to content, exploring new perspectives and making comparisons to real life analogies (Maiorana 1990-91).¹⁰

⁹ "Socratic Circles/Seminars - SELspace." <https://selspace.ca/socratic-seminars/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

¹⁰ "Full article: Influence of academic self-regulation, critical" 16 Apr. 2014, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01587919.2014.891426?scroll=top&needAccess=true>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

Socratic questioning, when employed, is a useful tool to discuss issues, concepts, feelings , and thoughts. It also helps to deeper understand the misconceptions and analyze them on a deeper level than general questioning. It has additional benefits, which naturally come from a better understanding of the topic.

To evoke a thorough understanding, one may need to use variety of question types and methods. At the moment of the research, many different approaches have been encountered, which differentiated by the purpose and setting in which they have been used.¹¹ The following examples illustrate the Socratic method and provide guidelines on how it works. It is also framed in such way, requiring at least two participants, while not being limited to just two.

Question Type	Examples
Clarification	What do you mean when you say X? Could you explain that point further? Can you provide an example?
Challenging Assumptions	Is there a different point of view? What assumptions are we making here? Are you saying that?
Evidence and reasoning	Can you provide an example that supports what you are saying? Can we validate that evidence? Do we have all the information we need?
Alternative viewpoints	Are there alternative viewpoints? How could someone else respond, and why?

¹¹ "Socratic Questioning in Psychology: Examples and Techniques." 9 Jan. 2020, <https://positivepsychology.com/socratic-questioning/>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.

Implications and consequences	How would this affect someone? What are the long-term implications of this?
Challenging the question	What do you think was important about that question? What would have been a better question to ask?

Figure 2.5.1 Socratic questioning method.¹²

In this example, the question types refer to a logical progression from understanding the issue better by clarification, as well as the way the issue is perceived by the opponent in the discussion. Then it follows with challenging assumptions questions, which help to illustrate a bigger picture and see other possible viewpoints. The Evidence and reasoning stage calls for in-depth understanding of the view, trying to find examples where it applies and where it does not. It also sheds a light on information, that has been left out for one or another reason in the initial statement of the issue. Alternative viewpoints questions guide understanding of other possible views and approaches with directing questions. This step insures that other views are also being represented, as problems are usually multi-dimensional. Implications and consequences changes the scope from which the issue is being analyzed, possibly rediscovering other involved actors.

52's Method.

5W's (and an H)

Who is involved?

What happened?

When did it happen?

Where did it happen?

Why did it happen?

How did it happen?

¹² "Socratic Questioning in Psychology: Examples and Techniques." 9 Jan. 2020, <https://positivepsychology.com/socratic-questioning/>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.

Figure 2.5.2 5 Why Method.¹³

While the 5W's is a rather simple method, it is widely used in journalism and general information gathering, as it provides a summary-breakdown of the topic for easier understanding and digestion.¹⁴

There are many different varieties of Socratic approach, and even though they all are slightly different, the core principles is the same, and it aims to promote critical thinking in participants and stimulated a deeper understanding of the issue at hand.

2.5.1 Applying Socratic questioning as a part of distance learning.

Distance learning has been a hot topic since the internet emergence, and nowadays, with the ongoing situation around Covid-19 it became even more relevant. According to researches done on distance learning, educators experience difficulties establishing the presence of critical thinking in the taught information, due to the lack of dynamic, in-person communication with students.¹⁵

Critical thinking has a great significance in higher education, and teachers continue to integrate into the learning process. According to the study done by (C. Yang, J. Newby and L. Bill, 2005) effects of Socratic questioning can cultivate and sustain a critical thinking environment for students, by introducing appropriate course design and changes in instructions. The results of the study encourage distance learners and teachers to create an environment where critical thinking is maintained and valued by all participants, where students are motivated and supported at their attempts to think critically using asynchronous discussion forums (ADFs) (i.e., text-based computer-mediated communication tools).¹⁶

¹³ "Socratic Questioning in Psychology: Examples and Techniques." 9 Jan. 2020, <https://positivepsychology.com/socratic-questioning/>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.

¹⁴ "Socratic Questioning in Psychology: Examples and Techniques." 9 Jan. 2020, <https://positivepsychology.com/socratic-questioning/>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.

¹⁵ "(PDF) Thinking Critically and Critical Thinking: Integrating" 4 Oct. 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26495228_Thinking_Critically_and_Critical_Thinking_Integrating_Online_Tools_to_Promote_Critical_Thinking. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

¹⁶ "Full article: Influence of academic self-regulation, critical" 16 Apr. 2014, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01587919.2014.891426?scroll=top&needAccess=true>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

Since the Socratic method can widely be used to promote critical thinking in people, it has similar potential in online discussions, as critical thinking is an integral part of the process. In our daily lives, we face opportunities to think about our concerns and form a point of view using critical thinking. Such behaviour is natural and is widely accepted common metrics of success¹⁷.

2.6 Asynchronous discussion forums.

As mentioned in previous sections, asynchronous discussion forums are widely used in distance education, as it accommodates for students who live in different times zones, as well as adjust time for participants to process, prepare and engage the discussion. Since it has been established that some forms of discussions promote learning experience, a proper assessment of individuals' participation in a discussion should be examined and included in the final course graded assessment. Despite the fact that some learners will willingly participate in such discussions, others need the incentive to do so. Therefore, one of the primary roles of an instructor in asynchronous educational discussion forums is to facilitate classroom discourse between peers.

The shortcoming of asynchronous discussion forums become more visible in the subsequent analysis of students' contribution to the discussion. The analysis of the created content has been shown to be more efficient in a smaller classroom setting, due to the sheer volume of data that has to be addressed.¹⁸ In the vast amounts of the created data in asynchronous discussion forums, students make their own decisions where the comments should be posted, and which posts they are more interested in participating.¹⁹ Therefore, the discussions can appear disconnected from one another, as the structure of the forum does not allow for easy assessment for an outside viewer, in this case - instructor.²⁰

¹⁷ "Fifteen Positive Examples of Critical Thinking - Insight"
<https://www.insightassessment.com/article/fifteen-positive-examples-of-critical-thinking>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2020.

¹⁸ "USING RUBRICS AND CONTENT ANALYSIS FOR"
<https://olj.onlinelearningconsortium.org/index.php/olj/article/view/1713>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.

¹⁹ "Using data mining as a strategy for assessing asynchronous" 4 Dec. 2020,
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222537033_Using_data_mining_as_a_strategy_for_assessing_asynchronous_discussion_forums. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.

²⁰ "Asynchronous discussion forums: success factors ... - JStor."
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/jeductechsoci.12.1.249>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.

2.6.1 Defining Agonism.

Agonism is a philosophical view that stresses the relevance of conflict in politics. It may take two forms: where it is viewed as a necessary feature of all political systems, or where it has a special benefit that makes it vital to be sustained. Often, a combination of two forms is used to make an argument, stating that attempts to remove conflicts from politics will have a negative effect.²¹ According to Chantal Mouffe's idea of the agonistic theory, democracy is inherently predisposed to uncertainty, disagreements and constant differences in opinions between groups.²² Since politics involves a plurality of actors, and is usually not two-sided (left vs right), the way to find a consensus among the involved parties would be through Agonism views conflicting views as a potential positive of some forms of political conflict.²³ Mouffe agreed, that conflict is central to politics, but does not require any particular identification of an enemy. In her work, Mouffe saw conflict between opposing views such, that disagreements are normal, and adversaries should respect views of one another to exist. This type of conflict is called "agonistic pluralism".²⁴

2.6.2 Algorithmic obligations.

Social media companies and platforms that enable people to communicate with each other, like Facebook, Reddit, Twitter, etc., employ algorithms that they find suitable to run such platforms. Algorithms also are used as a tool to promote types of discourse happening digitally between people. Since much of discourse is happening digitally through those companies, it is argued that they have an obligation to promote agonistic types of discourse through their platforms, by the means of algorithms.²⁵ Ability to select the content that will be presented to users falls on the way algorithms are written.

²¹ "Agonism | philosophy | Britannica." 25 Nov. 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/agonism-philosophy>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

²² "The Tasks of Agonism and Agonism to the Task: Introducing" 9 Apr. 2014, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13534645.2014.896543>. Accessed 28 Dec. 2020.

²³ "Agonism – I can't believe it!" 3 Dec. 2020, <https://barryhopewell.com/2020/12/03/agonism/>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

²⁴ "Agonism | philosophy | Britannica." 25 Nov. 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/agonism-philosophy>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

²⁵ "The social media commons: Public sphere, agonism, and" 2 Apr. 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19331681.2020.1742266>. Accessed 28 Dec. 2020.

2.7 Digital nudging.

Digital nudging is referred to the practice of using UI design elements to influence users' choice of digital environments. People make choices on daily basis, which can be very complex or very easy. These choices come in different forms and contexts. In digital environments, some of the available choices are designed by the owners of the platform, and can, under the right conditions and clever uses of UI, affect the final outcome or outcome made by the user.²⁶ The presentation of options plays a big role in the chosen outcome.

Having an ability to draw people to certain outcomes, choices and conclusions greatly shapes the overall perception and considerations of masses. It has a potential to guide people to enticing outcomes if that is part of the strategy. However, usually the goals of the stakeholders who have a say over the overall digital strategy do not align with ultimate good - helping people to make better choices.²⁷

Digital spaces became important parts of our daily lives. Millions of people use social media platforms to connect with others, see their opinions, watch the news, etc. Having an unethical nudging in such spaces may affect the overall perception of masses over the presented information, and potentially mislead them. People are not perfectly rational agents who approach all problems using critical thinking.²⁸ Practises as nudging, can be highly effective and there are numerous examples proving that.²⁹ Therefore, ethical implications should be carefully considered in the selection and final designs of online spaces.

2.8 Connecting the dots.

This chapter concludes the theoretical part of the research. There were many topics discussed, that at the first glance may not seem connected to one another. However, when putting them in the frame and context of the modern, digital world, connections start to be more visible. Argumentation theory explains formal rules of basic argumentation principles

²⁶ "Digital Nudging | SpringerLink." 3 Oct. 2016, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12599-016-0453-1>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.

²⁷ "Digital Nudging | SpringerLink." 3 Oct. 2016, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12599-016-0453-1>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.

²⁸ "Thinking, Fast and Slow D.Kahneman February 12-13 ... - math." <http://www.math.chalmers.se/~ulfp/Review/fastslow.pdf>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.

²⁹ "Nudge - ResearchGate." http://202.166.170.213:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/4313/Richard_H_Thaler_Cass_R_Sunstein_Nudge_Improv.%20%282%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.

as well as structures of arguments. This will be used in the construction of argument mapping further in the design. It also dwells into another aspect of argumentation, which is a persuasion of actor or actors with opposing views. However, as mentioned, persuasion does not necessarily involve proper and intellectually honest argumentation practises, which shows the shortcomings of argumentation in the current online setting.

But why then would honest reasoning and subsequent argumentation be interesting to us, if successful persuasion does not necessarily involve proper argumentation? Here Eudaimonia principle comes in, which shows the view of Aristotle's on the importance of proper reasoning, and how it is relevant to humans. It even argues for a notion of human happiness through complete and honest reason with oneself and the others, as humans are social and political animals.³⁰

People, however, despite being social and political animals in the modern era of socialization through the use of digital platforms, do not necessarily compete on digital playgrounds fairly and honestly, as other factors come into play (anonymity, opinion silos, nudging, platform framework, etc.) which can guide behaviours of users, often in the direction opposite from proper argumentation.

Socialization in some environments can be synonymous to learning and teaching. Therefore, understanding the applications of reason and argumentation in the context of more structural online environment - online learning, shows potential benefits of such approach, as well as its inclusiveness and efficiency in the process of collective understanding and development of suggested themes. Argumentation principles, as well as Socratic methods are widely used to foster and improve such environments. In a digital frame, online learning where peers are not in the same timezone or location, such learning/discussion forums are known as asynchronous discussion forums.

And the final, and connecting point of previously mentioned research is a view on political theory and Agonism in particular. It suggests that it is natural for people living in a democratic society to have different opinions, as modern societies are more complex and involve a plurality of actors, each with their own views. Modern digital nudging in many cases does not cater to agonistic discussions online, and therefore, being one of the most

³⁰ "Aristotle insists that man is either a political animal (the natural"
<https://oll.libertyfund.org/quotes/164>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.

widely used methods of communication, hampers agonistic intercourse within society by its designs and algorithms.

Chapter 3. Problem space.

3.1 Brain and thinking. Flaws in reasoning.

The brain of a modern human being evolved as a tool, to ensure our survival on this planet as a species. If ancient human overestimated his strength or agility during a hunt, he would not live to see the next day. From that we can assume, that our brain had to create a certain mechanism of thought and idea selection, to keep us alive. As such, if an ancient human had eaten red mushroom with white dots on it, he would die. However, the link between that person's death and the food he ate just before that would be formed in the brains of people who observed this event unfolding, which is an example of inductive reasoning, or reasoning by generalization. An absurd example of such reasoning would be: if you bought a bottle with liquid in it, and it happened to be cold tea, then all future bottles with liquids would also be filled with cold tea. The argument is false, as we all know for a fact that not all bottles have cold tea in them, however in inductive reasoning, given there are no other premises, such argumentation would still be valid, but wrong. Not all reasonings are perfect in all situations, therefore using an appropriate way of reasoning is important.

Such a mechanism in our brain was historically essential, as it helped us to move forward when we did not have such an abundance of knowledge that we have now. Inaccuracies in this approach were acceptable, as long as species survived and evolved. However, in modern time, when technology evolved way faster than our biological brain, some survival mechanisms that the brain came up with, do not necessarily work the same way in such an environment. It is in our nature to structure our thoughts and opinions one or the other way, instead of leaving them as separate entities, though sometimes structure is incorrect.³¹

The same method of thinking that our brains came up with thousands of years ago, are manifesting themselves even now. We tend to find a correlation and generalizations amongst our observations, which logically do not necessarily make sense. We make illogical fallacies quite often, as it is rooted in our way of thinking. Generalizing observations might have been beneficial when the world was more intricate and new to humans that it is right

³¹ "A natural history of the human mind: tracing ... - NCBI - NIH."
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2409100/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

now, but at the modern-day and age, it hinders our ability to think, and creates wrong perceptions of things. "Common sense is actually nothing more than a deposit of prejudices laid down in the mind prior to the age of eighteen" (Einstein, 1952). Logical thinking is definitely part of what makes up our thinking, but it is most certainly not the only one. Logical thinking helps us to formalize valid against fallacious reasoning.

3.2 Problem summary.

All in all, the problem lies in the way we approach online discussion, no matter what the initial purpose was. All non-verbal communication is lost, phrasing can be interpreted in different ways, assumptions are being made which do not hold in actuality by the person who expresses them, it is hard and in some cases impossible to connect the dots of the arguments one is making. People in general, seek to share their opinion, rather than try to understand the opposing view. People say things, they would never say behind the screen. Many other factors, that will be discussed in more detail further on, make arguing and reasoning online ineffective waste of time.

Taking into account the research, as well as the problems with existing inefficiencies of online communication, I see great potential in organizing online discourse in such way, that people would not only view the opinion of the person, but also collectively break it down to its first principles, find the reasoning behind it, and then decide for themselves if that opinion is worthy of their attention and consideration.

Problems with online argumentation that are rooted in human psychology, skills and the presented format of the interaction in the selected digital space:

1. Inability to convey required information for correct perception of a point.
2. If an opinion is rooted in the deep subconscious feeling, arguments usually can't reach it.
3. Logical fallacies.
4. A multiplicity of ways of interpreting a point.
5. Confirmation bias.
6. Unwillingness to seek opposing views.

The mentioned problems come into an interplay with other issues that make online discourse inefficient, that will be discussed further.

3.3.1 Debates are scattered over the internet.

Internet is a vast space for social interactions and news sharing. With the existing silos which represent big part of the internet, it becomes increasingly difficult to find a place for concentrated and in-depth debate/discussion on topics and be representative of all sides of opinions. The effort it takes to efficiently verify arguments and claims for a single person is a nearly impossible task. Many of such conversations also miss proper fact verification.³² Recent years have shown that misinformation in the news articles can travel very fast, the same can be the case in argumentative discussions in comments sections.³³

3.3.2 Arguments are made in silos

Since there are no sufficient playgrounds for individuals to express their views and be exposed to opposing views, as well as be able to engage into argumentation in good faith with them, the current state of argumentation online happens in closed silos. This format promotes uneven distribution of participants in online argumentation to such extent that discussions become redundant, where one group states their views, without engaging in a critical discussion with the group who hold opposing ideas. Resolving and understanding issues deeper becomes impossible in such environments. Various fallacies, like Strawman Fallacy and Cherry Picking become present more often.³⁴

3.3.3 No structure.

Since debates online often do not follow any formal argumentation structure, and discussions usually get polluted with unrelated comments, repetitions and redundancies occur. Responses to claims are being lost, good points missed or ignored, and the argument tree never establishes. Most used comment sectioned are not specifically designed to hold the history and development of discussion, making it inaccessible to newcomers to take part

³² "canonical-debate-lab/paper: The white paper ... - GitHub." 11 Jun. 2018, <https://github.com/canonical-debate-lab/paper>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.

³³ "We started fact-checking in partnership with ... - PolitiFact." 15 Dec. 2017, <https://www.politifact.com/article/2017/dec/15/we-started-fact-checking-partnership-facebook-year/>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.

³⁴ "canonical-debate-lab/paper: The white paper ... - GitHub." 11 Jun. 2018, <https://github.com/canonical-debate-lab/paper>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.

in it. Same questions are being asked and answered multiple times which do not allow the conversation to take further development.³⁵

As such discussions usually take place in silos, that represent a certain viewpoint, they also unintentionally promote a very one sided approach to issues being discussed. That way, over time they become repositories for arguments and claims that support a certain viewpoint.³⁶

3.3.4 Off topic comments can get rewarded.

The format which most public discussions follow, as well as the respective reward systems (likes, upvotes, shares etc.), in some cases reward behaviours which do not necessarily forward an ongoing conversation. Certain contributions in online conversations can be put in one of the several 'unhelpful' contributions like trolling, fishing for likes, demagoguing, insults, etc. that seek reaction from the reader which does not progress the discussion. The comment section on popular news sites, videos, posts on social media are known to have this issue, which leads to an unhealthy rivalry of commenters for a spotlight, which in some instances is borderline hate speech or worse. This leaves the owners of those platforms to either allow such comment sections to stay in its current state, or to disable them completely.³⁷

3.3.5 Wrong incentives.

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, trolling is also a part of comments sections over the internet. As observed by Shachaf and Hara (2010) in the interviews with Wikipedia trolls, the behind trolling varied: seeking attention, amusement, vengeance, desire to be destructive, etc.³⁸ The outcome of another research through content analysis of Usenet posts showed that there are four primary attributes of trolling: aggression, deception,

³⁵ "Why Arguing online is Futile.. As I've browsed my ... - Medium." 10 Jul. 2019, <https://medium.com/simply-live/why-arguing-online-is-futile-60fc96d81496>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

³⁶ "canonical-debate-lab/paper: The white paper ... - GitHub." 11 Jun. 2018, <https://github.com/canonical-debate-lab/paper>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.

³⁷ "canonical-debate-lab/paper: The white paper ... - GitHub." 11 Jun. 2018, <https://github.com/canonical-debate-lab/paper>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

³⁸ "Trolls just want to have fun - ScienceDirect.com." <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191886914000324>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

disruption and success. Trolling is usually 'pointless' and 'the troll' does not necessarily have any particular malicious aim (like cyber-bullying), and intent is not obvious.³⁹

3.3.6 Out of context.

For some people online discussions also pose danger, if their online profile somehow can get linked to their real life persona. Discussions that happen online can often be about controversial topics, and internet anonymity allows it. Online such discussions also occur quite often, but the level of preparedness of the argumentation participants is also usually higher than that of an average online user. In both cases, words can easily be taken out of context or try to be rephrased a certain way, which can damage an unsuspecting person. This was very clearly illustrated during the interview of Jordan Peterson by Cathy Newman.

Since it was a live interview, it is not directly related to the format of online group conversations. However, upon taking a closer look, it can be said that the setting of 1-1 face to face interview is closer to a structured debate than a random, unsupervised comment section. Therefore, it can be used in the analysis of context.

During the interview, Cathy Newman on numerous occasions tries to inflate or put the essence of Peterson's claims out of the context of the discussion. Many attentive viewers of that interview wondered, why interviewer does not address the real claims the interviewee is making.⁴⁰ Ultimately, observers were able to see through the tactics of the interviewer and call such behaviour out.

There is nothing wrong in a critical examination of ones' ideas from all points of view and various degrees of scrutiny, however, paying attention to the context as well as to the pushed narrative becomes quite important, when one's claim can be taken out of context and used against in real life. There are numerous examples where actions online, even ones that in the actuality were not harmful in any way, damaged reputation and other aspects of lives of the person.

³⁹ "Trolling in asynchronous computer-mediated communication" 10 Oct. 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263568332_Trolling_in_asynchronous_computer-mediated_communication_From_user_discussions_to_academic_definitions. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

⁴⁰ "Why Can't People Hear What Jordan Peterson Is ... - The Atlantic." 22 Jan. 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/01/putting-monsterpaint-on-jordan-peterson/550859/>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.

Chapter 4. Analysis of existing solutions with a similar aim.

There are many platforms that support digital argumentation, however, many of them do not provide the intended result for one or another reason. Therefore, it is important to analyze those examples carefully and answer the question of how to choose the right design, logic and technology to promote a seamless exchange of thoughts and arguments online, while also providing additional values by utilizing such platforms.

4.1 Platform for online discussions in good faith:

Over the years there have been many attempts to create a successful online argumentation platform, or platform with similar purpose. The analysis of each of them shows that in general there is a set of elements that platforms attempt to address, which will be discussed in this section.

Argumentation online is a complex topic and has many nuances to it. Argumentation requires some degree of structure if it is happening between many people, otherwise, the points made will be lost in the midst of the conversation. This makes the representation of arguments essential feature in argument based platforms, as it brings new joiners to the conversation, and makes points raised by users count.

4.1.1 Platform: "Letter".

As described on its official website, "If Twitter is the town square where conversations start, Letter is the cafe where the conversation has time and space to flourish."⁴¹ It is a platform where users can have meaningful conversations with each other by exchanging letters.

The Letter platform is designed for people who want to learn, view ideas of other people, share their own ideas, and engage in general exploration for a unique, valuable set of perspectives and thoughts.⁴²

⁴¹ "About - Letter.wiki." <https://letter.wiki/about>. Accessed 30 Dec. 2020.

⁴² "About - Letter.wiki." <https://letter.wiki/about>. Accessed 30 Dec. 2020.

Conversations are displayed to other users who can read and follow them. Users are also encouraged to sign up and start their own conversations about the topics that matter to them. The letteretter does not allow more than two people to participate in a conversation.

The mission of Letter is tightly linked with the internet's function to connect humanity. However, despite this connection, society still exists in silos, and such a divide shapes the future in its own way. Letter wants to develop ideas through dialogue in good faith, and thereby expand the scope and improve the quality of conversations.

Participants are requested to be sincere, fair, honest, put intellectual effort and be open to new ideas. In some ways it is a trust based community, where ones' conversation (between two people) is being displayed to others.

The shortcomings of the platform come in its main feature - a conversation between two people. It does not necessarily connect humanity, but it facilitates a more honest and constructive discussion between two people.

4.1.3 Platform: Argunet.

As described on the official website of Argunet, it has achieved some success during the years and was downloaded over 50.000 times, despite a small number of people who actually look for tools for argument mapping. Argunet was initially created for the use of its builders (mostly in philosophy seminars and project researches), and for moderation of live events and mapping down huge debates.⁴³

Argunet tries to combine intuitive argument mapping and real-time conversation platforms (chats) and forums. One of the main addressed issues Argunet tries to solve is to introduce new users to the application, extract and intuitively show their points in the argument using software.⁴⁴

Despite Argunet's sizable user base and demand in its features, some problems with the approach and tools continued to persist and could not be efficiently solved with the

⁴³ "Argunet - Open-Source Argument Mapping." 26 Oct. 2018, <http://www.argunet.org/>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

⁴⁴ "Argunet - Open-Source Argument Mapping." 26 Oct. 2018, <http://www.argunet.org/>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

resources at hand. Argunet tries to be a "swiss knife of argument mapping"⁴⁵. Because of that Argunet is quite big and complex to get used to. It is also quite difficult to maintain a Argunet. Ultimately, the developers had two choices: either to rewrite the whole code and redesign the platform, or to completely change the approach and start over, keeping in mind the issues that occurred in the past.⁴⁶ They have opted for the second option - therefore, currently the Argunet platform is not being updated.

4.1.4 Platform: ChangeMyView on Reddit.

ChangeMyView, or CMV is a subreddit devoted to supporting civil discourse. The main principle of CMV revolves around the idea that openness, respect and honesty in conversation are essential in trying to solve and understand disagreements. Debates hosted on CMV are not aggressive and do not call for judgement from other users, instead, they promote mutual understanding of all viewpoints and further discussion of all perspectives.⁴⁷

The subreddit currently is a home to over 700.000 active members. It started off with a simple premise that participants state their belief, offer reasoning behind it, and challenge others to update their belief based on convincing arguments. CMV was in the center of media attention with media calling it "our best home for civil discourse", and many studies on online rhetoric used it in their case studies.⁴⁸

It is a rather complex platform which has extensive usage guidelines. Some of the rules this subreddit holds true to are:

- 1- One should provide sufficient reasoning behind the view, and not just make a statement about their belief (500+ characters).
- 2- The view must be personally held by the commenter. However, willingness to change it, once sufficient evidence has been provided that affected the viewpoint.
- 3- Posts should summarize one's viewpoint, and include CMV in the title.
- 4- Posts should content a specific stance on the issue. One wouldn't be able to make a contribution for or against unless the stance expressed in the post is not neutral.

⁴⁵ "Argunet - Open-Source Argument Mapping." 26 Oct. 2018, <http://www.argunet.org/>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

⁴⁶ "Argunet - Open-Source Argument Mapping." 26 Oct. 2018, <http://www.argunet.org/>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

⁴⁷ "index - changemyview - Reddit." <https://www.reddit.com/r/changemyview/wiki/index>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

⁴⁸ "'Change My View' Reddit Community Launches Its Own Website." 6 Apr. 2019, <https://www.wired.com/story/change-my-view-gets-its-own-website/>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

5- One should post only if they want to have the conversation/debate on the matter, and can do so within 3 hours after posting.⁴⁹

The rules serve as a guide for new users, as well as reference for current users, by which the structure of argumentative conversation is reinforced on the platform. Having such items available to everyone creates transparency between users and moderators of the platform. Users can call each other out for behaviour which does not abide by those rules, knowing that the offered rules by which the forum is moderated help promote civic discourse of which they are a part of.

There are more rules and elaboration on each particular rule, included in the Appendix Section 1. The approach, through which the rules were built, helped in the development of functionalities of the final design of the thesis. In addition, it served as a guide on the rules and principles by which argumentation platform can work and serve its purpose.

4.1.5 Platform: Kialo.

Kialo is a platform that assists people in decision-making, offer a space to participate in reflective and meaningful dialogue, familiarize oneself with views of others in a structured manner. It encourages users to come up with relevant topics for discussions and engage in them, dissecting the presented issue to its more basic elements and understanding, and to develop discussion deeper for a better mutual understanding of competing points. The mission of Kialo is to make world more thoughtful.⁵⁰

Kialo is an argument mapping tool, that is free, where people can engage in focused discussions by inputting their comment as a section of an argument map. Visualized discussions has *pro* and *con* sections, which represent the viewpoint of a commenter on the *thesis* statement. It also accounts for the fact that arguments can be complex and multilayered, therefore arguments can branch out into a more complex discussion.⁵¹

⁴⁹ "rules - changemyview - Reddit." <https://www.reddit.com/r/changemyview/wiki/rules>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

⁵⁰ "About | Kialo." <https://www.kialo.com/about>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

⁵¹ "Kialo: Explore Popular Debates, Discussions and Critical" <https://www.kialo.com/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

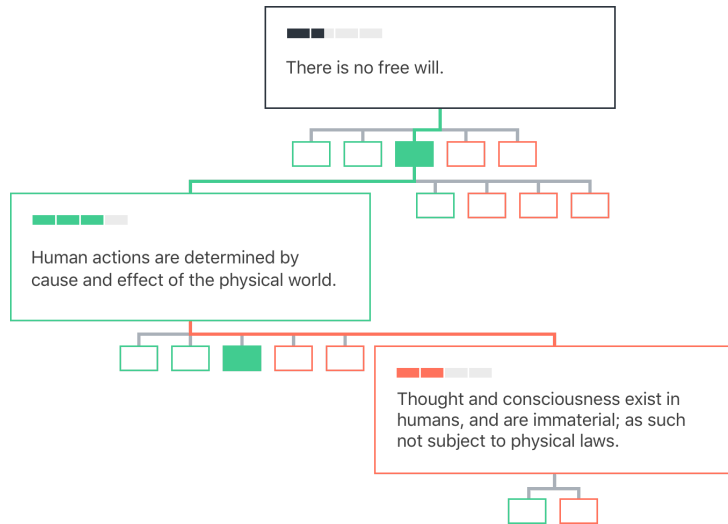


Image 4.1 Kialo Platform UI.⁵²

Chapter 5. Solution space.

In this work, I attempt to combine the Eudaimonia principles, of approaching everything with a reason, in the context of interpersonal communication decision-making and learning about decisions affecting our lives (ex. political), using online media as an enabling platform, in the frame of online collective discussions. I believe that approaching group discussions and disagreements on topics of news and politics, with the help of argumentation theory and supporting approaches will not only be a net positive good for the world but also will change the way people lead and participate in discourses online.

5.1 Modern view at argumentation.

Logical thinking, reason and argumentation have been around longer than the technology that allows us to communicate with one another, sitting behind screens of our devices in any part of the world. It became easier for us to find like-minded people, as the selection grew from local, to global. Now we are one message away from a listening ear, or ears. Sharing our thought has never been easier, and to share thoughts publicly, now does not require as much preparation as it did hundreds of years ago.

⁵² "Kialo." <https://www.kialo.com/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

Environment, where anyone, anytime can share their thoughts and ideas about global topics, which are now more accessible to public than ever, inevitably will encourage more discussions amongst the people who were enabled by technology to be connected. However, it comes at a price, as not all our thoughts and ideas were based on sufficient reasoning. This provokes online argumentations between groups of people with opposing views and claims, which can last days, and thousands of pages of text. Most of the time, such discussions end up nowhere, due to the number of variables which make the effort of so many people who were discussing their topic, futile.

5.2 Opportunity analysis.

5.2.1 Problem: Limitations of human brain.

To improve the quality of group reasoning, it is essential to tackle the problem in the space, where such discussions are taking place - the internet. We build websites and applications to suit our needs, we group them into categories to make sense of them, we match search expectations with machine learning predictions to find what we are looking for; However, we do not do the same in our social interactions on the internet as it is too much effort, and our brains have to be taught to do that. Even with the perfect methodology, our brains can hold only around 7 items (which can be premises of an argument) at ones in our short-term memory. That means that if an argument consists of more than the number of premises we are physically capable of holding in our heads, the understanding of the subject in that instance will not be complete (Mcleod, 2009). To tackle this inability, people have their own ways of individual thought documentation; however, on a collective level, the process of reasoning in the group has not evolved to the same extent.

Therefore, the design of the application should address an issue of argument/thought visualization to make it easy to new readers/contributors to understand the line of thought of the person who shares their idea. There are many methods to document an argument and many applications, methods and ways to visualize argument reduces the time needed to understand ones' idea by creating a convenient frame in which ones' ideas are represented. One of the most common ways to visualize arguments is the "Argument tree" (Image 4.1) form, where contributors can decide whether they support or oppose a certain and put their idea in the connected box to the initial argument.

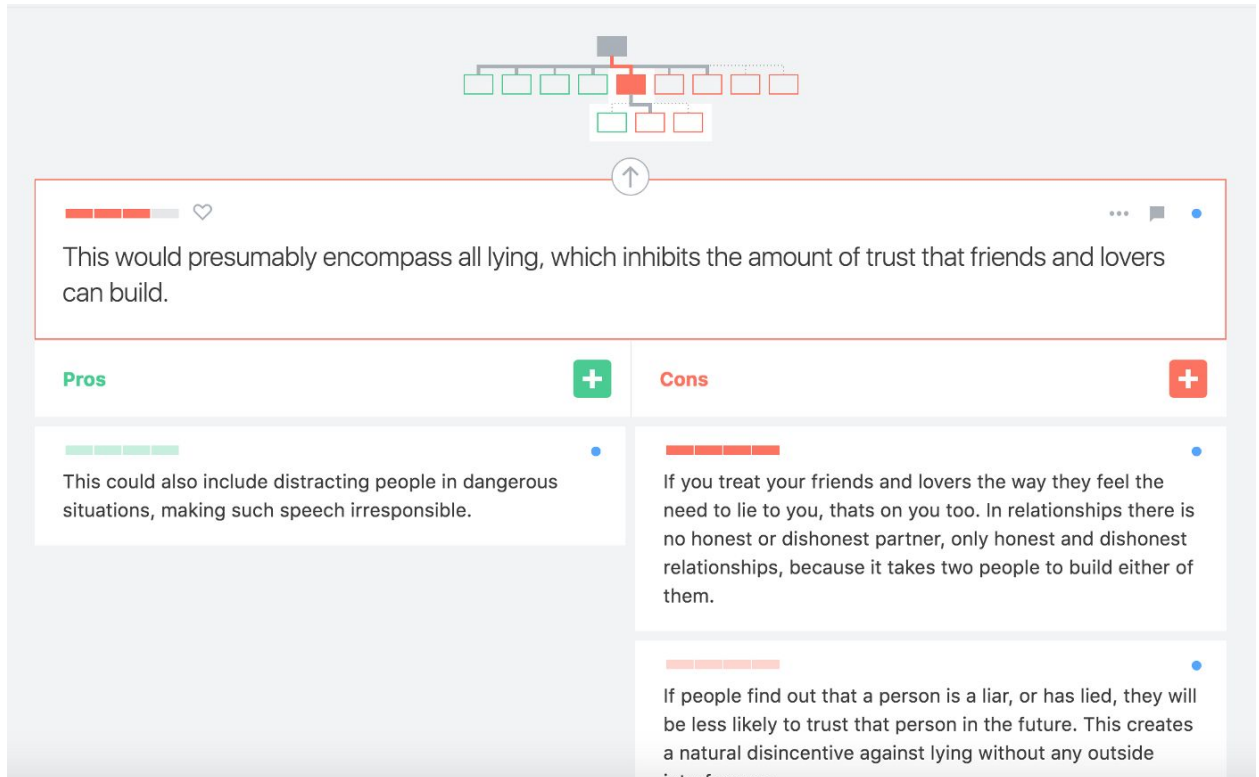


Image 5.2. Kialo Argument representation screen.⁵³

Sometimes single arguments can span many pages, which will not necessarily help to make argument representation easier by the means of Argument tree. The length of the message is just as important, and limiting the amount of words/character regarding particular topic can benefit the construction of argument, as it will promote users to develop their ideas further by adding more 'argument boxes' to their initial statement.

5.2.2 Problem: Accessibility.

The internet has abundance of websites, forums, social media outlets, and many more categories of content which serve particular purpose. Since some content online is dedicated to political discussions, and since one of the main purposes of design is to engage people into political discussions and engage in constructive debate over important matters, such online portals can be used as a part of user journey though which the platform for argument

⁵³ "UXperts Needed to Design the Future of Debate | by ... - Medium." 17 Oct. 2018, <https://medium.com/canonical-debate-lab/uxperts-needed-to-design-the-future-of-debate-824e6525ecca>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.

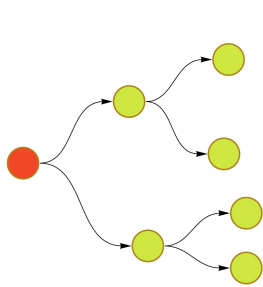
sharing can be introduced. Opportunity to engage people who are already interested in the political content is one of the main initial focuses of accessibility.

The second layer of accessibility is time needed for users to get into the framework of the platforms online. One of the ways online platforms are regulated is by rules. The more rules the platform has, the more time it is required for users to get familiarized with them, and subsequently becoming a user. Despite the positives (ex. Having a better discussion online), it eliminates many potential users which would otherwise participate. Considering that argumentation platforms with extensively elaborated rules tend to be more structured and yield a better result, in the context of online argumentation, which requires some degree of structure, considering the degree to which rules regulate the platform and their strictness is important.

5.3 Argumentation playground.

Used in many scenarios, word constellations reflect the schematic representation of how ideas are constructed in a very intuitive way. Currently, information is stored as a separate, linked entity and is usually assessed independently. Most of the time, connections between different items of information are not even drawn, which leaves people who are trying to learn more about a certain topic without the required support to build their own argument to support or refute the conclusion or claim.

The approach used before, where such connections did not have to exist does not work when the amount of supporting information for a claim or conclusion is enormous, and not accessible to all involved parties. The images #2 and #3 show the rough depiction of how premises are linked to arguments, and how they all support a claim or conclusion. Simple claims require less supporting *arguments*(red), which consist of *premises*(green). The more complex the issue is, more connections in the thought constellation will be required for an accurate assessment.



Imagine 5.3.1.

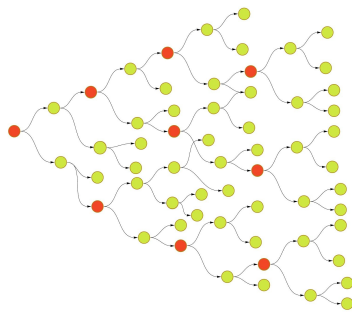


Image 5.3.2.

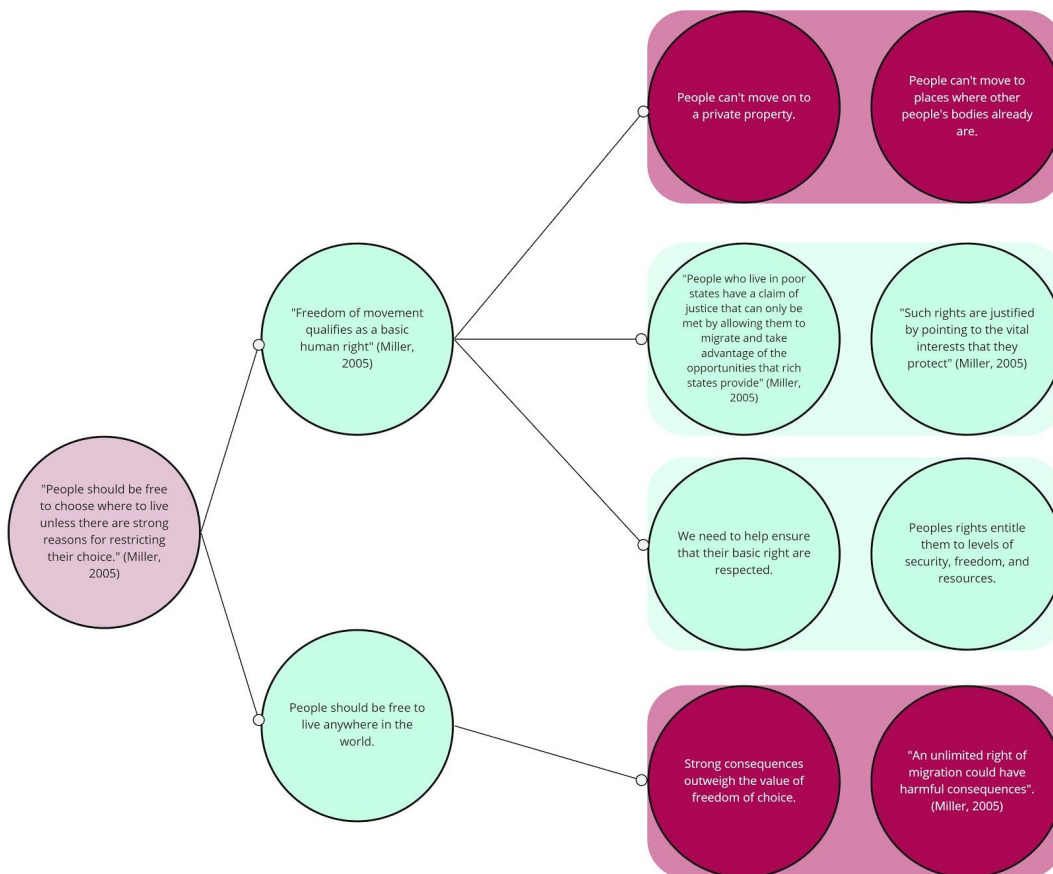


Image 5.3.3 Argumentation maps.⁵⁴

Current online discourse on complex topics, in the online discussions of informal format (Facebook, Reddit) do not evolve into thought constellation on the right side of the graph, due to human inability to hold vast amounts of premises in memory at ones. However, if the constellation is not built by one person, but instead, by the dedicated community of people, who seek the most truthful solution to any problem, in any discipline which requires

⁵⁴ <https://www.rationaleonline.com/editor/#?id=efxqxw> Taken from here. Put ref.

reasoning, the result will incorporate richer view on the issue from many different perspectives. In addition, as mentioned earlier, people most of the time do not have the same reasoning when they believe in a certain claim (if they believe in the same claim), which makes the same conclusion for two people in the linguistic sense "same", but reasoning wise different. That creates huge misunderstanding amongst people who were not trained in debating, reasoning or argumentation theory.

Given that there are already technologies that separately help us to construct arguments (not necessarily formal) through research, I believe that the combination of existing online services into one platform, with a defined goal of creating a conceptual "hive mind", that is capable of reasoning, is possible.

Platforms that the concept is inspired by: ChangeMyView - online space where people have constructive discussions with an aim to change someones' view, Kialo - debating platform to construct a complex constellation of arguments for and against a claim, RelatedWords - tool that find words that are related to a specific word or phrase.

5.4 Intended outcome.

The platform that would enable people to have constructive discussion on recent new and politics with other people, and making effort that goes into writing a constructive point not go to waste.

In the perfect case scenario, the proposed solution would enable people using dedicated social media platforms to have a social space, where every point said could be enhanced/corrected by other users through the addition of premises and arguments.

The platform will evolve in 3 stages. First stage: learning and debating platform where people learn by debating each other on certain topics. That way first batch of contributors will start to create a database for the second phase, which will be a decision-making platform with all the required information available at hand. Since all the information adheres argumentation theory standards and is inputted by humans, it can become the ultimate map of collective thought on complex topics, for us to use as a reference in future planning.

5.4.1 Teaching argumentation.

It is important to know the principles of argumentation as it is used to settle conflicts and enhance understanding of various topics and truths. It shows us how competing statements can be tested and observe the statements' truthfulness that led to the conclusion

It is used to settle disputes and discover the truth in many disciplines.

Argumentation is not an easy subject and requires some practise before one would be able to easily use it. Without proper reference, methods, and literature a platform which is based on understandings of formal argumentation rule (to some extent). Not having the user to learn argumentation by using the platform would distance huge userbase, as it would mean a required prerequisite of knowledge to becoming a member of such platform.

5.4.2. Teaching fallacies.

Logical inconsistencies and flawed reasonings are quite common in online argumentation setting. They are common feature of the way our brain thinks, as discussed previously. In fact, fallacies are so common, that they can be observed online, over the internet, in presidential debates, and pretty much anywhere. A fallacy is referred to an error in one's reasoning. Since fallacies are so common, there are even categories of fallacies (strawman, ad hominem, appeal to ignorance, false dichotomy, etc.). In general they are quite difficult to spot to the unprepared eye, however, once familiarization occurs, they become more easily noticed.⁵⁵

5.4.3 Making discussions accessible to new joiners.

One of the main problems in online argumentation now is the fact that new joiners can not usually find a summary of information on the discussion any way other than scrolling up the conversation and reading relevant comments. Therefore, a better way of representation of conversation should be analyzed. Argumentation mapping is one of the most promising technology elements that can assist people in having argumentative discussions online.

⁵⁵ "15 Logical Fallacies You Should Know Before Getting Into a" 9 Jun. 2020, <https://thebestschools.org/magazine/15-logical-fallacies-know/>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.

5.4.4 Empowering the users.

On most social media outlets users do not have much power other than liking/disliking, sharing or reporting contributions of others. This makes users feel powerless, as tools to express their satisfaction/dissatisfaction are limited by the features offered by those platforms. Therefore the empowerment, in this context means features that let the users have more power over the platform they are in.

5.4.6 Developing ongoing discussions.

Developing discussions online is not an easy task. There are many issues that are directly linked to interaction online (anonymity, platform framework, algorithms, etc.). Discovering and introducing elements that would promote discussion in online setting is therefore one of the key objectives of the intended outcome. There are many ways to promote discussions, some of which include Socratic method and argumentation mapping. They help to structure the conversation and provide necessary layout and connection of thoughts and questions, which lead to a better discussion experience and input documentation.

5.4.7 Making discussions visible.

Analysis of various political discussions on platforms such as Telegram, Reddit and Facebook showed, that in many instances discussions are cyclical. Same arguments, claims and reasonings are reused over and over again as counterpoints of opposing views from each side which creates visions cycle. Such feedback loop of repetitive arguments reinforces and provides queued responses to the same questions over and over again by the participants and viewers of such discussions, therefore, even further establishing opposing silos of further level responses to each groups' arguments.

The purpose of discussions where many people participate is to make the ideas heard and accessible to new joiners of the discussion. That way, established parts of the conversation can become building blocks for more deep discussion of any given topic, thereby promoting better understanding of opposing views.

Chapter 6. Pre-Design.

This section will introduce several perspectives and frames through which final design was decided. It will discuss involved stakeholders description, possible technology aspects, dominant elements and secondary elements for a deeper discussion of features and their role.

6.1 Stakeholders:

Consideration of the involved stakeholders is essential in the design process of the application that is based on the contributions of its users. Understanding motivations as well as their journeys will shed some light on the potential improvements in their existing user experience.

Considering the nature and aim of such a platform, the roles of stakeholders differ substantially, and at the same time work together in symbiosis.

6.1.1 Users/Contributors/Commenters.

Motivation.

People who participate in discussions online (in this case, all discussions are taken into account, not only politics/news related) can have different motivations and act upon them in different ways. In many cases those motivations are not the same, as grouping commenters into one category would be oversimplification. However, examining motivations from the perspective of the comment itself, several main triggers can be distinguished.

According to the respondents of the study, people either seek "to express an emotion or opinion," "to add information" or "to correct inaccuracies or misinformation."⁵⁶ All of the aforementioned motivations hold the place to be, and should be respected and considered. If the user does not feel that their motivations are not actionable upon in the platform, there would be no reason for them to stay.

Another motivator for the user to take ownership of such role would be their acknowledgement of inefficiencies of current comment sections and discussion forums on larger platforms like Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Willingness to interact with other

⁵⁶ "We Asked 8,500 Internet Commenters Why They Do What" 28 Nov. 2016, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/we-asked-8500-internet-commenters-why-they-do-what-they-do/>. Accessed 8 Dec. 2020.

people who try to stay reasonable and approach discussions with an honest interest in an equal, non-discriminatory playground is also one of the most important drives of user - stakeholder.

Role:

The role of the commenter is self-explanatory, and it is to leave a comment or start a thread on any given news article or a story, which can have a potential effect on the way we live our lives or matters of ethics.

Commenters should be empowered at what they do, and know that the comment they have spent time crafting has a potential to be considered by others in a more sophisticated way than simple 'like', as it is an argumentative platform that values the thinking process.

Secondary elements of the commenter role would be to create links of arguments and thoughts that are connected and that support or refute other arguments in the environment.

6.1.2 Readers

Motivation.

As can be observed from the research done by Survey of Commenters and Comment Readers - Center for Media Engagement, there are many reasons why people go down to comment sections after engaging with the media the post was made. Opinions of other people matter to them.⁵⁷ Another majority of comment readers do so to entertain themselves, which also means that they are not there necessarily to learn more or understand what others think.

⁵⁷ "Survey of Commenters and Comment Readers - Center for"
<https://mediaengagement.org/research/survey-of-commenters-and-comment-readers/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

**Why People Read News Comments
(among those who read news comments but do not comment)**

Why Read Comments	Percent
To learn about the opinions of others	46.2%
To be entertained or amused by others' comments	40.1
To see how your opinion of the story or topic compares to others' view	33.9
To get more information on a story	29.9
To get additional reporting/updates to a story	27.9
To gauge the pulse of the community	26.4
Other	2.7

Data from the Engaging News Project.

Notes: Multiple responses permitted. Unweighted sample size among those who have read comments on a news site, app, or social media page, but do not comment = 365; Question wording: "Why do you read comments about [insert topic about which comment most frequently] on [insert news site where comment most frequently]?"²³

Figure 6.1 Data on why people do read comments.⁵⁸

The data shows that approximately 46.2% of people who read news comments but do not comment, do so because they want to learn the opinions of others.

Role.

The primary role of readers is a secondary engagement with the written comments and provision of feedback in a form of unique 'like' systems that are suited for an argumentative platform.

The secondary role of readers is any sort of interaction with the commented material. Interactions or lack of their off will indicate the level of difficulty to enter certain discussions in the platform and indicate at potential improvements.

6.1.3 Admins/Moderators

Motivation:

Being a moderator on the first glance might look as a very unrewarding activity, which on average is true. However, people have different motivations which can be summarized into 4 categories: personal satisfaction; creating and bringing the community together; stay updated on subjects that matter; promote their views.

⁵⁸ "Survey of Commenters and Comment Readers - Center for"
<https://mediaengagement.org/research/survey-of-commenters-and-comment-readers/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

Since moderators have more power in the ecosystem they are in, for some people the power to delete, promote, edit, share and shape their environment is very alluring. Moderators largely affect the community they are part of by creating additional content of frames that can be filled in (ex. promoting certain topics, thereby increasing the likelihood of people noticing it). Many moderators deeply care about the subjects of forums they moderate, and generally know a lot about them. This motivates them to do their role in the forums they curate. And finally, some moderators use the privileges to carefully curate the contents, and sharing information that suits their interest.⁵⁹

Role.

The primary role of online moderators/admins is to keep discussions run smoothly. It is the role of moderators/admins to drive discussion so it stays on point, responding to set objectives and topic purpose. Without proper moderation many online discussions would fall into chaos. Moderators usually have more power than regular users, which enables them to delete, edit, promote, and more do other actions, in their respective forums.

6.2 Technology.

Since most of the problems that happen in online discussions and chats are not directly related to technology, this section will touch upon aspects that serve as guiding tools for the final platform. Recommendation algorithms are engines which are based on analysis of user data, history and behaviour online, and subsequent suggestions on a variety of topics.⁶⁰

Recommendation engines are widely used in online platforms as it can enhance overall experience as reduce time before user can get what they came for. In the example of Netflix, despite it having a huge selection of media to consume, the algorithmic suggestions to its users on what they might like played a major role in growing Netflix's popularity.⁶¹

⁵⁹ "(website): What do reddit moderators get out of being ... - Quora."

<https://www.quora.com/Reddit-website-What-do-reddit-moderators-get-out-of-being-mods-on-reddit>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

⁶⁰ "A simple way to explain the Recommendation Engine in AI" 25 Jun. 2019, <https://medium.com/voice-tech-podcast/a-simple-way-to-explain-the-recommendation-engine-in-ai-d1a609f59d97>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.

⁶¹ "A simple way to explain the Recommendation Engine in AI" 25 Jun. 2019, <https://medium.com/voice-tech-podcast/a-simple-way-to-explain-the-recommendation-engine-in-ai-d1a609f59d97>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.

There are two main types of information suggestion engines: content-based filtering; collaborative filtering. Content-based filtering makes a suggestion of the content based on personal data, history and online behaviour of the user. Collaborative filtering makes suggestions based on information collected from other users with same online activity on the platform.⁶² This method is more prompt to inaccuracies unless enough user data has been collected.

In the context of online argumentation, collaborative filtering method seems very promising, as such discussions invite people who are more knowledgeable in their field, which will create a segmentation of people based on their aptitudes and interests, thereby creating more in-depth discussions.

6.3 Dominant features.

Tool to create argumentation map by selecting relevant comments and linking them together, with a subsequent establishment of a relationship between the comments (supports, refutes, for, against, to which claim it is related, etc.). This would provide the necessary structure of which most modern chats and forums are lacking, as well as create a summary of a discussion for a new user.

Tools for admins, so they can moderate discussion forums. Such tools would include a regular admin toolbox (report, block, ban, promote, etc.), as well as set mechanical rules for chat rooms (cooldown timer between comments, number of comments, number of participants, reward achievements). Participants (readers and commenters) would have a full range of rating tools to provide feedback to writers, and weed out irrelevant comments which hinder discussion.⁶³

6.4 Learning argumentation.

⁶² "A simple way to explain the Recommendation Engine in AI" 25 Jun. 2019, <https://medium.com/voice-tech-podcast/a-simple-way-to-explain-the-recommendation-engine-in-ai-d1a609f59d97>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.

⁶³ "Framework for Designing and Evaluating Game Achievements." <http://www.digra.org/dl/db/11307.59151.pdf>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.

Since the platform about argumentation requires users to have some understanding on what the argumentation is, it will use online resources to introduce users to argumentation practises as well as to Socratic methods. Having such content available to users on one of the main screens and its connection to achievements can both increase the attachment to user profile/avatar and teach about argumentation and its use online. Since Socratic method focuses on forwarding discussions with clever use of guiding questions,

6.5 Final design.

The basic objective of the final design was to rethink the comment section in such way, so it provides more informational value to the users. During the analysis of information and articles on comment sections and the way the work, it became obvious that there are many problems with existing solutions. One possible reason for that can be that most prevailing comment sections with heavy traffic, are just extensions of the main product (Ex. Youtube comment section is just an extension of the main - video sharing platform). There no incentive for companies to invest in such features like improved tools for comment sections, as they can intervene with the existing algorithms that make the engines of such platforms work the way they do. In other cases improvements would change the reason why people go to such platform altogether, thereby making such changes unwanted.

Therefore, to redesign a comment section it was important to boil what the comment section is, to its basic principles, which is a modern way of communicating with each other. In other words, it is a playground, and the rules of the playground either promote or impede certain behaviours related to communication on such platforms. Easy way to think about it would be considering what 'likes' do to our online behaviour. Despite being a simple feature, it has a dramatic effect on the way the interactions online are happening by motivating us to post, like, share, etc.

Keeping in mind the importance of small features which have potential to enable certain behaviours in all involved stakeholders is crucial, as it drives the process of keeping the comment space 'clean' from types of comments which hinder development of the discussion.

The final choice of the platform at which such discussions should take place was mobile, as it is currently one of the fastest-growing tool for digital interactions. Taking into account an

ongoing pandemic, the mobile usage increased this year by 13% globally on average.⁶⁴ Even before the pandemic, the mobile usage was constantly increasing, and according to experts did not reach its peak yet.⁶⁵ It is estimated that there will be 1 billion more smartphone users in 2021, in comparison to 2016.⁶⁶

Ultimately, it is an argumentation platform that would make discussion of complex issues easier and more structured than on average forums or chats. An environment where people who are seeking meaningful discussions on important issues can share their thoughts, or read what other people think.

6.6 DigiAgora.

DigiAgora is a platform dedicated for people to have semi-formal to informal conversations on political news and social issues, in a familiar chat-forum setting with addition of tools, that would support argumentative frame of discussion.

The functionality and logic of the DigiAgora, includes features, actions, points of interaction and roadmap to those points of interaction. It is important for a platform success, that the features correspond to the built logic, especially in the context of chat/forum like platform with several main stakeholders.

What is the platform?

It is a combination of chat/forum based environment with features, roles, and rewards. For a first time user it would be like like a regular mobile chat-forum platform, with headings consisting of political discussion topics and links to the news sources they came from. In addition it will depict the media courses from which the topic is taken. Upon selecting a topic of interest, one would become a participant of the conversation in the role of either reader or writer. In both scenarios features to construct arguments using

⁶⁴ "• Coronavirus impact: global device usage increase by country" 18 Jun. 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1106607/device-usage-coronavirus-worldwide-by-country/>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.

⁶⁵ "10 Mobile Usage Statistics You Should Know in 2021 - Oberlo." 22 Apr. 2020, <https://www.oberlo.com/blog/mobile-usage-statistics>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.

⁶⁶ "10 Mobile Usage Statistics You Should Know in 2021 - Oberlo." 22 Apr. 2020, <https://www.oberlo.com/blog/mobile-usage-statistics>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.

argument mapping would be available. That way contributions of both new users who did not yet write and users who already provided their contribution will be valuable, as both can connect arguments of other users by their purpose (arguments for and against claims of other users).

What tools will the platform have?

It will provide rating tools, argument mapping tools, and moderator tools (block, delete, promote, etc.).

Rating tool will allow all three types of users/stakeholders to evaluate other peoples' contributions. However, since the 'like' features already have established understanding on how they work, other categorizations for evaluation have been proposed. Categories "for" and "against" which rate the comment by its intention to either support or refute the argument to which it was directed to.

Categories "fallacy", "fact", "strong argument", "weak argument" used to rate the quality of the argument to weed out unproductive contributions, mark them for other users to see, and rate the degree of its relation to the initial claim.

And the "agree" and "disagree" categories, which do not hold actual value in the debate configuration, and serve a purpose of either following the made points, or for motivational support to the writer.

Making a statement.

As discussed previously, there are many news which spark discussions on them. People feel differently about the news, and letting them express their views based on news should be available. Therefore to make a statement one would need to provide some arguments "for" it, as well as add references, so other users can get the idea where the news came from, as well as provide some context to what is being discussed.

Such statements-claims will be building blocks of each discussion "room", as they would provide content for people to start argumentative dialogue about.

Participating in the discussion "room".

Discussion rooms serves as a playground for a discussion on particular topic. Rooms, depending on the discussed issue can have different rules, set rating limits, and frequency at which people can post in them. Regulation of rules and settings falls on moderators of that or similar topics, as they will be selected based on their expertise as well as previous

contributions on the platform. For example, more complex discussions would have stricter (more time in between postings, higher allowed participation rating) rules of participation, while discussions which do not require as much preparation time would have less (faster cooldown reduction for posting, lower allowed rating).

That would ensure that the platform stays flexible and discussions' rules will stay organic and regulated by community behaviour.

Mapping tool.

Readers and writers on the platform will have an ability to connect the dots in the discussion, rate the quality of arguments, degree of their relevance to initial claim.

Entrusting users with those abilities, coupled with the motivational queues and achievement system may foster attachment in users to their accounts, as well as structure discussions organically, with a help of people.

Achievement system.

Final element of the platform is linked to human psychology and motivation-reward systems in our brains. Social media websites use it extensively, and to some extent shape and change our behaviour. We are social beings, and opinions of other people matter to us. Social media portals where people share photos help people see what other people think about their photos. Media where one shares their art, provides feedback to users on their art. Since it is an argumentation platform where people engage intellectually, achievement system of such platform should correspond to its initial purpose.

Basic achievements focused on ,familiarization with the platform, quantity of contributions, quality of contributions, and assistance roles (ex. Connecting arguments) will be introduced.

Initial progress achievement list:

"Made 10 arguments" -> "Made 50 arguments" -> "Made 100 arguments"

"Made 10 strong strong arguments" -> "50 strong arguments" -> "Made 100 strong arguments"

"Counted 5 fallacies" -> "Counted 10 fallacies" -> "Counted 20 fallacies"

"Created post with 10 comments" -> "Created post with 50 comments" -> "Created post with 100 comments".

"Argumentation excellence" - curated discussion which ended up having an argumentation map with more than 20 elements.

“Adhom” - used fallacies 5 times to forward your point.

“Argumaster” - passed the test on argumentation structure.

“Learned from Socrates” - used Socratic questioning to foster discussion (rated by moderators).

More achievements can be introduced after the initial usage of the platform is observed, and comments read, as otherwise it is unknown what users value within a platform.

6.7 Platform accessibility.

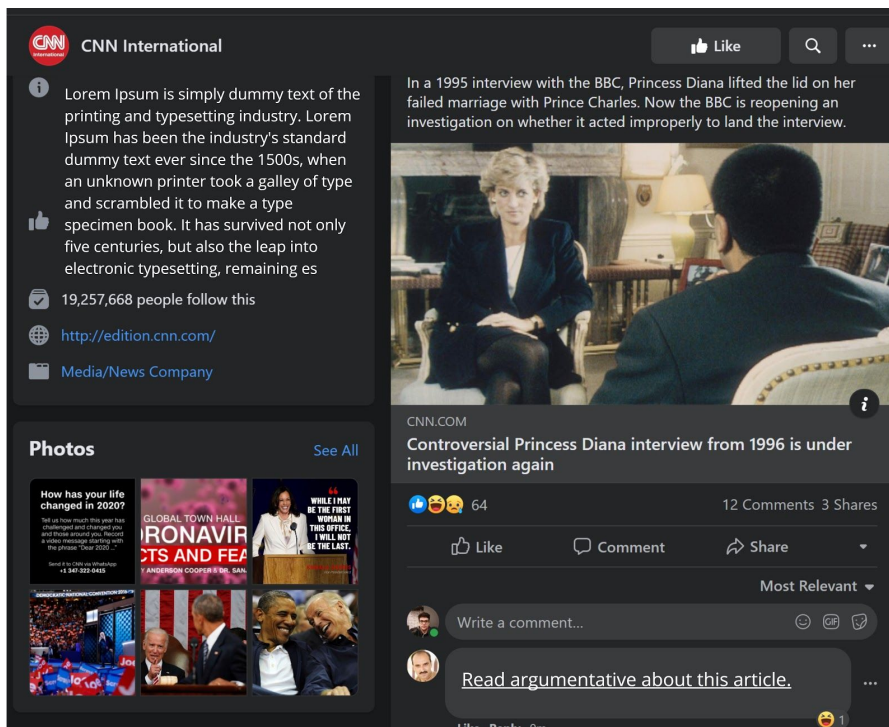


Image 6.6.1

The proposed design suggests reducing the steps necessary to be a part of such a platform by simplifying the way one could enter or create a room/playground for discussions. It suggests that a platform should exist as a continuation of news about politics and social issues. It can be done using a “room” creation function. That way user can assign an article from the internet to the discussion “room”, with subsequent referencing to the article, by simply copy-pasting a link of the article to the respective section in DigiAgora. New users

will have access to the initial source of the discussion as well as will be able to add more news about the topic, presented under a different angle. Refer to image 6.5.1

This will provide the first aggregating step by news topic, from which people from other social media outlets can come together if the topic matters to them. Currently, such discussions either are on dedicated websites, or happen on the media they were shared.

6.8 UI Elements.



Image 6.8.1

Image 6.8.1 shows a home screen of the application. Through this screen users can create discussion rooms by posting a link of the news to newly created discussion room. Users also can access their achievements, previous argument participation (history of arguments and maps) and learn principles and methods for argumentation.

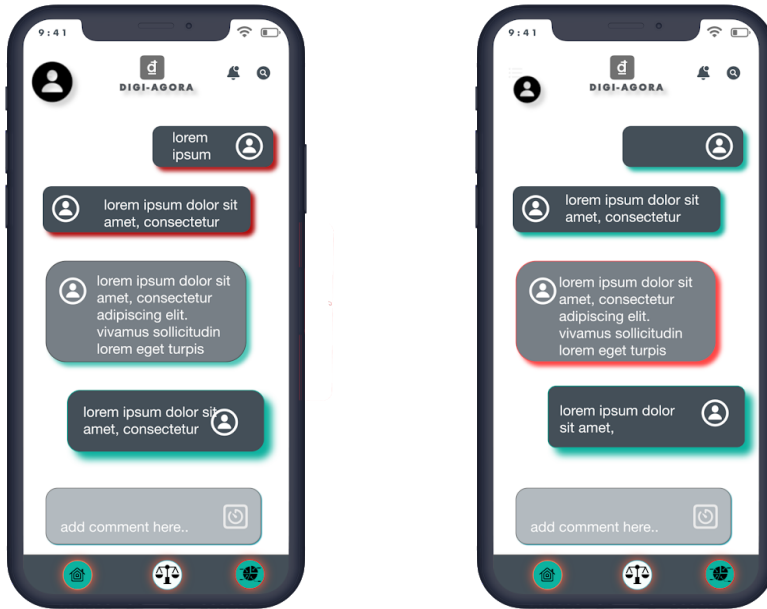


Image 6.8.2

Image shows argumentative conversation where each text message is highlighted with the color to indicate if it supports or refutes the initial post. This design will enable users to clearly see points for and against, as well as help with the grouping and connection of arguments.



Image 6.8.3

Here the number of relationship for each comment is represented with the circle under the text. Such design will assist observers and commenters to connect arguments and points in relation to each other. By a simple click on the circle under the comment, one could find the related comment that either supported or refuted the point.

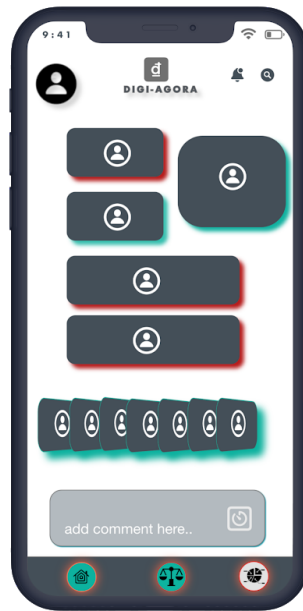


Image 6.8.4

This screen depicts the user history of argumentation, with the completed built argument maps in the bottom of the screen, and ongoing conversations and points made (for against) on the top. Through this screen discussions and points made will never be lost, and will stay documented connected to the profile.

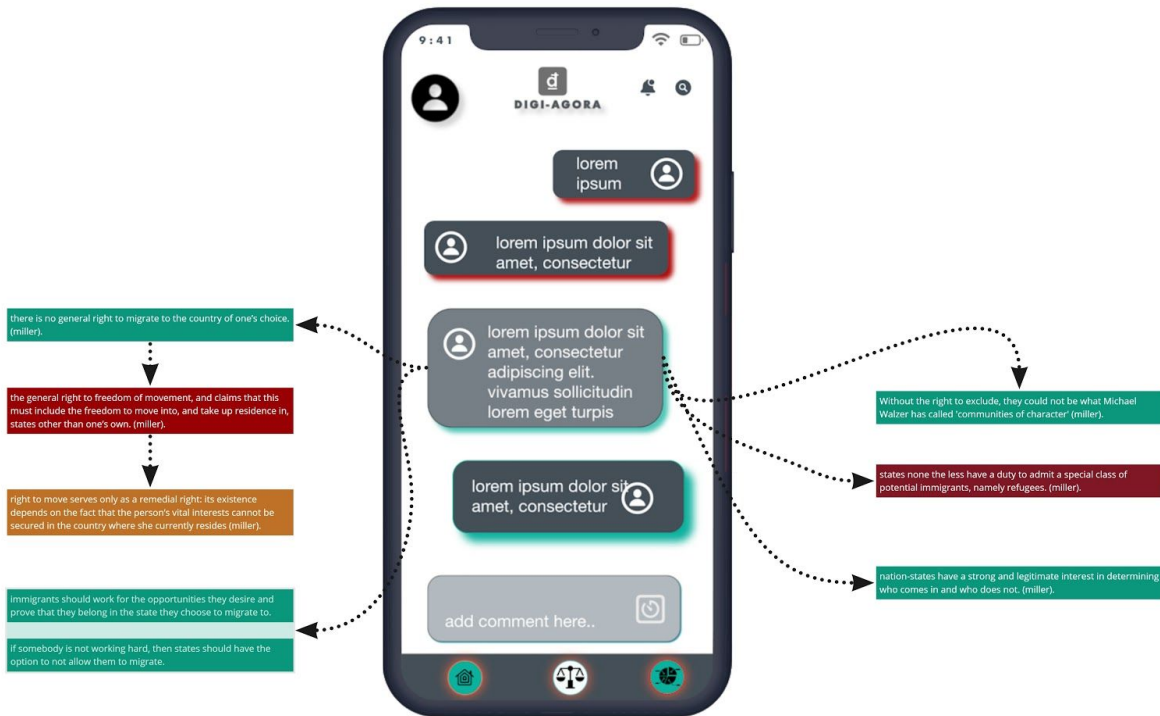


Image 6.8.5

Image 6.8.5 depicts a platform chat section, after the graphical representation of arguments has been selected. In this mode users can see the actual connections of the arguments on an argument tree. For that they do not need to leave the platform, as it can be enabled, at which point the screen will be possible to drag, thereby see all the connections.

Chapter 9. Conclusion.

This research aimed to demonstrate the issues that are currently present in the way people communicate online, and offer a glimpse on what it can possibly evolve into, if the intention of online conversation platforms shifted towards having more meaningful discussions online. It shows the previous attempts to making online conversations more intellectually honest and analyzes the used approaches, as in most cases they are innovative in the scale of their application. The importance of intellectually honest conversation between people, and its relation to argumentation online and democracy, in the context of the modern ways of communications demonstrates the niche which is currently unfulfilled.

The design aims to combine positive elements of other attempts of making online argumentative conversations more productive and inclusive. It uses both logical and representational design elements from other online portals with the same aim, coupled with a new approach on motivational impulses and attachment to ones' profile.

Research showed that argumentation mapping is one of the best tools to have in an argumentation platform due to its benefits: short summary of conversation, structure and relation of thoughts. Moderators also take important role in such platforms, as they enforce general rules onto users, on which all have been agreed upon. Overall success

Appendix.

Submission Rules on reddit Changemyview.⁶⁷

These rules apply to the OP and their submission only.

Rule A

Explain the *reasoning behind your view*, not just what that view is (500+ characters required)

Why an Original Poster (OP) holds a particular view is an incredibly important thing for commenters to know if they are going to try and convince the OP that they should hold a different view. By not explaining why you hold a particular view, you are going to find yourself giving the same explanation to every commenter over and over again. We've found that it is better to get this out of the way upfront, and to edit the post periodically with answers to the most common questions to save everyone time and effort. The reason that we require 500 characters is that we've found that this is the minimum amount of explanation the average post needs to launch a productive discussion. Some posts may be able to get away with less than that but they are few and far between, and they are nearly always made better posts with more explanation.

500 characters isn't all that much - here is what 500 characters looks like:

- Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis autem vel eum iriure dolor in hendrerit in vulputate velit esse molestie consequat, vel illum dolore eu feugiat nulla facilisis at vero eros et accumsan et iusto odio dignissim qui blandit praesent luptatum zzril delenita.

Indicators of Rule A Violations

⁶⁷ "rules - changemyview - Reddit." <https://www.reddit.com/r/changemyview/wiki/rules>. Accessed 1 Jan. 2021.

- The 500+ characters of your post need to be an explanation of your view in your own words. While we encourage submitters to use quotations and citations, they do not count towards the character requirement; we want to know what you believe, not what someone else does.
- If you find that many different commenters are asking you the same question about your view, that's a strong indication that the answer to that question should have been included in your original explanation. You can (and should) edit your original post to include that information.
- We don't judge the quality of the arguments posted on CMV, but we will remove submissions which are incoherent, unreadable, or so convoluted that they can't be easily understood.
- Bypassing the character requirement with any form of "filler text" will result in your submission being removed.

Rule B

You must personally hold the view and demonstrate that you are open to it changing.

The purpose of CMV is for the OP and responders to have an exchange of ideas in an effort to change the view of the OP. If you don't hold the view, however, then it is impossible to determine if that view has been changed.

- **A submission cannot be made on behalf of others...**
 - Allowing OPs to submit views on behalf of other people would put an impossible burden on them to divine what another person might think. The only way for you to really know if a comment has changed your view is if you can personally evaluate the argument and decide if your view was changed.
 - Historically, OPs posting for others would reply to strong arguments with, "That is what I told them, but they don't get it!" which doesn't help bring the discussion to closure.
 - If your friend holds a view, encourage them to make an account rather than try to argue on their behalf.

- **...as "devil's advocate..."**
 - Historically, allowing OPs to post views that they don't actually hold allowed them to use CMV to just fish for better arguments for conversations, assignments or debates. While this isn't necessarily bad, that is not what we are here for - we are here to help change people's minds, not win their arguments for them.
 - Even when done in good faith or in a genuine attempt to gain good arguments for a view that they hold, an OP that doesn't hold a belief can never really have that belief changed so we only allow views that you personally believe to be true or right.
 - Commenters (non-OP) are more than allowed to argue views they do not personally hold in responses.
- **...as any entity other than yourself...**
 - This prohibits OPs from submitting "in character" or role-playing. Since the OP is not the character in question, it is not possible for them to know what actually change a character's mind. The only mind you know is your own, so it is the only one you can speak to.
- **....or to soapbox.**
 - Your submission and subsequent explanations should not aim to convince others, spread your ideas, advocate for a cause, or otherwise "soapbox" in any way. While we do not require that our Original Posters (OPs) want to have their view changed or that they can articulate any doubts they have about their view, we do require that they be open to hearing arguments against that view. They must be willing to seek further understanding for those who disagree with them, and they must enter with the acceptance that their view may be flawed. A good OP must have the mindset that they might be wrong and be genuinely open to exploring that possibility.
 - To that end, OPs must act in a way that demonstrates that willingness. Many people who are soapboxing fall back on claiming that they are "willing to change their view if they see the right argument", but that is not sufficient. The moderators do not have access to their internal mental state, but only to what they see in the post and comments.

Indicators of Rule B Violations

Enforcing this rule requires subjective evaluation of the post by the moderators, which can only be made based on observable behavior. When evaluating this rule, the moderators look for specific indicators of unwillingness, including but not limited to:

- Explicit statements of intent to change the views of others
- Cherry-picking weaker arguments to shoot down, while ignoring stronger and more persuasive arguments (including abandoning an exchange that isn't going your way).
- Dismissing a response by merely pointing out some superficial and partial imperfection, instead of comprehensively refuting its substantive parts, or making concession that it has merit and giving deltas where appropriate.
- Arbitrarily limiting the lines of argument discussed, or demanding impossible/highly unreasonable evidence as the only means to change the view (e.g. that new studies be done or that negatives be affirmatively proven).
- Making ad hoc patches to the original view (without awarding deltas and updating their post accordingly), or rejecting relevant counter arguments for being "unimportant" or "off-topic".
- Reiterating OP's viewpoints to others (beyond the degree necessary to reply to overlapping responses), while not exploring new grounds offered by others (such as asking genuine follow up questions to gain more insight of an angle).
- Writing the view like a persuasive essay, "rant", or call to action (evidence include explicit statements of intent to change people's minds, external links to essays by the OP, or requests for advice in advocacy groups/forums supporting the view).

Common Rebuttals to Rule B Removals

When posts are removed for Rule B violations, many of the same justifications are provided. These are listed below, along with why the moderators do not find them compelling arguments. Please review these before appealing a Rule B removal; rehashing any of these

arguments as a part of that appeal will only result in the moderators asking you to review this guidance:

- **I am open to changing my view.**
 - To be blunt, saying it doesn't make it so. If your submission was removed as a Rule B violation, it's because multiple moderators agreed that you weren't acting open-minded.
 - If you want to convince us you are open to other opinions, show us evidence of it - provide us links to exchanges where you were working with other users and making progress toward a change of view.
- **I just haven't seen a good enough argument/the evidence I want yet.**
 - Any rational person will be open to changing any view if presented with undeniable proof that it's wrong. That degree of "open-mindedness" isn't sufficient to satisfy Rule B.
 - On a basic level, there has to be a realistic chance of your view changing for a CMV submission to function. If you're requiring an unrealistically high standard of evidence to even consider a shift in perspective, then you're violating Rule B.
- **Of course I haven't been convinced, here are all the reasons I'm right**
 - Your view may indeed be correct; we take no position on that because Rule B isn't about that. Rule B is about your openness to making a change.
 - On any complex issue it should at least be possible to recognize some aspect of the other side which broadens your perspective, even if your core belief is well-justified.
 - In the improbable event that you're completely right about everything, you don't belong on CMV.

Rule C

Submission titles must adequately sum up your view and include "CMV:" at the beginning.

People reading from their front page will know immediately which subreddit the post is from. This is vital, as there is a certain level of respect in CMV that may not be present in

other places. If someone is conveying their controversial opinion without including the recognized "CMV" acronym, people may assume this is a closed-minded individual trying to stir controversy. While this can still be present in our subreddit, the "CMV" reminds users to treat this OP with respect and open-mindedness in order to provide new perspectives. Having no acronym may cause some people to jump the gun without realizing which subreddit they're in. Similarly, we feel there is a big difference between "I believe this" and "CMV: I believe this" for setting the tone. At a first glance, one seems to be a closed case and the other is up for discussion. This is important for first impressions on the front page.

Indicators of Rule C Violations

- Titles are questions, not statements. For example, you should write "CMV: Trix are just for kids", not "CMV: Are Trix just for kids?"
- While not strictly prohibited, posts that use inflammatory language or all caps are discouraged because they do not inspire confidence that the OP is here to have their view changed. We are not a G-rated forum and adult language is permissible, but overtly hostile submissions may be seen as indications that the OP is violating the rules on openness to change and be removed for that reason.
- Titles should also avoid inflammatory language or all caps whenever possible. "CMV: I don't have an anger problem" sets a very different tone than, "CMV: I DON'T HAVE AN ANGER PROBLEM YOU JERKS!"

Posts Containing Spoilers

If, and only if, your title contains spoilers for any popular media, please keep the title as vague as you can out of respect to others reading the thread that may not know the spoiler. "CMV: About the ending of Hamlet" allows users to decide if they want the ending spoiled without actually spoiling it; "CMV: Hamlet should not have killed his uncle" doesn't give them that option.

Spoilers are allowed in the body of posts, so long you indicate the post will contain spoilers; we suggest appending your title with [Spoilers] tag to make this clear.

Rule D

Posts cannot express a neutral stance, suggest harm against a specific person, be self-promotional, or discuss this subreddit (visit [r/ideasformv](https://www.reddit.com/r/ideasformv) instead)

Over the years, we have found that certain types (not topics) of posts just don't lend themselves well to the CMV structure and result in very poor discussions. For that reason, we have decided not to allow these types of posts on CMV for purely practical reasons.

We do not remove posts based on content or perceived offensiveness. If your post was removed for violating this rule, it is because the format just doesn't work well for CMV and not because we are censoring any view point.

Indicators of Rule D Violations

- **Neutral Posts:** Views that do not take a stance
 - Neutral posts are prohibited because we feel like they would only open up discussion for the most popular opinion. In order for people to argue the other side of a view with you, they have to know what that other side is first. Saying, "I believe that X is correct" gives people something to react to; saying "I don't know if X or Y is correct" does not.
- **Personal Harm:** Views relating to your life or personal situation are allowed so long as they can't reasonably lead to a dangerous outcome.
 - An obvious example, while unlikely, would be "CMV: My life IS worth living". This would hopefully be ignored anyway, but Rule 1 would mean some users might try and convince you that it isn't worth it.
 - A less obvious example - since it's something we'd want you to change your view on - would be "CMV: My life ISN'T worth living". The reason being that commenters might not know how to deal with this situation and inadvertently make it worse, which is a negative experience for everyone involved. When someone subscribes to CMV, they aren't signing up to deal with such a situation. Those subscribing to [r/SuicideWatch](https://www.reddit.com/r/SuicideWatch), however, do expect such posts and we'd therefore recommend you visit there instead - and check out their [resources](#) if you are dealing with a crisis.

- Another example would be both "CMV: I SHOULD leave my abusive partner" and "CMV: I SHOULDN'T leave my abusive partner". These posts are problematic because arguments by commenters or the OP would advocate a dangerous position.
- This part of the rule also prohibits posts that could personally endanger a specific living individual, e.g. posting about why a public figure should be assassinated. Abstract discussions about the merits of such actions, discussions about the application of law (e.g. the death penalty or other legal punishment) or government/military action, and/or discussions about past actions or historical people remain permissible.
- We must stress that this rule does not apply to groups of people or general views that you believe indirectly endangers you or your way of life. However, "calls for violence" are [against reddit's site policy](#).
- **Self-Promotion:** Views that exist only to promote or sell
 - If we believe your post was made to promote or advertise something (i.e. YouTube channel, blog, book, etc.), we will remove the post. We will also remove the post if it appears that your goal is advocacy of a specific cause or action (e.g. trying to get users to sign a petition or brigade a website).
 - Links to blogs, YouTube channels and other media that you do not personally control are allowed, providing that the post still satisfies Rule A. Linking to blogs, YouTube channels or other media that you own or control in comments are similarly allowed, providing the comment still satisfies Rule 5.
- **Meta-Topics:** Views about CMV itself
 - We aren't opposed to criticism or suggestions, but we've disallowed "meta" posts from the main site because the format of CMV doesn't suit a genuine suggestion, since OP might not be interested in debating it (which doesn't reduce its potential utility) and the top level comments would have to criticise it in some way, which would make moderator responses difficult.
 - To this end, we have set up an entire sub, [r/ideasforcmv](#), to handle all of our meta discussions. Please note that [r/ideasforcmv](#)

has a different set of rules, so please review the moderation standards before posting there.

Rule E

Only post if you are willing to have a conversation with those who reply to you, and are available to do so within 3 hours after posting

CMV is about conversation between people who believe different things. The Original Poster (OP) needs to be available to answer questions, provide clarification, evaluate arguments and provide responses as part of a back-and-forth between them and the people in the discussion. If someone takes the time to respond to your post, it is only fair that you be there to read it and respond yourself.

Indicators of Rule E Violations

- **No responses from the OP in 3 hours**
 - For the super popular submissions that get a disproportionate amount of attention, a three (3) hour limit is enough to stop the submission in its tracks if OP is unresponsive.
 - This gives plenty of time for responders to see the thread and start engaging with OP. Without a doubt there should be at least a few users in the thread. If we wait any longer, then new users who see it and comment will be wasting their time responding to an OP who isn't there.
 - On the off chance that nobody responds to OP (really, really rare), we will be lenient on the timeframe because obviously OP needs someone to respond to for it to be a conversation. Similarly, if you only receive a few low-effort responses (e.g. "You spelled X wrong" or "It was actually 1990, not 1991") within 3 hours after posting, we won't hold it against you for not responding.
 - If you become available to respond after your post has been removed, it can be reinstated by messaging the moderators. You should only make this request if you can participate within three hours of the reapproval request. Sometimes, it is more beneficial

to create a new thread, especially if the original had low participation and a considerable amount of time has passed.

- **Low effort responses from the OP**
 - A small number of one line responses that don't address the arguments that people are making will still result in removal.
 - Additionally, OPs who exclusively respond to people agreeing with them doesn't really count as conversation. You need to actually engage with people who are countering your argument, not look for people who agree with you and bolster your own. Furthermore, frivolous responses (e.g. saying "it's all good" in response to all comments) are not a "conversation".

Comment Rules

These rules apply to all commenters involved in the discussion.

Rule 1

Direct responses to a submission must challenge or question at least one aspect of the submitted view. Arguments in favor of the view OP is willing to change must be restricted to replies to comments.

In order to prevent Change My View from becoming another echo chamber, all direct responses should challenge or attempt to clarify some part the submitter's view; agreement with the view is restricted to replies to responses. Your goal as a commenter should be to challenge the Original Poster (OP) and help them understand why they might be wrong in their viewpoint, not provide additional reasons that they might be right.

If we allowed responses that reinforced the OP's view as top level, CMV would quickly become an echo chamber where only popular opinions were allowed. It would also increase the likelihood that people would come here to soapbox rather than take a critical look at their own viewpoint. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this, that is not what CMV is for, so this rule ensures that all direct replies must present some argument against the stated view.

Clarifying questions are acceptable in top level comments, but it must be clear that their goal is to advance the conversation or better understand the OP's initial position.

OP's cannot make top-level comments for any reason. If you need to clarify your view, please edit your post instead.

What isn't acceptable in a top-level comment

- This should be obvious, but saying something like "Your view is correct. You're wrong to think that you should change it." Also included in this provision are comments that only confirm that the OP's view is accurate or already in place (e.g. "CMV: Murder should be illegal" - "It already is")
- A comment that is entirely dedicated to supporting or merely restating the view or some part of it
- Positively expanding the view while leaving the original view unchallenged; comments that argue OP's suggestions "don't go far enough"
- Providing alternate reasoning to arrive at the same conclusion; saying that the OP is "right for the wrong reasons"
- Non sequiturs that don't address OP's view. E.g. OP claims to be in favor of fascism and the top-level response that argues against communism (without somehow tying it in to fascism explicitly)
- Musing about random topics that are not the topic of the view.
- Questions that are not clarifying and of no appreciable aid in facilitating a view change.
- One that predominantly supports the view while correcting only a tangential aspect of the view; otherwise known as the *Foot in the Door Technique* (see below)

The *Foot in the Door* Technique

We allow direct responses to challenge minor aspects of the OP's argument, but we do not allow posters to use nods to disagreement as a means to 'get their foot in the door' and then devote the bulk of their response to agreement. Correcting some minor aspect of the

view, or pretending to ask a clarifying question to get by on a technicality will result in your comment being removed.

For example, if OP argues "Andre the Giant was right; nobody should start a land war in Asia," the response "Actually, Vizzini said that. Also, here is a laundry list of reasons why we still shouldn't start a land war in Asia" would violate Rule 1, but "Actually, Vizzini said that." (with more wording to avoid low effort) is acceptable.

Rule 2

Don't be rude or hostile to other users. Your comment will be removed even if the rest of it is solid.

Change My View is meant to be a place where a person with an unpopular view could go to learn about the other side of issue, to try and understand different perspectives, and do so without fear of being attacked. This is meant to be a place where even the most unpopular views can come to work it out.

A lot of people who post here are doing so in the confidence that people will treat them with respect, approach the topic politely and respond in a mature manner. Being rude and hostile can scare them off, or worst of all, make them retaliate. If you think that a person's opinion is vile, and you're insulting them in CMV, then you're being unproductive.

Controversial, Inaccurate, and "Bad" Arguments

We deliberately avoid removing posts and comments if the only reason is that the view presented is offensive or controversial itself. We also don't remove comments just because the argument is made badly, is inaccurate, or contains logical fallacies, nor do we remove posts that simply alledge a logical fallacy is being made. Doing so would suppose that we were somehow the ultimate arbiters of truth or correctness, which we aren't.

If you're rude and hostile to someone arguing that it's okay to eat babies, but they're otherwise being civil, then much as it pains us we'd have to remove your response and not theirs. The goal of CMV is to have you, the user, change views and not just point out the problems with another user's responses - sometimes this is done best by educating someone that their argument has issues. The moderators are only empowered to break up verbal fistfights, and those are the only comments we will remove.

Groups vs. Individuals

This rule only covers rudeness and hostility towards individual CMV users, not groups of people or other figures not participating in the discussion. Attacks on public figures, institutions, and/or categories of people are allowed and you can use whatever language you wish, but other users and public figures who are participating in the discussion are off limits.

The reason for this is that if we were to say that groups of people can not be insulted or criticised, it would be nearly impossible to discuss any thing of value on CMV. While these opinions on groups may be unpleasant or vile, those are the exact opinions CMV wants to try and change. If someone feels negatively about a group we want them to come here, post that opinion and have others try and explain to them what they are missing or don't yet understand.

Moreover, limiting what can be said about any group of people would put the moderators in a position of having to decide which groups were off limits to criticism and which were not. That is not a power that we can, should or want to have.

Please note that an insult to a group does not always equate to an insult to an individual who might be a member of said group for the purposes of this rule, and is thus not necessarily removable. There is an exception to this when it is clear that the group insult was directly aimed at a commenter who identified with the group.

Offensive Labels

Labeling someone with an offensive term, e.g. "You are a racist", is a violation of this rule unless the person applied that label to themselves first. You are free to call the idea they present an offensive term - "That viewpoint is racist" - but you must stop short of saying anything about the person making the comment. Talking about ideas is fine, talking about a person is not.

The offensiveness (and removability) of any given label is determined by the moderators, in line with socio-cultural norms and context of the comment. If you see a label that you feel is offensive but the comment is not removed, please feel free to message us and let us know why that label is problematic.

Passive Aggression

This rule also covers excessively passive aggressive comments or backhanded compliments. For example, a very common reason for removals is implying or stating that someone "lacks reading comprehension" (or is failing to use it). To be clear, this (and other forms of passive or active condescension) are prohibited.

Semantics

We are somewhat more flexible about rudeness towards someone's argument rather than their character. However, don't use narrow semantic distinctions to try to dodge. Calling an argument "moronic" is effectively calling the person making it a moron, in part because arguments themselves don't have intelligence, and therefore can't even be "moronic"... only the arguer can be. An argument can be called fallacious or incorrect, but it can't be called stupid.

"Conditional insults" like "If you don't agree with me you are stupid" or "Only a retard would voice an opinion like yours" will be counted as violations of this rule. Constructing a hypothetical argument where they have to agree with you or be insulted is against the spirit of CMV. Different perspectives should be celebrated, and if those perspectives are wrong they should be challenged on factual grounds not with attacks on people as personal attacks tend to lead to people shutting down. If your comment was removed, it's because you were "attacking the person", not because you were "attacking the argument". You are not allowed to be rude or hostile to a user even if your hostility is also addressed to their argument.

Severe Infractions: KYS, Threats and Doxxing

Telling, instructing, or even suggesting to another user to kill themselves is a prima facie violation of Rule 2 in **any** context. Same goes with direct threats of violence or harm or any form of doxxing. These behaviors are so antithetical to the premise of CMV that we have a zero-tolerance policy. If you threaten, dox, or instruct another user to kill themselves - in seriousness or even in jest - it will result in an **immediate permanent ban from CMV without exception.**

Common Rebuttals to Rule 2 Removals

When posts are removed for Rule 2 violations, many of the same justifications are provided. These are listed below, along with why the moderators do not find them compelling

arguments. Please review these before appealing a Rule 2 removal; rehashing any of these arguments as a part of that appeal will only result in the moderators asking you to review this guidance:

- **They started it.**
 - This is not an excuse to break the rule. If someone is being rude/hostile to you, report it. Retaliatory responses (i.e. being rude/hostile to another user because they were rude/hostile to you first) will be removed and the violating user(s) will receive a formal warning. No exceptions.
 - We often get asked, "Well, why didn't you remove their comment too?" Typically the answer to this is, "Because no one reported it". We can't review every single comment and we rely on user reports to help us moderate. If you want us to take a look at another comment, report it and it will get reviewed.
- **But it was true.**
 - This isn't an excuse either. We prohibit insults even if you think they're accurate. Insulting other users does not lead to views being changed and just results in unproductive arguments.
 - This counterargument is particularly common when posts are removed for using an offensive label (e.g. "You are a racist"). Our position is that since there is no universal or objective standard for these labels, they cannot be "true" and thus still violate the rule
- **I was being sarcastic**
 - While irony is an important persuasive tool, your comment may be removed if is sufficiently sarcastic to also constitute an attack on the user.

Rule 3

Refrain from accusing OP or anyone else of being unwilling to change their view.

Another common reason for removals is accusing the submitter of being a troll, soapboxer or otherwise purposefully arguing in bad faith. While being open to changing one's views is a requirement for submitting (see the other rules), accusing them of trolling only serves to make people who truly are open more defensive and less likely to hear what you have to

say. We do allow mild comments - such as pointing out that someone might be moving the goalposts on their argument - as rhetorical techniques, but only insofar as they help to advance the primary goal of changing views.

Apply the principle of charity here - assume people have an open mind, and, if you think they don't, report the post to us and we'll look into it. Keep in mind that only the submitter has the requirement for openness - commenters are not required to argue in good faith and playing "devil's advocate" is specifically allowable.

Similar to Rule 2, accusations of bad faith are disallowed no matter how accurate you feel the accusation to be. Removal appeals using the justification "but it is true" will be closed without action.

Rule 4

Award a delta when acknowledging a change in your view, and not for any other reason

Celebrating view changes is at the core of Change My View, so if your view is changed, reply to the response that changed it with a short explanation as to how and award a Delta; do not use deltas sarcastically, jokingly, or when you already agree with the response.

It is important that you award deltas any time your view has been changed. We want to be a place where people are not only rewarded for expanding the views of others, but a place where Original Poster (OPs) are celebrated for deepening their own understanding.

When awarding a delta, you must include an explanation as to why and how your view has changed. Particularly if the response concerned covers many points, some of which may have stood out to you more than others. This part of the rule is an attempt to prevent the meaning of deltas from being "watered down", and also help any readers understand or skim through arguments. Consider it a too long; didn't read (TL;DR) for a successful discussion. Deltas can not be awarded to the OP. While we understand that sometimes an OP might change your view to their stance, allowing OPs to receive deltas would incentivise people to come to CMV to soapbox in an attempt to persuade others. As this is a direct violation of Rule B (and potentially Rule 1), we disallow OPs from receiving deltas.

When to award deltas

You must award a delta if you had a change of view or have mentioned a change of view in your response. We can't force you to admit that your view has been changed, but if you have indicated at this being the case then please award one. Please note that a delta is not a sign of 'defeat', it is just a token of appreciation towards a user who helped tweak or reshape your opinion. A delta also doesn't mean the discussion has ended.

A change in view need not be a complete reversal. It can be tangential, or takes place on a new axis altogether. A view changing response need not be a comprehensive refutation of every point made. It can be a single rebuttal to any sub-arguments. While it is not required, it's also a good practice to go back and edit your submission to mention how your view has been changed. This makes it easier for people to focus their new responses on parts of your view that still remain, or at least not to waste time crafting a lengthy argument about the view you've changed.

Any user, whether they're the OP or not, should award a delta if their view is changed.

Example of awarding a delta:

The screenshot shows a comment editor interface. At the top, it says "Commenting as: IAmAN00bie". Below that is a rich text editor with a toolbar containing options like Bold, Italic, strike, sup, Link, Quote, Code, Bullets, Numbers, reddiquette, and macros. The text in the editor is: "Δ this post convinced me that even if we beat modern diseases we'll never be able to achieve immortality. The laws of physics just can't be outrun! I especially liked how you phrased your comment from the perspective of someone who *did* achieve what we would today call 'immortality'." A red arrow points from the text "Inserts a delta" to the Δ symbol at the start of the comment. A black arrow points from the text "Explanation" to the right side of the editor. Below the editor is a checkbox labeled "Remember to award a Δ if that comment changed your view (see sidebar)". At the bottom of the editor are buttons for "save", "cancel", "reddiquette", "formatting help", and "big editor". Below the editor is a "Live Preview" section showing the rendered comment with the Δ symbol and the text.

[This picture is in reference to this comment.](#)

When **not** to award deltas

Since deltas are a key component of how CMV works, their misuse is strictly controlled. You cannot award deltas for anything other than a genuine change of your view (to any degree).

This therefore excludes:

- Sarcastic deltas
- Joke deltas
- "Super-agreement" or "Upvote" deltas
- Deltas awarded to the OP
- Awarding deltas on behalf of another user you feel should have awarded one. If you feel that another user should have awarded a delta but did not, message us and we can award one manually if necessary
- Anything else that awards a delta for anything other than a genuine change of your view

Rule 5

Responses must contribute meaningfully to the conversation

In order to keep responses relevant to the discussion, users can report posts that don't add anything useful to the thread. To be clear, we're not referring to the effort of an argument - we don't make it our place to judge the strength or weakness of your comment in this regard - but rather to the effort of the comment itself.

Examples of Low Effort Comments

- Responses that are so short that people have to make assumptions about what is meant in order to understand them and respond to them.
- Vague questions like "What?" or "Huh?"
- Reaction gifs, meme posts, and puns.
- "lol", "this", "FTFY", "KTHXBYE", "Cheers", etc.

- Responses that are only a single link with no substantial argumentation, or that are directly copy/pasted from another source unless a specific link or quote was requested. If you want to link a source, include a short summary of what that source says and why it is relevant to the argument. A short summary saves people a lot of time.
- Responses that correct someone's spelling or grammar unless it meaningfully changes the argument or view.
- Simple refutations such as "you're wrong" or "A != B".
- Responses from bots or in-character novelty accounts. These accounts will be banned.
- Responses that just say "Yes" or "No" unless you were personally asked a Yes/No question needing no further explanation.
- Responses that just express agreement, such as "You're right" or "Great post". You are allowed to agree with someone in your response, but you must also add something to the discussion in the process. If you just want to call out a post as good without adding anything to the discussion, use the Upvote button.

Spam, Sales, Pornography and Violence

Links to sites that are clearly spam, pornography, an attempt to sell a product or service and/or contain video/audio of terrorist attacks or other excessively violent content will also be removed under this rule. We do not believe that these links provide value to the conversation.

Extra Information

Views about Double Standards

"Double standards" are very difficult to discuss without careful explanation of the double standard and why it's relevant.

- Most views like "people treat group A like this, but group B is not" are difficult to discuss in CMV, because it's not clear what the

actual view is, and therefore how we should enforce Rule 1. Please think carefully about whether you actually care about the double standard, or if your view is actually that the standard or its application is wrong.

- Often, it becomes obvious during the discussion that your real view is "group A shouldn't be treated like this" or "group B should be treated like this". In many cases, the poster actually believes *both* of these, and is therefore guilty of the very double standard that they are trying to accuse others of. If your view is really one or both of these, please don't use the "double standard" format, because it is very misleading.
- If you're certain that your view is genuinely about people having a double standard, very often the argument still comes down to "well, one liberal said this thing, and some other liberal said this other thing, so liberals are inconsistent". Please refer to at least one individual or agency (i.e. an entity that could reasonably be expected to have one standard) that is acting inconsistently. The idea that large vague groups are somehow homogeneous in their standards is an unreasonable expectation and very hard to argue.
- Very often, these "double standards" posts don't explain what you think the standard actually is or what you think it should be. Please be sure to describe the standard that you think is being violated in accurate enough terms for people to actually discuss it.
- If most of your comments are about how one or the other of the groups is being treated unfairly, that's a strong sign that this is actually your view, and your post may be removed for violating Rule A or B (or both).

Manual Approval

Posts by new, low karma, and throwaway accounts must be approved through modmail.

Posts by accounts that are too new or have low karma are automatically removed by a filter. Please contact the moderators through modmail to have your post approved. Please **do not** delete your post.

The manual approval rule was added to limit soapboxing on this subreddit. People have often made new accounts to post threads with the intention of spreading their beliefs rather than engaging in a conversation with the users. We realize that there are certain topics or situations that require the use of a new or throwaway account, and therefore we handle these posts on a case-by-case basis.

Non English Posts

Submission and responses made in languages other than English may be removed at the moderators' discretion. We don't have anything against our international users, but as CMV's moderation team consists primarily of English speaking users, we simply can't practically enforce the rules in a language other than English at this time. As our team grows, we will relax this condition to include other languages.

Removed Posts

Comments made in posts that have been removed will still be moderated. We do not want to discourage conversations from continuing, as such all comment rules will still apply even if the parent post has been removed.

Deliberate Attempts to Disrupt Discussion

Not everyone comes to CMV to argue in good faith, and while we do not allow people to make accusations like that in the forum, we do acknowledge that those people exist. Bad-faith users are defined as users whose activity on CMV is overwhelmingly dedicated to making incendiary responses, with the apparent intent of instigating conflict and inciting rule violations by other users.

Simply disagreeing with you or not having their view changed by your argument is not sufficient to conclude the person violates this. Neither is someone playing devil's advocate (which is specifically allowed) - there is a difference between someone arguing a side of an issue they don't agree with or passionately arguing for their beliefs, and someone who is not here to argue in good faith at all. We evaluate bad-faith users on two key criteria:

- Their commaluable to the discussion being had. We apply this **very** narrowly and only remove items when it is clear that the user was not here to have an discussion, but rather to rile up others and cause general disruption.ents are minimally or tangentially related to the submission's primary topic of discussion (if they are related at all)
- They are nearly exclusively engaging in chronic hostility (especially advocating violence) toward groups or individuals

This is not to say that all responses that may meet these criteria will be removed. At times, hostility towards groups or responses that seem tangential may still be v

We also see users who routinely delete their posts and/or comments as disruptive. While we understand that from time to time it may be necessary to delete a post or comment (for a variety of legitimate reasons) doing this excessively makes it difficult for people to engage with you in a meaningful way. If you are concerned about a particular view being associated with your primary account, you can create a "throwaway" (a new, single use account) to post the view.

Bibliography.

1. "Concentrating minds: how the Greeks designed spaces for" 11 Jan. 2016, <https://www.democraticaudit.com/2016/11/01/concentrating-minds-how-the-greeks-designed-spaces-for-public-debate/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
2. "Reasoning | Definition of Reasoning by Merriam-Webster." <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reasoning>. Accessed 18 Dec. 2020.
3. "Argumentation and reasoning." https://scholars.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/christaasterhan/files/argumentationreasoning_elsevierhandbook.pdf. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.
4. "Why Study Argument? - Higher Education | Pearson." <https://www.pearsonhighered.com/assets/samplechapter/0/2/0/5/0205943721.pdf>. Accessed 9 Dec. 2020.
5. "Full article: Reconsidering happiness: the costs of" <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17439760802303044>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2020.
6. "immanent politics, participatory democracy, and the pursuit of" https://cdn.mises.org/-3-16_2.pdf?token=V-xB4Qc1. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.
7. "Why do we argue online? - The Irish Times." 24 Jul. 2015, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/tv-radio-web/why-do-we-argue-online-1.2295986>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.
8. "Socratic Circles/Seminars - SELspace." <https://selspace.ca/socratic-seminars/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
9. "Full article: Influence of academic self-regulation, critical" 16 Apr. 2014, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01587919.2014.891426?scroll=top&eedAccess=true>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
10. "Socratic Questioning in Psychology: Examples and Techniques." 9 Jan. 2020, <https://positivepsychology.com/socratic-questioning/>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.
11. "(PDF) Thinking Critically and Critical Thinking: Integrating" 4 Oct. 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26495228_Thinking_Critically_and_Critical_Thinking_Integrating_Online_Tools_to_Promote_Critical_Thinking. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.

12. "Full article: Influence of academic self-regulation, critical" 16 Apr. 2014, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01587919.2014.891426?scroll=top&eedAccess=true>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
13. "Fifteen Positive Examples of Critical Thinking - Insight" <https://www.insightassessment.com/article/fifteen-positive-examples-of-critical-thinking>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2020.
14. "USING RUBRICS AND CONTENT ANALYSIS FOR" <https://olj.onlinelearningconsortium.org/index.php/olj/article/view/1713>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.
15. "Using data mining as a strategy for assessing asynchronous" 4 Dec. 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222537033_Using_data_mining_as_a_strategy_for_assessing_asynchronous_discussion_forums. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.
16. "Asynchronous discussion forums: success factors ... - JStor." <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/jeductechsoci.12.1.249>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.
17. "Agonism | philosophy | Britannica." 25 Nov. 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/agonism-philosophy>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.
18. "The Tasks of Agonism and Agonism to the Task: Introducing" 9 Apr. 2014, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13534645.2014.896543>. Accessed 28 Dec. 2020.
19. "Agonism – I can't believe it!" 3 Dec. 2020, <https://barryhopewell.com/2020/12/03/agonism/>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.
20. "The social media commons: Public sphere, agonism, and" 2 Apr. 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19331681.2020.1742266>. Accessed 28 Dec. 2020.
21. "Digital Nudging | SpringerLink." 3 Oct. 2016, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12599-016-0453-1>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.
22. "Digital Nudging | SpringerLink." 3 Oct. 2016, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12599-016-0453-1>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.
23. "Thinking, Fast and Slow D.Kahneman February 12-13 ... - math." <http://www.math.chalmers.se/~ulfp/Review/fastslow.pdf>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.
24. "Nudge - ResearchGate." http://202.166.170.213:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/4313/Richard_H.

- [Thaler Cass R. Sunstein Nudge Improv.%20%282%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](#). Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.
25. "Aristotle insists that man is either a political animal (the natural"
<https://oll.libertyfund.org/quotes/164>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.
 26. "A natural history of the human mind: tracing ... - NCBI - NIH."
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2409100/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
 27. "canonical-debate-lab/paper: The white paper ... - GitHub." 11 Jun. 2018,
<https://github.com/canonical-debate-lab/paper>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.
 28. "We started fact-checking in partnership with ... - PolitiFact." 15 Dec. 2017,
<https://www.politifact.com/article/2017/dec/15/we-started-fact-checking-partnership-facebook-year/>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.
 29. "canonical-debate-lab/paper: The white paper ... - GitHub." 11 Jun. 2018,
<https://github.com/canonical-debate-lab/paper>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.
 30. "Why Arguing online is Futile.. As I've browsed my ... - Medium." 10 Jul. 2019,
<https://medium.com/simply-live/why-arguing-online-is-futile-60fc96d81496>.
Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
 31. "canonical-debate-lab/paper: The white paper ... - GitHub." 11 Jun. 2018,
<https://github.com/canonical-debate-lab/paper>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.
 32. "canonical-debate-lab/paper: The white paper ... - GitHub." 11 Jun. 2018,
<https://github.com/canonical-debate-lab/paper>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.
 33. "Trolls just want to have fun - ScienceDirect.com."
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191886914000324>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.
 34. "Trolling in asynchronous computer-mediated communication" 10 Oct. 2020,
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263568332_Trolling_in_asynchronous_computer-mediated_communication_From_user_discussions_to_academic_definitions.
Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.
 35. "Why Can't People Hear What Jordan Peterson Is ... - The Atlantic." 22 Jan. 2018,
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/01/putting-monsterpaint-on-jordan-peterson/550859/>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2020.
 36. "About - Letter.wiki." <https://letter.wiki/about>. Accessed 30 Dec. 2020.
 37. "Argunet - Open-Source Argument Mapping." 26 Oct. 2018,
<http://www.argunet.org/>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

38. "index - changemyview - Reddit."
<https://www.reddit.com/r/changemyview/wiki/index>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.
39. "'Change My View' Reddit Community Launches Its Own Website." 6 Apr. 2019,
<https://www.wired.com/story/change-my-view-gets-its-own-website/>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.
40. "rules - changemyview - Reddit."
<https://www.reddit.com/r/changemyview/wiki/rules>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.
41. "About | Kialo." <https://www.kialo.com/about>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
42. "Kialo: Explore Popular Debates, Discussions and Critical"
<https://www.kialo.com/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
43. "UXperts Needed to Design the Future of Debate | by ... - Medium." 17 Oct. 2018,
<https://medium.com/canonical-debate-lab/uxperts-needed-to-design-the-future-of-debate-824e6525ecca>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.
44. <https://www.rationaleonline.com/editor/#?id=efxqxw> Taken from here. Put ref.
45. "15 Logical Fallacies You Should Know Before Getting Into a" 9 Jun. 2020,
<https://thebestschools.org/magazine/15-logical-fallacies-know/>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.
46. "We Asked 8,500 Internet Commenters Why They Do What" 28 Nov. 2016,
<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/we-asked-8500-internet-commenters-why-they-do-what-they-do/>. Accessed 8 Dec. 2020.
47. "Survey of Commenters and Comment Readers - Center for"
<https://mediaengagement.org/research/survey-of-commenters-and-comment-readers/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
48. "Survey of Commenters and Comment Readers - Center for"
<https://mediaengagement.org/research/survey-of-commenters-and-comment-readers/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2021.
49. "(website): What do reddit moderators get out of being ... - Quora."
<https://www.quora.com/Reddit-website-What-do-reddit-moderators-get-out-of-being-mods-on-reddit>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.
50. "A simple way to explain the Recommendation Engine in AI" 25 Jun. 2019,
<https://medium.com/voice-tech-podcast/a-simple-way-to-explain-the-recommendation-engine-in-ai-d1a609f59d97>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.
51. "Framework for Designing and Evaluating Game Achievements."
<http://www.digra.org/dl/db/11307.59151.pdf>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.

52. "• Coronavirus impact: global device usage increase by country" 18 Jun. 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1106607/device-usage-coronavirus-worldwide-by-country/>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.
53. "10 Mobile Usage Statistics You Should Know in 2021 - Oberlo." 22 Apr. 2020, <https://www.oberlo.com/blog/mobile-usage-statistics>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.
54. ARGUMENT | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary. Retrieved 13 January 2020, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/argument>
55. AUDI, R. (1999). Retrieved 14 January 2020, from <http://stoa.usp.br/rdeangelo/files/-1/10954/Cambridge+Dictionary+of+Philosophy.pdf>
56. Austin, J. (1960). Retrieved 14 January 2020, from http://www.naturalthinker.net/trl/texts/Frege,Gottlob/Frege,%20Gottlob%20-%20The%20Foundations%20of%20Arithmetic%20%281953%29%202Ed_%207.0-2.5%20LotB.pdf
57. Definition of LOGIC. (2020). Retrieved 9 January 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/logic>
58. Definition of REASONING. (2020). Retrieved 9 January 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reasoning>
59. Drid, T. (2016). The Realm of Argumentation: Basics and History. Retrieved 14 January 2020, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298353549_The_Realm_of_Argumentation
60. Emeren, F., & Grootendorst, R. (2004). Retrieved 13 January 2020, from <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam041/2003046181.pdf>
61. Grech, G. (2010). Retrieved 14 January 2020, from <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/994/GeorgeGrechMPhilThesis.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>
62. Hintikka, J. (2008). philosophy of logic | Definition, Problems, & Facts. Retrieved 14 January 2020, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/philosophy-of-logic>
63. Lab, P. Rhetorical Strategies // Purdue Writing Lab. Retrieved 14 January 2020, from https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/establishing_arguments/rhetorical_strategies.html
64. McKeon, M. Argument | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved 14 January 2020, from <https://www.iep.utm.edu/argument/>

65. Mcleod, S. (2009). Short Term Memory | Simply Psychology. Retrieved 14 January 2020, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/short-term-memory.html>
66. Reasoning | Department of Communication | University of Pittsburgh. (2015). Retrieved 14 January 2020, from <https://www.comm.pitt.edu/reasoning>
67. Smith, R., & Zalta, E. (2000). Aristotle's Logic (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Retrieved 14 January 2020, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-logic/>
68. Tan, C., Nicolae, V., Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, C., & Lee, L. Winning Arguments: Interaction Dynamics and Persuasion Strategies in Good-faith Online Discussions. Retrieved 8 January 2020, from <https://chenhaot.com/pubs/winning-arguments.pdf>