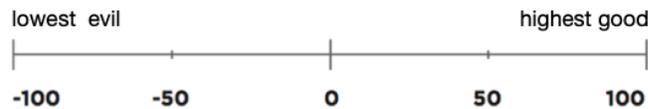


How to stop arguing to 0 and start arguing to 100

What is arguing to 100 (and -100) vs. arguing to 0?

To argue to 100 is to argue that a certain course of action is the best way of achieving an inspiring good and avoiding a dreadful evil.

Every conversation has a moral framework, which you can think of as an x-axis running from -100 (the lowest evil) to 100 (the highest good).



Redefining good and evil

In my study of the best persuaders, I noticed that they typically enter a debate where they disagree with the moral framework and then *redefine* good and evil.

For example, before Donald Trump's campaign, the political 100 was "equality" and the -100 was "inequality." Trump redefined 100 as "American greatness" and -100 "American decline."

The green movement also redefined good and evil in the energy debate. The 100 for energy used to be "availability" or "security" and the -100 used to be "unavailability" or "insecurity." The green movement redefined 100 as "completely green/renewable" and -100 as "not green/renewable (more fossil fuels)."

Arguing superiority

Once great persuaders redefine good and evil, I found that they then proceed to *argue superiority*: they argue that their course of action is the best way to move toward the good—and that their opponents' course of action moves us toward the evil.

Trump, for example, was able to argue effectively for *coal* by tying it to American greatness and tying anti-coal policies like the Clean Power Plan to American decline.

Arguing to 0

Bad persuaders, on the other hand, accept their opponents' definition of good and evil—even though they don't agree with it. For example, the fossil fuel industry will concede that the ideal is "green/renewable energy," and then try to argue for fossil fuels and against "green" policies. But this forces them into a disastrous position.

Take the shale energy debate. Josh Fox started with the 100 of “green/renewable energy” and the -100 of “more fossil fuels” and then argued that fracking not only increased our use of fossil fuels, but introduced new risks like groundwater contamination, earthquakes, and cancer clusters.

The industry didn’t challenge Fox’s goal. Instead it argued that actually fracking isn’t as bad as Fox said. What was their best case? To argue themselves from -100 up to 0.

Or take the debate over the Green New Deal. The industry has called the plan unrealistic and expensive, but it has conceded that it’s moving us toward the right goal. What’s the industry’s best case? To argue its opponents from 100 down to 0.

And since you can never actually get all the way to 0, arguing to 0 really amounts to slowing down how quickly your opponents win.

So how can the industry stop arguing to 0 and start arguing to 100 (and arguing its opponents to -100)?

Arguing to 100 Checklist

Step 1: Define good and evil (100 and -100)

- Are you thinking of the *ultimate* 100 as maximum human flourishing and the ultimate -100 as maximum human suffering?
- Are you owning every value issue, including prosperity, opportunity, health, environmental quality, climate safety, and the future by connecting these to your ultimate 100 of human flourishing?
- Don’t concede that our goal should be to minimize human impact (be “green” or “renewable”).

Step 2: Argue superiority

- Think for yourself what the best policy is.
- Be rigorous: be able to back up the claim that yours is the best course of action and answer others’ arguments.
- Superiorize the benefits: argue that yours is the best option for achieving “100.”
- Normalize the risks: show that your risks are normal and acceptable.
- Overcome bias by framing fairness: ask people to agree to be evenhanded, looking at the pros and cons of every option.