**TYPES OF SUPPORT (EVIDENCE)**

1. **Experimentation :**

Induction is obviously useful in arguing. If, for example, one is arguing that handguns should be controlled, one will point to specific cases in which handguns caused accidents or were used to commit crimes.

1. **Examples :**

One form of evidence is the example. Suppose that we argue that a candidate is untrustworthy and should not be elected to public office. We point to episodes in his career—his misuse of funds in 1998 and the false charges he made against an opponent in 2002—as examples of his untrustworthiness.

A Yiddish proverb shrewdly says that “‘For example’ is no proof,” but the evidence of wellchosen examples can go a long way toward helping a writer to convince an audience.

In arguments, three sorts of examples are especially common:

• Real events

• Invented instances (artificial or hypothetical cases)

• Analogies. We will treat each of these briefly.

* **REAL EVENTS :**

The advantage of an example drawn from real life, whether a great historical event or a local incident, is that its reality gives it weight. It can’t simply be brushed off.

any real event is so entangled in its historical circumstances that it might not be adequate or even relevant evidence in the case being argued. In using a real event as an example (and real events certainly can be used), the writer ordinarily must demonstrate that the event can be taken out of its historical context and be used in the new context of argument.

Thus, in an argument against using atomic weapons in warfare, the many deaths and horrible injuries inflicted on the Japanese at Hiroshima and Nagasaki can be cited as effects of nuclear weapons that would invariably occur and did not depend on any special circumstances of their use in Japan in 1945.

* **INVENTED INSTANCES Artificial or hypothetical cases—invented instances—**

in a discussion of rights, the philosopher Charles Frankel says, Strictly speaking, when we assert a right for X, we assert that Y has a duty. Strictly speaking, that Y has such a duty presupposes that Y has the capacity to perform this duty. It would be nonsense to say, for example, that a nonswimmer has a moral duty to swim to the help of a drowning man.

This invented example is admirably clear, and it is immune to charges that might muddy the issue if Frankel, instead of referring to a wholly abstract person, Y, talked about some real person, Jones, who did not rescue a drowning man. For then he would get bogged down over arguing about whether Jones really couldn’t swim well enough to help, and so on. Yet invented cases have their drawbacks. First and foremost, they cannot be used as evidence. A purely hypothetical example can illustrate a point or provoke reconsideration of a generalization, but it cannot substitute for actual events as evidence supporting an inductive inference

But we add one point: Even a highly fanciful invented case can have the valuable effect of forcing us to see where we stand.

* **ANALOGIES :**

The third sort of example, analogy, is a kind of comparison. An analogy asserts that things that are alike in some ways are alike in yet another way. Example: “Before the Roman Empire declined as a world power, it exhibited a decline in morals and in physical stamina; our culture today shows a decline in morals (look at the high divorce rate, and look at the crime rate) and we also show a decline in physical culture (just read about obesity in children). America, like Rome, will decline as a world power.”

Strictly, an analogy is an extended comparison in which different things are shown to be similar in several ways. Thus, if one wants to argue that a head of state should have extraordinary power during wartime, one can argue that the state at such a time is like a ship in a storm: The crew is needed to lend its help, but the decisions are best left to the captain. (Notice that an analogy compares things that are relatively unlike. Comparing the plight of one ship to another or of one government to another is not an analogy; it is an inductive inference from one case of the same sort to another such case.)

The problem with argument by analogy is this: Two admittedly different things are agreed to be similar in several ways, and the arguer goes on to assert or imply that they are also similar in another way — the point that is being argued.

Analogies can be convincing, especially because they can make complex issues simple. “Don’t change horses in midstream,” of course, is not a statement about riding horses across a river but about choosing leaders in critical times. Still, in the end, analogies do not necessarily prove anything. What may be true about riding horses across a stream may not be true about choosing leaders in troubled times or about deciding on a given change of leadership. Riding horses across a stream and choosing leaders are, at bottom, different things, and however much these activities may be said to resemble one another, they remain different, and what is true for one need not be true for the other

1. **Authoritative Testimony :**

Another form of evidence is testimony, the citation or quotation of authorities. In daily life we rely heavily on authorities of all sorts: We get a doctor’s opinion about our health, we read a book because an intelligent friend recommends it But heed some words of caution:

• Be sure that the authority, however notable, is an authority on the topic in question (a well-known biologist might be an authority on vitamins but not on the justice of a war)

• Be sure that the authority is not biased. A chemist employed by the tobacco industry isn’t likely to admit that smoking may be harmful, and a “director of publications” (that means a press agent) for a hockey team isn’t likely to admit that watching or even playing ice hockey stimulates violence.

• Beware of nameless authorities: “a thousand doctors,” “leading educators,” “researchers at a major medical school.”

• Be careful when using authorities who indeed were great authorities in their day but who now may be out of date (Adam Smith on economics, Julius Caesar on the art of war, Louis Pasteur on medicine).

• Cite authorities whose opinions your readers will value.