

What is the intellectual key to persuasion?

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There are facets to persuasion, and the one of interest here is the intellectual facet. What occurs intellectually when a person is persuaded to adopt a goal, such as to vote for a particular candidate?

Suppose that person A is seeking to persuade person B to adopt goal G. What A needs to do is to persuade B that goal G will help B achieve some goal H of B.

For example, voting for a particular candidate will help achieve H, or buying a particular computer will help achieve H, or reading a particular book will help achieve H, or attending a particular meeting will help achieve H.

To understand more deeply, let's consider B's goal tree. A goal tree is an abstract representation of a person's goals. Ideally, it has a single node at the top, from which branch a few subordinate goals. Each subordinate goal, in turn, has subordinate goals. This pattern continues on down to the most fundamental, automated goals of the human mind, such as automated, coordinated movements of muscles and automated operations of the mind.

In this light, when person A is seeking to persuade person B to adopt goal G, what A needs to do is to persuade B that goal G will help B achieve some goal H in B's goal tree. This is the intellectual key to persuasion.

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Please see Goals in the index of *Human Life*. Here are a few key pages: Goals (p. 18-23), Goals/Origin of goals (p. 22), Goals/Goals not explicitly chosen (p. 22), Goals/High-level goals (p. 22), Goals/Volitional processes (p. 146), Goals/Bootstrapping pursuit of goals (p. 147). Here's a summary quote:

Most goals that a person has are not explicitly chosen by them or explicitly identified by them but are given by their nature as a human or are assimilated from family, friends, and culture. [p. 22]

Also see Animals in the index of *Human Life*. Here are a few key pages: Animals/Intelligence (p. 29), Animals/Mind (p. 166), Animals/Willpower (p. 374). Here's a summary quote:

[This theory of mind]...will generalize, in diminishing degree, to animals along a continuum ranging from humans to lower animals per the structure and operation of the respective neural systems. [p. 166]