

## Extreme Logic

**Y**OU CAN'T DENY THAT LOGIC IS A NECESSARY PART of any thought process. It's the structure upon which we build everything we know. In high school math we learn about postulates and axioms. Belief in these simple *truths*, based solely on a great abiding trust in our powers of observation, is the only leap of faith we normally make on the road to enlightenment. Logic is the persuasive power that, through a logical reasoning process, squeezes out of these postulates more complicated and less obvious truths.

For example: the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, which leads to modern geometry; time moves in only one direction, which allows us to remember the past, be aware of the present, and wonder about the future; bears do strange things in the woods so don't go there. From simple axioms like these, reasonable people throughout history have built up the body of human knowledge we call mathematics, philosophy, and all the sciences.

But like all things, if you spend too much time on them you start butting up against extremes. Logic is no exception. Early in the development of any reasoned progression of ideas, many next steps will seem bizarre or extreme. You know how it works: testing and experimentation, trial and error. Insight often contributes, too.

Along the road to understanding, however, some turns prove to be dead ends and ought to be backtracked. But, some people just don't get that! When you listen to what they say you know absolutely that they can't possibly be listening to themselves. You're left speechless. How can you reason a person out of a thing he couldn't possibly have reasoned himself into? That's what *extreme logic* is. It's logic run amok. It's a scourge on humanity. It must be stopped.

### Some Examples

Crop circles. I don't understand why some highly intelligent alien race would use its advanced technology to come to our

planet, no doubt at great expense, only to reveal its existence to us through a practical joke. Heck, we have the technology to make crop circles in our cornfields. The aliens would have been a lot more effective if they'd fused beach sand into glass circles or painted a happy face on the moon.

Closer to home, I read in the September 2002 issue of the *Actuarial Update* a consumerist's argument that the size of liability awards is not the cause of the increase in premium rates for malpractice insurance. He argues that the real reason is in insurers'

pricing and accounting practices. Apparently, he thinks that if insurers are *not allowed* to pass investment losses, which they have *not experienced*, on to policyholders the whole problem will go away. Somebody needs to explain the use of a double negative to this guy!

And, today I read in the newspaper the sad story of Tuvalu. Tuvalu is a country consisting of seven coral atolls and three coral islands located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The land area of the whole country is 10 square miles, with a highest elevation of 16 feet above sea level. Understandably, the Tuvalu people are concerned

about the effect of global warming and a rising sea level on their coconut crop. What have they done? They've hired a Washington attorney and are trying to figure out who to sue for causing the planet's temperature to rise. I have done a little research and have found that if the earth's temperature rose enough to cause all of the ice on Greenland to melt, the oceans would rise 20 feet—just enough to do the job. I smell class action down the road.

### Sue Them!

Hey, that might be the answer. Sue them. Put all the abusers of logic into one big courtroom and sue their pants off.



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And I know exactly who to go after—average people.

Extreme logic is created, fed, and nurtured by average people. Yes, the very fact that average, reasonable people can exist is the cause of extreme logic. It makes sense. You just can't have extremes without an average, and that applies to reasoning, too. There are many degrees of reasonableness, and it's all those people in the middle hogging the average that causes the problem at the extremes.

It all fits together. That's what the talk about increasing diversity on college campuses and in the workplace is really all about. Increasing diversity is a code phrase for getting rid of average people—eliminating their political base—reducing their influence on our way of life.

Average people are the root of all evil in the world. Deep down, if you trace through all their arguments, you know that Tuvalu is ultimately going to be suing average people because average people are causing the planet's temperature to rise. And you know deep down in your heart that, if aliens are creating the crop circles, they're average aliens.

### The Root Cause

We all have, I believe, an innate tendency toward using extreme logic. It starts in our childhood. Our brains are probably hard wired for it. We all want to be like everybody else—average, even if it's a strange new average. As children and young adults we want to belong so we hop onto fads to fit in and be average. What else could account for young men wearing pants with a crotch below their knees and waddling like a duck when they walk? If you asked them why, I'm sure their answer would be a fine example of extreme logic.

I'd like to think, however, that there's at least one redeeming feature in all this. I'd like to believe that these young men must have at least gotten a job to pay for those pants themselves, making them productive members of society. Surely their parents wouldn't be funding their rebellion. But I'm not so sure. You see, most of these kids' parents drive silver BMWs or,

at the very least, silver Honda Accords. Did you know that the top three average colors for cars in the United States are silver, black, and white? A silver car, regardless of the make, is the adult equivalent of low-rider pants. Average parents breed average kids. That's just the way it'll always be.

OK, but wait! We're not home free yet on eradicating extreme logic by attacking its source—average people. Here's the problem. I don't know about you, but I never considered myself average. I drive a blue car (fifth on the list). I bet that you don't consider yourself average either (red cars are fourth). So, if we exclude me and all my readers from the set of average people, we end up with an empty set. And, yes, that means, though theoretically possible, there are no average people. There's no one personally to blame or sue for extreme logic reparations. It's no one's fault! Now what do we do?

### From the Mouths of Babes

Extreme logic leaves me speechless—and it shouldn't. Confronted extreme logic shouldn't leave one with a *dumbfounded* look on one's face. To the casual observer, dumbfounded and dumb look pretty much the same. This means that without some jousty comeback you're sitting there looking just as dumb as the guy who's talking.

So, I'm thinking, fight fire with fire. Think like they do. Find a way to use extreme logic against itself. Fortunately, all

of that confusion so clogged my brain waves it pushed out the deep thought of an event that occurred a number of years ago that suddenly became relevant. I remembered once asking my niece, six years old, to run into the kitchen and bring back the bag of potato chips on the counter without opening it. I told her it was very important that she do it quickly because if she was too slow, or ignored one single instruction, the sun would not rise in the morning and we would all freeze to death.

Well, this kid, who still needed help in a lot of the activities of daily living, knew her way around a bag of potato chips. She stopped everything else she was doing, turned to face me, arms folded defiantly, looked me straight in the eye and said "*Nah-ah*"—lingering on and accenting the last syllable.

And let me make this clear. She was not refusing to be helpful. Her nah-ah was a deliberate, purposeful, and effective rebuttal to my argument. She was telling me that the sun would rise tomorrow and, subtly, that she now knew there were potato chips in the kitchen. Most important, she was *not* speechless.

We finally agreed that she could open the bag and eat as many as she could manage in a slow walk from the kitchen to me. Fortunately, it was a big, 24-ounce bag and we were all able to leave the party happy.

### Answer to Gardiner 9 digit puzzler, page 21

1. Fill the odd spaces with the odd numbers in regular order:

1 even 3 even 5 even 7 even 9

2. Fill the even spaces with the even numbers, but in reverse order:

odd 8 odd 6 odd 4 odd 2 odd

3. Combine step #1 and step #2:

1 8 3 6 5 4 7 2 9

4. interchange the first and third digits:

3 8 1 6 5 4 7 2 9

381654729 is the answer and the only number that fits the criteria

To check:

$38 \div 2 = 19$   
 $381 \div 3 = 127$   
 $3816 \div 4 = 954$   
 $38165 \div 5 = 7633$   
 $381654 \div 6 = 63609$   
 $3816547 \div 7 = 545221$   
 $38165472 \div 8 = 4770684$   
 $381654729 \div 9 = 42406081$