

Hum 110: Causal Arguments & Herodotus

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What is a Causal Argument?

$x \implies y$ (or $x \implies q \implies r \implies z \implies y$ therefore $x \implies y$)

$\neg x \implies \neg y$ (or $\neg x \implies \neg q \implies \neg r \implies \neg y$ therefore $\neg x \implies \neg y$)

Generic Example:

Whenever I forget my raincoat, it begins to rain. Whenever I wear my raincoat, it doesn't rain. Therefore, forgetting my coat is probably the reason why it rains.

Assumption: There is no other cause

e.g. _____

To Weaken: Show there is another cause. Show that something interferes & causes y not to happen. Show that x isn't the cause.

e.g. _____

To Strengthen: Cite an alternate cause or interference & eliminate it as a possibility. Show x is the cause.

e.g. _____

Example from Herodotus p. 136 (2.13):

Like the Greeks, the Egyptians are susceptible to famine. Why? Because if the land below Memphis continues to increase in height at the same rate, then the river can no longer flood the fields, and the people who live there will go hungry.

i.e. increase height \implies river can flood fields (\implies people can't irrigate their crops \implies crops will fail) \implies people will starve.

CONCLUSION: _____

ASSUMPTIONS: _____

TO WEAKEN: _____

TO STRENGTHEN: _____

What does Herodotus say that strengthens his argument?