

# The Argument Clinic

Monty Python's Flying Circus

August 17, 2007

*The man knocks on the door.*

**Mr Vibrating (JOHN)** Come in.

**Man (MICHAEL)** Is this the right room for an argument?

**MV** I've told you *once*.

**Man** No you haven't.

**MV** Yes I have.

**Man** When?

**MV** Just now!

**Man** No you didn't.

**MV** Yes I did!

**Man** Didn't.

**MV** Did.

**Man** Didn't.

**MV** I'm telling you I did!

**Man** You did not!

**MV** I'm sorry, is this a five-minute argument, or the full half-hour?

**Man** Oh... Just a five-minute one.

**MV** Fine (*makes a note of it; the man sits down*) thank you. Anyway I did.

**Man** You most certainly did not.

**MV** Now, let's get one thing *quite* clear. I most definitely told you!

**Man** You did not.

**MV** Yes I did.

**Man** You did not.

**MV** Yes I did.

**Man** Didn't.

**MV** Yes I did.

**Man** Didn't.

**MV** Yes I did!!

**Man** Look this isn't an argument.

**MV** Yes it is.

**Man** No it isn't, it's just contradiction.

**MV** No it isn't.

**Man** Yes it is.

**MV** It is not.

**Man** It is. You just contradicted me.

**MV** No I didn't.

**Man** Ooh, you did!

**MV** No, no, no, no, no.

**Man** You did, just then.

**MV** No, nonsense!

**Man** Oh, look this is futile.

**MV** No it isn't.

**Man** I came here for a good argument.

**MV** No you didn't, you came here for an *argument*.

**Man** Well, an argument's not the same as contradiction.

**MV** It can be.

**Man** No it can't. An argument is a connected series of statements to establish a definite proposition.

**MV** No it isn't.

**Man** Yes it is. It isn't just contradiction.

**MV** Look, if I argue with you I must take up a contrary position.

**Man** But it isn't just saying 'No it isn't'.

**MV** Yes it is.

**Man** No it isn't, argument is an intellectual process... contradiction is just the automatic gainsaying of anything the other person says.

**MV** No it isn't.

**Man** Yes it is.

**MV** Not at all.

**Man** Now look!

**MV** (*pressing the bell on his desk*) Thank you, good morning.

**Man** What?

**MV** That's it. Good morning.

**Man** But I was just getting interested.

**MV** Sorry the five minutes is up.

**Man** That was never five minutes just now!

**MV** I'm afraid it was.

**Man** No it wasn't.

**MV** I'm sorry, I'm not allowed to argue any more.

**Man** What!?

**MV** If you want me to go on arguing you'll have to pay for another five minutes.

**Man** But that was never five minutes just now... oh come on! (*MV looks round as though Man was not there.*) This is ridiculous.

**MV** I'm very sorry, but I told you I'm not allowed to argue unless you've paid.

**Man** Oh. All right. (*pays*) There you are.

**MV** Thank you.

**Man** Well?

**MV** Well what?

**Man** That was never five minutes just now.

**MV** I told you I'm not allowed to argue unless you've paid.

**Man** I've just paid.

**MV** No you didn't.

**Man** I did! I did! I did!

**MV** No you didn't.

**Man** Look I don't want to argue about that.

**MV** Well I'm very sorry but you didn't pay.

**Man** Aha! Well if I didn't pay, why are you arguing... got you!

**MV** No you haven't.

**Man** Yes I have... if you're arguing I must have paid.

**MV** Not necessarily. I could be arguing in my spare time.

**Man** I've had enough of this.

**MV** No you haven't.

**Man** Oh shut up!

[From *Monty Python's Flying Circus: All The Words (Volume Two)*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1989.]