

LEGAL REASON

Legal Reason describes and explains analogical reasoning, the distinctive feature of legal argument. It challenges the prevailing view that analogical reasoning is a logically flawed, defective form of deductive reasoning. Drawing on work in epistemology and cognitive psychology, the book shows that analogical reasoning in the law is the same as that used by everyone routinely in ordinary life and that it is a valid form of reasoning, derived from the innate human capacity to recognize the general in the particular. The use of analogical reasoning in law is dictated by the nature of law, which calls for the application of general rules to particular facts. Critiques of the first edition of the book are addressed directly and objections answered in a new chapter. Written for scholars, students, and persons interested in law, *Legal Reason* is written in accessible prose, with examples drawn from the law and everyday experience.

Lloyd L. Weinreb is Dane Professor of Law, Emeritus at Harvard Law School. His other books include *Natural Law and Justice* (1987) and *Oedipus at Fenway Park: What Rights Are and Why There Are Any* (1994).

Legal Reason

THE USE OF ANALOGY IN
LEGAL ARGUMENT

Second Edition

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-60732-9 — Legal Reason
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Frontmatter
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Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781316607329

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First edition published 2005
Second edition published 2016

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

Names: Weinreb, Lloyd L., 1936–

Title: Legal reason: the use of analogy in legal argument / Lloyd L. Weinreb.

Description: Second edition. | New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016026393 | ISBN 9781107153462 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781316607329 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Law–Methodology.

Classification: LCC K213 .W45 2016 | DDC 340/.11–dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016026393>

ISBN 978-1-107-15346-2 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-316-60732-9 Paperback

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Preface to the Second Edition

Robert Dreesen, who succeeded to the role of my representative at Cambridge University Press, suggested that I prepare this new edition. He guided the proposal through the process of approval and then publication, for all of which I am grateful.

For this edition, I have thoroughly reviewed the text of the first edition. I have made some corrections and have revised and expanded arguments that now seem to me less clear than they should have been. The major addition is a discussion of objections that were raised in response to the first edition. Although the substance of those arguments was familiar and was addressed in the first edition, having them directed explicitly to what I said there has helped me to sharpen my own arguments and to present them more forcefully. The discussion of Scott Brewer's account of analogical legal reasoning, which was formerly set off by itself in Chapter 1, has been integrated with the discussion of other accounts that differ from mine, all of which are now included in a new chapter that follows the full exposition of analogical legal reasoning in Chapter 2.

Marilyn Uzuner helped to prepare the manuscript for publication. Melinda Eakin applied her uncanny ability to detect typographical errors to this edition as she did to the first.

Preface to the First Edition

Recent discussions of the use of analogy in legal argument, which measure its use against the standards of deductive and inductive reasoning and find it wanting, prompted me to write this book. Even those who have approved the use of analogical argument in the law, like Edward Levi in his classic study, *An Introduction to Legal Reasoning*, have thought it is rationally “flawed,” although how in that case it could have the benign effects that Levi and others attribute to it is not explained. So also, efforts to reconstruct analogical legal argument as only a slightly disguised form of deductive or inductive argument, or some combination of the two, distort the arguments that lawyers and judges actually make and are evidently dictated only by the conviction that otherwise the arguments are invalid and entitled to no weight.

Views of this kind, which have dominated the discussion about analogical legal reasoning, fly in the face of the indubitable fact that the use of analogy is at the very center of legal reasoning, so much so that it is regarded as an identifying characteristic not only of legal reasoning itself but also of legal education. It is not credible that arguments subjected routinely to the closest scrutiny would contain such fundamental error. Studying the matter, I confirmed my belief that the use

Preface to the First Edition

of analogical argument in law stands up on its own terms and, indeed, is not different from the reasoning on which we all rely successfully in the affairs of everyday life. Its use in the law is distinct only in that it is not merely commonplace and useful but is essential to the preservation of values that we ascribe to “the rule of law.” The effort to displace analogical reasoning by deductive or inductive reasoning responds to a mistaken belief that the rule of law so requires. Analogical reasoning does not undermine the rule of law but rather sustains it.

I intend this book both for those who are interested in the scholarly debate and for those who are beginning their legal studies or just entering the practice of law, as well as for persons who have a general interest in law. Addressing myself to these audiences, I have not scanted discussion of the issues. I have, however, omitted most of the apparatus – lengthy footnotes about marginally relevant points and extensive citation – that is, excessively I think, common to legal scholarship. I have been generous with commonplace examples and with explanations of matters that will be familiar to legal scholars and experienced practitioners but perhaps not to beginning students, practitioners starting out, and others outside the legal profession.

I am grateful to many colleagues and friends who read some or all of the manuscript and made fruitful suggestions, among whom are Brian Bix, Michael Doyen, Richard Fallon, Robert Ferguson, Morton Horwitz, Daniel Meltzer, Anton Metlitsky, Daniel Weinreb, Mark Yohalem, and Benjamin Zipursky.

Andrew Waterhouse, George Borg, and Marcia Chapin helped me to understand the chemistry of wine stains and talcum powder. I presented some of the ideas in the book at workshops at Cornell Law School, Fordham Law School, and Harvard Law School and was encouraged and stimulated by comments of the participants.

The library of Harvard Law School provided ready access to books and articles about a wide variety of subjects, including many that did not make it into the final manuscript. The library of Fordham Law School was similarly helpful when I was a visiting professor there in 2003. Melinda Eakin prepared and managed many drafts of the manuscript and assisted in the final copyediting. Her help was invaluable. Ed Parsons was a generous and helpful representative of Cambridge University Press.