

Fallacies

When that students do der projekts

On Fallacies and Faulty Logiks

Gathered to groups four en masse

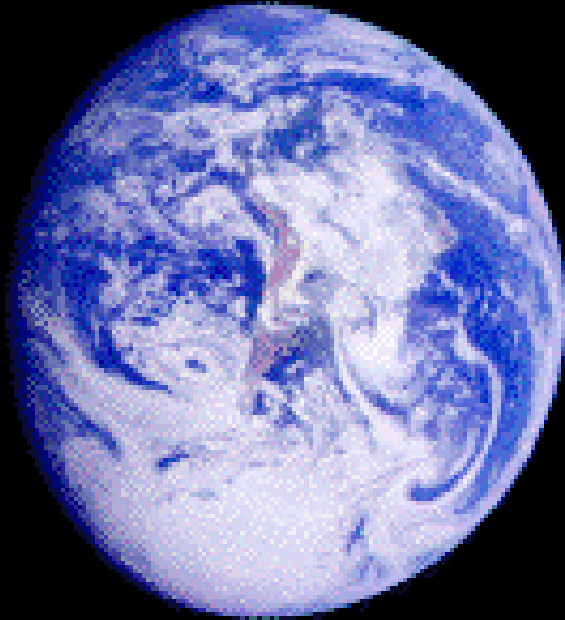
To make der grades en Zaidman's
classe

Appeal to spite and vanity

Days and nites, insanity

The A+ grade es what they seeke

Oh, let us get through one more
weeke.



Appeal to Authority

- Ex: “One may doubt whether it would be preferable to follow Ptolemy or Copernicus....But Copernicus’s principles contain a great many assertions which are absurd....For **according to the philosophers**, a simple body like the Earth can only have a simple motion....Therefore, it seems to me that Ptolemy’s geocentric doctrine must be preferred to Copernicus’s doctrine.” -Clavius
- An appeal based on the assumption that because a person holds an authoritative position, he or she is correct
- In this argument, Clavius relies on the opinion of the philosophers as his sole evidence in arguing that Ptolemy’s theories are more correct than Copernicus’s. By definition, the philosophers ideas are speculation. Therefore, Clavius uses the opinions of a respected group as his sole evidence

Appeal to Common Belief

- An appeal that uses common beliefs and popular opinions as evidence for the validity of a statement
- The writer of this letter contends that because the *majority* of Americans believe smoking advertisements are influential, such a belief is valid (even this majority is questionable, as it is doubtful that the entire American population was polled on this issue; it is much more likely that the statistics come from a select few who were polled.)

- Ex: “J.J. Boddewyn argues that ‘Smoking Ads Don’t Get People Hooked.’ However, the **majority of Americans** consider tobacco advertising a major influence in promoting the killer habit.” –Letter to the editor, *Wall Street Journal*



Common Practice

- Appeal in which an action is justified based on the fallacy that “everybody’s doing it”
- This passage argues that just because all the other countries are setting up federal daycare programs, America should too. Aside from saying that everyone else is doing it too, the author gives no other reason to support his proposition.



- Ex. “...Federal governments should be more involved in daycare. **The only industrialized nation in the world** that lacks a national policy on daycare is the United States.” –Tony Schwartz, “Good Daycare - A National Need”

Two Wrongs

- An appeal justifying one's wrongdoings because one feels that they have been or will be wronged just as much
- Arafat is implying that because his people, Palestinians, have been shot by Israeli soldiers, they are justified in making unprovoked attacks on Israeli soldiers.



- “You tell your soldiers to stop shooting my people...and I will tell my people to stop throwing rocks...” -Yassir Arafat

Indirect Consequence



- An appeal claiming remotely possible but usually very negative effects are consequences of a course of action or a belief
- Ex: “If today you can take a thing like evolution and make it a crime to teach it in the public schools, tomorrow you can make it a crime to teach it in the private schools, and next year you can make it a crime to teach it in a church. At the next session you can ban books and the newspapers. Ignorance and fanaticism are ever busy, indeed feeding, always feeding and gloating for more.” - Clarence Darrow, in *Hen’s Teeth and Horse’s Toes*

The writer uses one hypothetical situation as the basis for a series of conclusions, each relying on the previous, and each more unlikely than the last. The final conclusion that book burning and fanaticism will result has no direct relation to the original argument regarding the teaching of evolution in schools.



Wishful Thinking

- An appeal to one's hopes by suggesting an extremely positive outcome, but one just as remote, hopefully distracting from the merits of the case at hand.
- King has no evidence to suggest that this hopes will come to fruit--he relies on an emotional appeal, playing on the hopes of others that such a change will occur, as evidence of its likelihood.
- Ex: "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident--that all men are created equal.'" - Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" speech

Appeal to Fear

- An appeal threatening one's safety or happiness of themselves or of someone they love
- Ex. "Socrates, I think you are too ready to speak evil of men: And, if you will take my advice, I would recommend you to be careful. Perhaps there is no city in which it is not easier to **do men harm** than to do them good, and this is certainly the case in Athens, as I believe you know." – Anytus, Plato's *Meno*



Anytus attempts to support his position, that Socrates is too critical, by threatening that if Socrates does not comply, he will come to harm.

Appeal to Pity

- An appeal using emotions instead of reason in order to replace logic instead of supporting it
- Although Socrates states that he will not use his sons in order to evoke sympathy, he does so in his moving appeal by his exquisite use of detail regarding his sons, a literary reference to Homer, and, yes, pathos.
- Ex. “My friend, I am a man, and like other men, a creature of flesh and blood, and not “of wood and stone,” as Homer says; and I have a family, yes, and sons, O Athenians, three in number, one almost a man, and two others who are still young; and yet I will not bring any of them hither in order to petition you for acquittal.” – Socrates speaking before a jury

Appeal to Spite

- An appeal attempting to feed off of the animosity a person feels for another in order to build an argument
- Ex. “The difficulty... is that you do not recognize abortion as the direct killing of an innocent child, as the most violent oppression of the weak our world has ever known...” -Letter to the editor, *New York Times*



The use of adjectives in this argument creates a negative prejudice against abortion, the target of his argument. Also important is the word “recognize” which implies that this statement is something the reader should already know and understand.

Appeal to Loyalty

- An appeal based on the notion that one should act for the group's best interest, regardless of the merits of the particular situation
- Ex. “Reflect....that you are taking a decision **for your country**....a country whose fate hangs upon a single decision right or wrong.” – Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*



Thucydides is relying on patriotism and loyalty to Greece to draw support for his argument. He calls on his audience to make the right decision as best for their country.

Appeal to Prejudice

- An appeal to stereotypes, which take positive and negative sides when judging groups, even when facts state otherwise.
- “Do you see a man sitting here?...Look at the shape of this skull, this face as flat as my hand...[He is] a thing to hold the handle of your plow, to load your bales of cotton...Justice gentlemen? Why, I would as soon put a hog in the electric chair as this.” - Ernest Gaines, *A Lesson Before Dying*



The attorney is hoping to use the jury's existing prejudice against a black man as a defense, by implying that as a black man, he is no better than an animal, and thus not worth executing.

Appeal to Vanity

- An appeal which creates a likeness for agreement by paying compliments
- Scout's praise of Walter, Cunningham's son, plays off of Cunningham's pride in his son, and not only uses his pride, but creates an emotional appeal regarding his own humanity, juxtaposed with the inhumane crime he is about to commit.



- Ex: In Lee Harper's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Scout, a little girl, attempts to convince Mr. Cunningham not to lynch a man in jail by speaking well of his son: “Don’t you remember me Mr. Cunningham? I’m Jean Louise Finch. You brought me so hickory nuts one time...I go to school with [your son] Walter...He’s in my grade, and he does right well. He’s a good boy...a real nice boy.”

Hasty Generalization

- An appeal in which there is not enough evidence to make a proper generalization; the conclusion exceeds what the evidence offers
- Ex. “Here is a man of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He is just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tone of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan. – Arthur Conan Doyle, “A Study in Scarlet”
- First of all, Afghanistan is NOT in the tropics. But more importantly, the evidence Mr. Holmes presents is not sufficient for the outrageous conclusion he draws. Any number of situations could have led to the ascribed condition, not only a military endeavor in Afghanistan, which is actually quite cold (especially in the winter).



Argument from Silence

- An attempt to prove an argument by lack of evidence to the contrary

Ex. “I admit I have no hard evidence, but then there is no negative evidence either...”
-George Stone, *The Star*

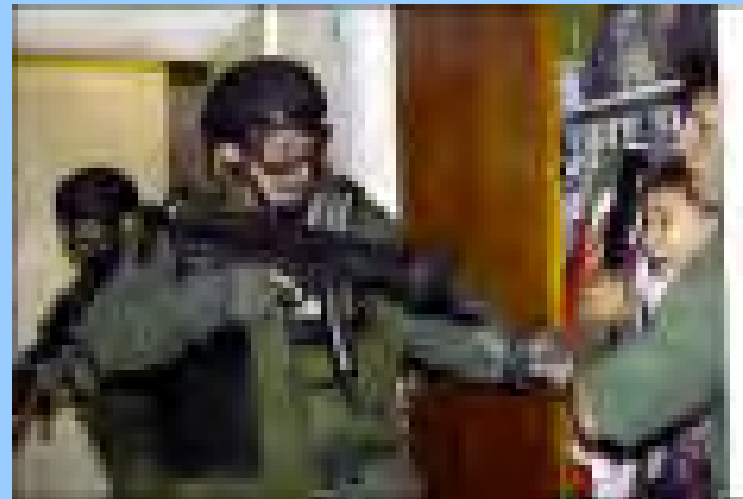
The argument in this passage is illogical; technically, the same argument could be used to prove the existence of anything. That fact that there is no proof that something doesn't exist is not evidence that it does.



Sweeping Generalization

- Argument that draws a conclusion regarding a wide spread of items based on evidence from one item
- “Does in a gun in the home make you safer? No. Guns kept in the home for self protection are more oftentimes used to kill someone you know than to kill in self defense.” - Handgun Control Incorporated Website

This example takes a general rule and applies it to the reader as an individual. Just because guns have been used to kill in the home does not mean this applies to every situation.



Part for the Whole

- Assumption that because the components of a same are true by themselves, then the sum they create is also true
- Ex. “You’ll love the Meat Lover’s Pizza if you like meat and you like pizza.” – Pizza Hut Ad



Although the literary merit of this source is questionable (don't you think it could appear on the AP exam?), the fallacy is clear: you may like salsa and you may like peanut butter, but more than likely you won't like them together.

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- Assumption that because the sum of several parts creates a valid argument, then each portion is valid on its own.
- Here, Smith is guilty of several fallacies. He begins by assuming all “religions” are non-Christian, and by this categorizes Mormonism, which is referred to as a “religion,” is therefore not Christian.

for the

- "Mormons also usually refer to themselves as a religion. Since Judaism and Islam are religions (and are, therefore, non-Christian), and Mormonism is also a religion, then it is also non-Christian."
John L. Smith, "The Evangel"

Part

Ad Hominem

- An attack on the person issuing an argument, rather than the argument itself, as evidence that the argument is invalid.
- Ex. “The most recent occurrence of recent years is all these **knuckleheads** running around protesting nuclear power—all these **stupid people** who do not research at all and who go out and march, pretending they care about the human race, and then go off in their automobiles and kill one another.”
– Ray Bradbury, *Omni*

To begin with, Bradbury is not only guilty of ad hominum, he is just plain redundant. His reference to the “knuckleheads” and “stupid people” clearly are an attack on the person rather than the argument, the nature of which we are not precisely sure about anyway.



Post Hoc

- **Argument that assumes because one event occurs before another, the first event is the cause of the second**
- **Huck, Huck, Huck.....there is simply no connection between the two events; this is a perfect example of the fallacy of post hoc, in this case as a superstition. Had Old Hank Bunker not looked over his left shoulder at the moon, he still would have gotten drunk and fallen off the shot tower. Because there is no logical connection between the events, the argument is invalid.**
- **Ex. “I’ve always reckoned that looking at the new moon over your left shoulder is one of the carelesst and foolishhest things a body can do. Old Hank Bunker done it once, and bragged about it: and in less than two years he got drunk and feel off of the shot tower....But anyway it all came out of looking at the moon that way, like a fool. –Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn***



Straw Man



- An argument that states an opponents position and oversimplifies it, so as to give a false image of that position
- Limbaugh commits the straw man fallacy by giving a misleading summary of Reagan's critics. What most critics claimed was that Reagan gave the rich greater advantages and privileges, not that the rich paid less taxes.



- Ex. “Despite the charge that “the rich got richer and pay less tax” between 1980 and 1992, the wealthy not only paid more income taxes in actual dollars, but they paid a greater share of income taxes as a percentage of their income compared to other groups.” -Rush Limbaugh, *See, I Told You So*

Burden of Proof

- Attempting to validate an argument by calling on an opponent to give evidence to the contrary.
- Tucker gives no evidence that any substances are cancer inducing; he avoids the issue by calling on his opponents to give proof that substances are not cancer inducing, which is of course impossible.
- Ex. “...you can’t say something doesn’t cause cancer because there’s always the chance that it does cause cancer but hasn’t showed up yet...” –William Tucker, “Of Mice and Men”, *Harper's Magazine*

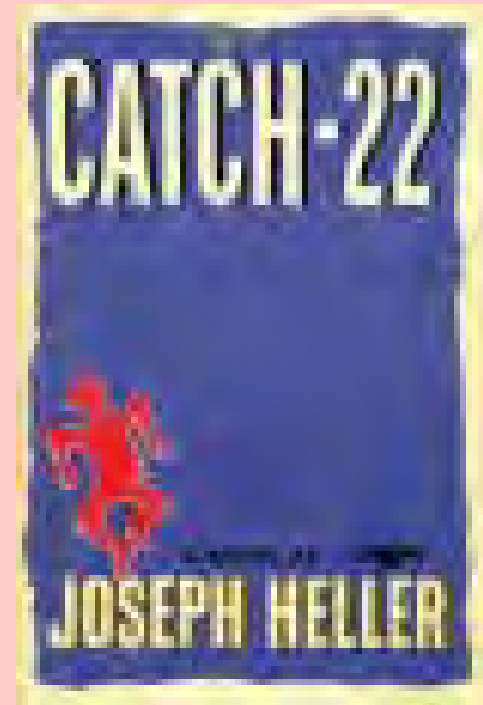


Circular Reasoning

- Circular reasoning relies on the assumption that the point one attempts to prove is true, and thus conclusions drawn from that point are evidence that it is true.
- In this example, Farkas answers to question of how to test whether what one reads in the Bible is true by suggesting that one look in the Bible.
- Ex. “We test the doctrine that comes to us... What is the ultimate test for spiritual truth? What God has already given us, the Holy Bible. It is our standard for testing truth.”
- John Farkas, "HOW DO WE TEST FOR SPIRITUAL TRUTHS?"

Loaded Question

- Any simple response to a loaded question is incriminatory
- The question is incriminating no matter what the response: if the answer refutes the original accusation, that something is stolen, then the speaker accepts the accusation that that he is guilty by responding.
- Ex. “If you didn’t steal it, then why are you so guilty?” -Joseph Heller, *Catch-22*



False Dilemma

- **The presentation of two choices as the only available option, when in fact other solutions are viable**
- **Ex. “Either we must have war against Russia before she has the atom bomb, or we will have to lie down and let them govern us.” – Bertrand Russell**



Russel is leaving out many alternatives here. War and submission are not the only options available. Take negotiation, for example.

False Compromise

- **A compromise that does not create a logical solution because judgment must be suspended to create the compromise**
- **That that both sides are unsatisfied is not evidence that the course is correct; the criticism suggests not that a willing compromise between two sides has been reached, but that neither agenda has been satisfied at all**
- **Ex “This administration has been attacked for going too far in affirmative action, and it’s been attacked for not going far enough. It would be our hope—which would seem to be demonstrated by the criticism on both sides—that we have chosen the course that helps to correct discrimination...” –Carter Administration Spokesman**



False Equivocation



- Creating a link between two items based on a key word, the definition of which changes in the course of the argument
- In this example, Chester is changing the meaning of incompatible to support his opinion. In the first sentence, “incompatible” refers to the similarity of their lifestyles. In the last sentence, the meaning is changed to refer to the essential nature, and thus gender, of men and women.
- Ex. “If Americans can be divorced for ‘incompatibility,’ I can not conceive why they are not all divorced. I have known many happy marriages, but never a compatible one. For a man and a woman, as such, are incompatible.” – G.K. Chesterton