Chapter 3: Section 3.1

Fallacies in General

fallacy = "defect in an argument that consists in something other than merely false premises."

2 Types of Fallacies

1. formal fallacy = form or structure of the argument is defective; only applies to deductive arguments that have identifiable forms

2. informal fallacies = 'can be detected only through analysis of the content of the argument"
3.2 Fallacies of Relevance

Premises are *logically irrelevant to the conclusion*, yet they may seem to be relevant psychologically.

**TYPES OF FALLACIES OF RELEVANCE:**

1. **APPEAL TO FORCE:** "always involves a threat by the arguer to the physical or psychological well-being of the listener or reader who may be a single person or a group of persons"

2. **APPEAL TO PITY:** evokes pity from the reader/listener

3. **APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE:**
   - **direct approach:** "arouse mob mentality"; excite emotionally; used mostly in politics, religious circles
   - **indirect approach:** "appeal is aimed at one or more individuals separately, focusing on some aspect of their relationship to the crowd"
     - bandwagon argument: everyone does it
     - appeal to vanity: celebrity testimony
     - appeal to snobbery: touts the advantage of being in an elite group
   - **common factor** in both approaches is the appeal to be included in some group that is held in esteem

4. **ARGUMENT AGAINST THE PERSON**
   - the respondent (2\textsuperscript{nd} arguer) directs his/her argument not at the actual argument made by the first arguer, but rather at the person directly
     - **abusive:** verbal abuse, slander
     - **circumstantial:** directs attention to the special circumstances that might cause the first arguer to take such-and-such a position
     - **tu quoque ("you also" or "you too"):** points to hypocrisy or corrupt nature of first arguer to discredit the argument presented
     - **RULE:** there must always be two arguers
     - Don’t rule out real reasons that might cause information to be less than credible.

5. **ACCIDENT:** misapplication of a general rule that the particular case does not fit

6. **STRAW MAN:** "distorts an argument .to more easily attack it"
- make argument look more extreme
- exaggerate/change focus of argument

7. **MISSING THE POINT:** conclusion misses the point entirely; arguer does not understand the proper way to argue

8. **RED HERRING:** changing the subject/central point entirely without the reader/listener noticing

- Note distinction between straw man and red herring
- Missing the point should not be used except as a last resort, "catch-all" fallacy.
3.3 Fallacies of Weak Induction

TYPES OF WEAK INDUCTION:

"connection between the premises and conclusion is not strong enough to support the conclusion"

9. **APPEAL TO UNQUALIFIED AUTHORITY**: "cited witness or authority is not trustworthy"
   - Reasons why an authority might not be qualified:
     - lack of expertise
     - bias or prejudice
     - motive to lie or provide misinformation
     - might not perceive/recall an event accurately.
   - 2 points to consider:
     1. People may specialize in more than one field, and therefore, act as a qualified authority.
     2. In certain areas of debate there are no absolute answers (e.g., religion, politics, values), and no one can claim to be the absolute authority.

10. **APPEAL TO IGNORANCE**
   - 2 Qualities
     1. Premises freely admit that nothing has been proven one way or the other.
     2. Conclusion makes a definite assertion/claim that such-and-such is the case.
   - 2 Exceptions
     1. Qualified researchers fail to turn up any evidence of certain phenomena after a search.
     2. Courtroom procedure: reasonable doubt.

11. **HASTY GENERALIZATION**: inductive generalization drawn from a sample that is not necessarily representative of the entire population to which it is being applied.
   - Sample may be too small, or not randomly selected.
   - Hurley also notes that a small sample is not necessarily atypical in every case. See the examples that follow You have to look at the context to evaluate the quality of the sample.

12. **FALSE CAUSE**: imagined causal connection that does not exist.
- temporal succession & causal connection; common in the realm of superstition
- oversimplified cause: arguer selects one of many causes and ignores systemic effects of multiple causes
- "usually motivated by self-serving interests"
  
  - e.g. companies that try to deny culpability when their products or environmental practices cause illness/death; tobacco wars
- It may be difficult to determine when two events are causally related (e.g. Ebola).
- Cause and effect are often not easily distinguished from one another.
- "Statistical correlations by themselves often reveal little about what is actually going on..."
- Data used for group projects may present this problem

13. **SLIPPERY SLOPE:** arguer predicts a chain reaction of undesirable events when there is little likelihood that these events will come to pass

- Note that this is a popular political tactic to get people to vote for radical legislation
- "rests on emotional conviction"

14. **WEAK ANALOGY:** "analogy is not strong enough to support the conclusion that is drawn"

- What is an analogy? See [Chapter 9.1](#)
- How can we tell if two things are similar/alike in some way?
3.4 Fallacies of Presumption and Ambiguity

**Fallacies of Presupposition:** "premises presume what they purport to prove"

15. **Begging the question:** "requesting the source"
   - arguer conceals the key premise by using complex terminology
   - arguer lacks good evidence to support claim
   - often occurs in arguments for the existence of God (remind class of Descartes)
   - Many forms:
     1. assume what you are trying to prove
     2. "premise of an argument merely restates the conclusion in slightly different language"
     3. "circular reasoning in a chain of inferences"
       - arguments are usually valid but unsound
       - concealed premise is usually unsound or untrue

16. **Complex question:** two or more questions are being asked and a single answer is prompted by the questioner
   - correct response: "resolve complex question into its component questions answer each separately"
   - Leading questions are different as they suggest the answer within the question that is being asked.
   - tricks respondent into admitting something that he/she did not want to

17. **False Dichotomy:** presents two alternatives as if they were jointly exhaustive and the only two possible alternatives in existence
   - Again, the argument is valid, but unsound.
   - Review disjunctive syllogism:
     \[
     p \lor q \\
     \sim p \\
     q
     \]
     - You may have to supply a missing premise to fill out the syllogism.

18. **Suppressed Evidence:** ignoring an important piece of evidence that would entail acceptance of a different conclusion.
   - Quoting passages out of context from religious, political, legal documents that "support a conclusion the passage was not intended to support."
• Note the difference between begging the question and suppressed evidence.

19. **Equivocation**: "word or phrase is used either explicitly or implicitly in two different sense in the argument."

• Techniques to confuse the listener:
  
  • use "equivocal word in ways that are subtly related."

  • "spread the shift in meaning over the course of an argument." This is a popular political favorite for rhetoric/propaganda.

• Use the word two different ways to two different audiences.

20. **Amphiboly**: sentence is syntactically ambiguous and is interpreted in the wrong way.

• There are two meanings for the sentence and the listener usually misinterprets.

• Note difference between amphiboly and equivocation.

21. **Composition**: attributes are transferred from the parts to the whole and the transfer is inappropriate.

• Note that some transfers are appropriate and these are legitimate non-fallacies.

• You must have "general knowledge of a situation" in order to recognize some fallacies of composition.

• Since everything here is judged in context, you have to be familiar with the context to be a competent judge. (Mill’s utilitarianism)

• Introduce the idea of distributed properties and collective properties
  
  • Distributed = every member of the group has that property

  • Collective = must consider the group as a whole to talk about the attribute in question.

• Note method to distinguish composition from hasty generalization.

22. **Division**: transferring an attribute from the whole to the parts erroneously.

• Note the confusion with the "accident" fallacy, and the method to avoid this confusion.