

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 (2nd 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.
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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:

$$\begin{array}{l} p \vee q \\ \underline{\sim p} \\ q \end{array}$$

- 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.