

Logical Fallacies – An Introduction

Chapter 17

Everything's An Argument

Fallacies of Emotional Argument

Either-Or Choices (False Dilemma)

- Reduce **complicated issue** to simple terms
- Seductive to those who know little about a topic
- Ask: Are there any OTHER alternatives?

Example of a Either-Or Choice

- *The Bulldogs are the first-place team, so either we beat them tonight and gain a little self-respect, or we lose like everyone expects us to, and hide our faces in shame!*
- Or maybe they could play a great game and still lose, but come out of it feeling good about their performance. That's only one option beyond the false dilemma offered here of "win self-respect" or "lose in shame."

Cigarettes
are
addictive.



Scare Tactics



Sentimental Appeals

▲ CAUTION



**SLIPPERY
SLOPE**

Slippery Slope

- Claims that a sort of chain reaction, ending in some dire consequence, will take place (there's really not enough evidence for that assumption).
- If we take even one step onto the "slippery slope," we will end up sliding all the way to the bottom; writer assumes we can't stop halfway down the hill.

Example of Slippery Slope

"Animal experimentation reduces our respect for life. If we don't respect life, we are likely to be more and more tolerant of violent acts like war and murder. Soon our society will become a battlefield in which everyone constantly fears for their lives. It will be the end of civilization. To prevent this terrible consequence, we should make animal experimentation illegal right now."

Fallacies of Ethical Argument

Appeals to False Authority

- Writers offer themselves or others as authority
- Information and opinions should not be accepted simply because they are put forth by authorities
- “Trust, but verify.”

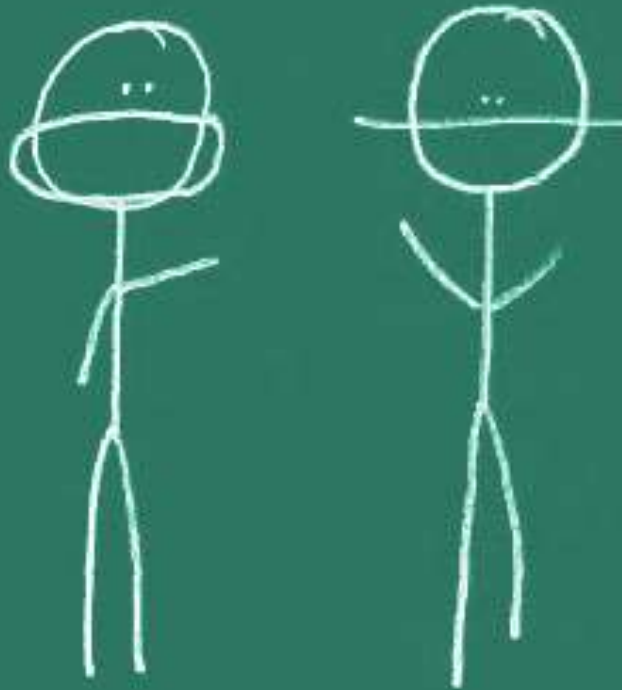
Dogmatism

- No arguments are necessary; the truth is self-evident.
- *No rational person would disagree that...*
- *It's clear to anyone who has thought about it that...*

Ad Hominem Arguments

- Directed at character of person, rather than claims they make.

only an idiot would engage
in ad hominem attacks!



ad hominem kitteh sez,

ur wrong...

...bekuz ur stupid!

Fallacies of Logical Arguments

Hasty Generalization

- Making assumptions based on a small sample
- Is the writer relying on opinions or experiences of just a few people or personal experience in just a few situations?
- Perhaps more evidence is needed - or a less sweeping generalization.

Example of a Hasty Generalization

- *"My roommate said her philosophy class was hard, and the one I'm in is hard, too. All philosophy classes must be hard." Two people's experiences are, in this case, not enough on which to base a conclusion.*
- *Saying "Some philosophy classes are hard for some students" would NOT be a hasty generalization.*

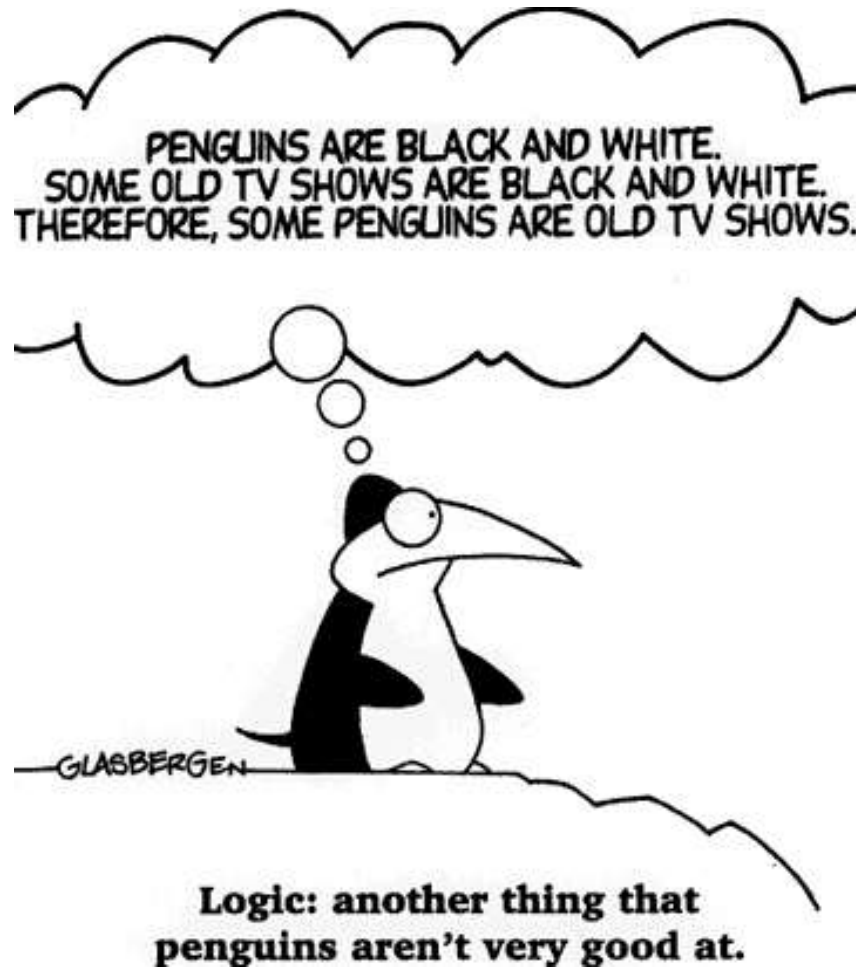


Equivocation

Give a lie an honest appearance – a half truth. The witches' prediction:

“till Birnam wood/Do come to Dunsinane” (*Macbeth* 5.5.44-45)

Using “black and white” equivocally...



Begging the Question

- An argument that begs or EVADES the question asks the reader to simply accept the conclusion without providing real evidence
- Argument either relies on a premise that says the same thing as the conclusion ("circular reasoning"), or simply ignores an important (but questionable) assumption that the argument rests on.

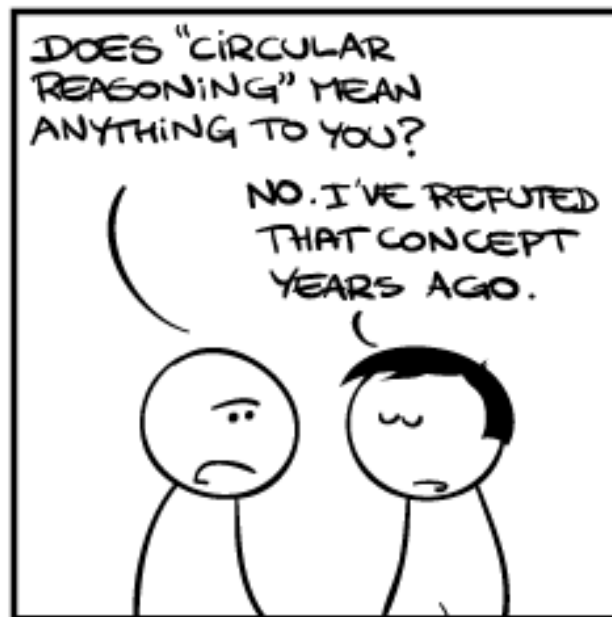
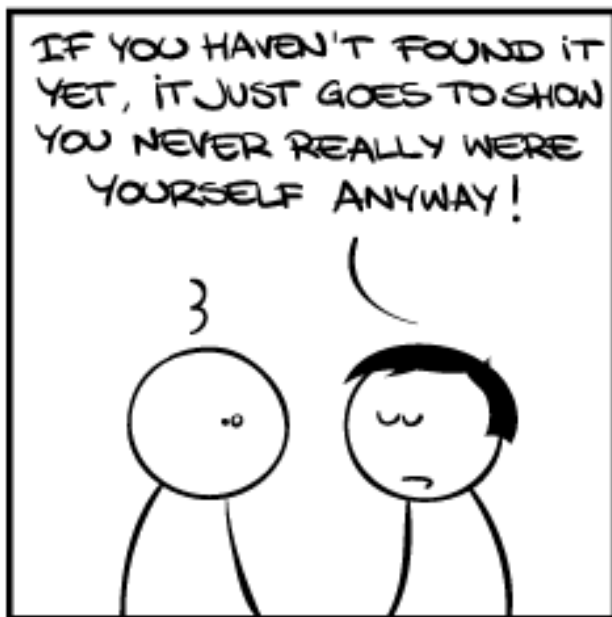
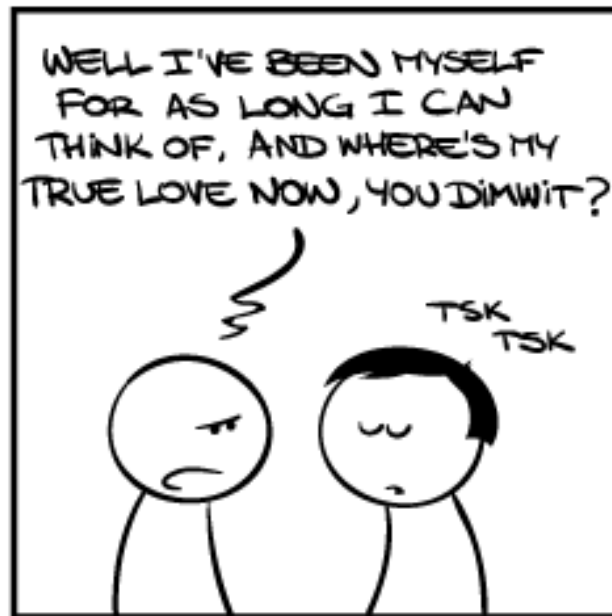
Example of Begging the Question

"Murder is morally wrong. So euthanasia is morally wrong."

- The premise that gets left out is "euthanasia is murder." And that is a debatable premise—the argument "begs" or evades the question of whether euthanasia is murder by simply not stating the premise.
- The arguer is hoping we'll just focus on the uncontroversial premise, "Murder is morally wrong," and not notice what is being assumed.

Circular Reasoning

- Supporting a premise with a premise, rather than a conclusion.
- **A citizen says: “Huebner is the most successful mayor the town has ever had because he's the best mayor of our history.”**
- The second part of this sentence offers no evidence — it simply repeats the claim that was already presented.
- Don't be fooled into believing that using the word “because” in an argument automatically provides a valid reason. Be sure to provide clear evidence to support your claims, not a version of the premise.





STRAWMAN

Your argument did not address my own, but nice try.

Straw Man Fallacy

- Arguer sets up a simplistic or exaggerated version of the opponent's position and tries to score points by knocking it down.
- Imagine a fight in which one of the combatants sets up a man of straw, attacks it, then proclaims victory.

Example of a Straw Man Fallacy

- "Senator Jones says that we should not fund the attack submarine program. I disagree entirely. I can't understand why he wants to leave us defenseless like that."
- Often misrepresents the context from which a quotation is taken. Straw man usually occurs when the point of view is paraphrased or summarized.

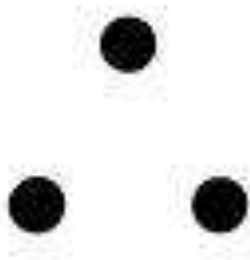
Non Sequitur

- Claims fail to connect logically
- Children can be good at these!
- *“You don’t love me or you’d buy me that bicycle!”*
 - *Claim: You must not love me...*
 - *Reason: ...because you haven’t bought me that bicycle*
 - *Buying bicycles is for children is essential to loving them.*

What's a Syllogism?

- Deductive reasoning (general \rightarrow specific)
- Conclusion supported by major and minor premises (statements)

“Therefore”



What a Syllogism Looks Like

Major Premise: All mammals **are warm-blooded.**

Minor Premise: **All horses** are mammals.

Conclusion: ∴ **All horses are warm-blooded.**

Subject (All horses) → from minor premise

Predicate (are warm-blooded) → from major premise

You Try It...

- All PWHS graduates take four years of Communications classes. (Major Premise)
- Bob is a PWHS graduate. (Minor Premise)

∴ Bob took 4 yrs of
Comm. Classes!