

THE FALLACY FILES...



Win Groseclose

The Fallacy

It was a dark and stormy night; the kind of night where the hollow blackness chills even the marrow of your bones. It was the kind of night that was filled with the haunts of a thousand nightmares—the bad ones that make you wake up in a cold sweat and leaves you with the feeling that something is watching you from within the blackness. The darkness was thick in the air and the wind howled and bit at my shoulders when I stepped into the blowing rain from the relative sanctity of my sedan. My name is Justice, Mike Justice, and there had been a murder.

The uniforms were just beginning to secure the scene, though I am not sure from what. No one would be out on a night like this...no one, that is, but several uniforms earning their wage and a detective that would rather be inside by a warm fire, but now a warm cup of joe is my only warmth and cold, dark thoughts of murder my only companion. It would be a long night.

Then again, there was the body—a crumpled heap of what was once a man, but cast away like yesterdays garbage. He was an average sized corpse, five-ten and probably just under two-hundred pounds, a little more muscle than flab, though. The give-away was the hilt of a dagger with what looked to be a six-inch blade, although four of its inches had taken up residence in the man's chest cavity from behind. Never a good sign. And something about this murder just did not sit well with me; like week-old pizza, while they pieces looked like they fit together, they just didn't sit right. Then again, nothing about this night was sitting well with me.

The body had been discovered by a uniformed patrol officer who made regular evening rounds in this part of the city. About 12:30, on his regular interval, he saw the body, laying like a heap of soggy laundry under a street lamp in a fairly deserted part of town—almost as if it was intended to be found. The body used to belong to one Lewis H. Warner, a hardware salesman from across town—hardly the kind of career that would earn you such an eventful murder, but then again, stranger things happen.

This wasn't that atypical of murders in this part of town—the knife in the back seemed like the obvious murder weapon, but something still felt amiss about this case...yet I couldn't put my finger on it. The detail was there, it was registering in my mind, but it was as if the darkness of the night was clouding it...like I was observing things through a veil of shadow or through a window whose glass had become warped. Like a bad, "B-Rated" movie, things looked right, but at the same time, they were strangely off—I just could not figure out why.

And then I saw what was disturbing me so much...his shoes, his shoes were new. I don't mean that an honest man is not permitted to have a new pair of new shoes, but these were brand new—the leather soles, though soaked in the rain, had none of the normal scuffing that you would expect on the bottom, not from walking on the pavement and not from a scuffle that might earn you a knife in the way this man had received it. In fact, looking closely, the black dye that typically is left on the bottom of the shoe was still in good condition. Not only were these shoes new, but they had never been worn—that is, until now.

And that is when I noticed a second thing that stood out like a bright red balloon in a clear blue sky—something that only a minute before had been concealed by the

night...gravel. Not a lot of it, only a few stones, and those few stones were lodged in the wound between the knife and the stiff flesh. The night was starting to get interesting...

Observation—Truth from Error

For a detective, keen observation skills are essential. One must not only be able to see the things that are present, but one also must be able to see what is not present, but that ought to be. Sometimes a clue can be as small as a new pair of shoes on an otherwise disheveled man, a piece of gravel where it ought not be, or a broken watch at a murder scene that might help to establish the time of death (or at least of the time of the scuffle that led to death). Noticing these things are essential to being a good detective.

Yet skillful observation alone does not make one a good detective. There are tools of the trade—in Sherlock Holmes' day it was the magnifying glass, in modern times it is the forensic crime lab—and there is also a person's ability to logically put together the pieces of evidence that one finds at a crime scene—like putting together puzzle pieces—to find the solution to the crime—weaving all of the pieces of evidence into a tapestry that clearly depicts what has taken place.

Yet, observation, tools, and logic are not only important to the detective, but they are important to rational thought and argumentation as well. Just as criminals either try and obscure evidence or leave false clues, so too, people do the same as they construct arguments—sometimes unintentionally and sometimes with devious purposes. Your job as a Christian apologist, as a rhetorician, a logician—is to be a linguistic detective and separate the truth from error—and one of the tools of the trade is an ability to recognize logical fallacies when they are used around us.

We will return to our detective, Mike Justice, before long, but first, we need to set out some basic definitions and principles.

The Basics:

To begin with, if we are going to discuss logical fallacies, we must first understand what the term “logic” means and some basic principles of its use. The term is derived from the Greek word, λογικός (logikos), which refers to something that is “carefully thought out.” Its verbal form is λογίζομαι (logizomai), which means “to calculate something out”, “to carefully ponder”, or “to hold a reasonable opinion on a matter.” In other words, in its most basic meaning, the term refers to the way in which one evaluates the evidence around them and even the way in which one constructs the views that they hold.

This does not mean that every view that every person holds has been logically reasoned out; many of the views we hold have not. Some views we have are taken on faith and some of the views we hold are plainly irrational. The point of truth comes when each of the views is tested. For example, when a young lady first falls in love with a young man, she tends to see him as if he has no flaws whatsoever. Her family and friends typically see the flaws, but she is incapable of seeing them because she is enamored with the young man. Yet, given the test of time (especially if the young love

leads to marriage), the young lady will forsake her delusions and see the young man for who he is (and sometimes wonder what happened to the perfect man she fell in love with!). True Christian faith, in contrast, when tried by the tests of time, reason, and experience, God shows himself to be true time and time again. In turn, what was initially taken on faith proves itself to be eminently reasonable or logical.

Thus, when we reason, we are applying logical tests to ideas and premises for the purpose of evaluating them. Some of these tests play themselves out quite neatly on paper; some do not. Thus, what we are about to learn are basic principles, but one must also remember, sometimes logical tests will not convince a person of their error. In the case of a young lady in love, no amount of logical evidence will convince her that the young man she loves has pimples, bad breath, and passes gas. Like the magnifying glass, these tools can help you see the evidence more clearly, but they may not change another person's presuppositions—or even your own.

Some Basics:

One might argue that the most basic logical principle is the Law of Non-Contradiction. This principle simply states that “X” cannot be “Y” and “non-Y” at the same time. Here are several examples to illustrate this concept:

1. Emily has a pet named “Fuzzy.” It is not possible for Fuzzy to be a dog and for Fuzzy not to be a dog at the same time. There are lots of things that Fuzzy can be, he might be part Great Dane and part Dachshund, but he cannot be both “dog” and “non-dog” at the same time.
2. Sarah has an imaginary pet crocodile named “Hungry.” It is not possible for “Hungry” to exist and to not exist at the same time. One may make the argument that the existence of “Hungry” in her mind constitutes existence yet the imaginary nature of “Hungry” means that “Hungry is non-existent as well. Following this line of thought, some might be tempted to suggest that existence is relative and that the Law of Non-Contradiction does not apply. Yet, to conclude this overlooks a very important logical principle—that of defining terms. Before one pursues this argument, the definition of the term “existence” must be established. If, for example, the definition of existence is that something must be physically seen, touched, or otherwise observed, then “Hungry” does not exist. Yet, if existence is defined not only in terms of physical observation, but of the effect that the thing has on a person, and, if when Sarah is frightened, she finds herself comforted by having a conversation with “Hungry,” then Hungry can be said to exist. Once the terms are defined, it once again becomes clear that “Hungry” cannot exist and non-exist at the same time.

This second example may, at the outset, sound rather far-fetched, but if you are a perceptive student, you will recognize the importance of this question when debating on the existence of God. Many atheists will argue that since they cannot touch or otherwise

observe God, God is non-existent.¹ Yet, Christians have consistently held that you can prove the existence of God through observing the effect that God has on the lives of believers; thus God is existent. Christians certainly appeal to other aspects of logic as well, to demonstrate the existence of God, like the argument from design, the teleological argument, and the argument based on fulfilled prophesy, but the question of defining the term “existence” is an important aspect of the debate over God’s existence.

Thus, defining terms clearly is an essential part of any logical thought and communication. Many arguments and disagreements could be avoided if people paid more attention to clearly defining the terms that they are choosing to use. Of course, there are those who seek to be intentionally vague and do so by using words whose meaning can be taken in more than one way. Such is especially prominent in politics, but we find this practice used elsewhere as well. Let us examine the following two statements that might be given by someone being asked for a character reference:

1. “John is a man of many convictions.” Does this mean that John has many ideas that he holds strong opinions on? Or, does this mean that John has been arrested and convicted of multiple crimes? Without defining terms, either could be true.
2. “You would be fortunate to have Allen work for you.” Does this mean that Allen is a good employee and would be an asset to this new firm? Or, does this mean that Allen is a rather lazy individual and that the company should count themselves fortunate if John actually did any work at the new company? Again, without defining terms, either could be true.

So, not only is it important to recognize contradictions, it is equally as important to make sure words are defined clearly and accurately.

The Shoes

I knew that there was something odd about this case. The shoes were on the corpse’s feet, but they showed no sign of wear. They either had been worn or they had not been worn, “a simple deduction, dear Watson.” And since they clearly had no evidence of wear, the shoes had not started out the day on this man but only ended up on his stiff and soggy remains.

Of course, that observation did not get me anywhere—in fact, it raised more questions than it answered—as if there would be any answers at this hour of the night and in this rain. If these are not this man’s shoes, where are his original shoes and what tales

¹ Note that it is very difficult to live consistently when defining existence in this way. When one adopts this mindset (called an “Empirical” approach to knowledge—we can only know what we observe), one finds oneself unable to prove the existence of many things that we take for granted. One cannot prove the existence of an idea, for example, by empirical observation; yet few would suggest that ideas do not exist. The ironic thing about the empiricist position is that the position itself is an idea arrived at through the use of reason; yet, neither ideas nor reasoning can be proven to exist through empirical observation. The position is ultimately an irrational one; it is like using a proof to prove that proofs do not exist.

will they tell us about where this murder took place. Where did these shoes come from—and why exchange new shoes for old shoes in the first place? Why not leave the stiff bare-footed? Why waste a perfectly good pair of shoes on a stiff who could not benefit from them anyway? And by the looks of them, probably an expensive pair of shoes as well—then again, they were pretty soggy—hard to tell these things.

Old shoes, new shoes, and gravel—and I thought this night would be a wash-out... Gravel could come from anywhere; new shoes could not—I knew where I had to start looking.

Contradictions in Logic and Logical Fallacies:

A fallacy is a mistaken view or belief due to faulty logic. Sometimes fallacies are easy to recognize, but sometimes they are more subtle and go unnoticed. Just like clues for a detective, some will be obvious and some will not; the key is developing one's critical observation skills and honing them in such a way as to be able to recognize these errors. Whether obvious or subtle, fallacies obscure the truth. Thus understanding these fallacies below will help you become an effective linguistic detective and an effective communicator of truth.

To begin with, people usually divide fallacies into two categories: Formal and Informal. Formal fallacies are those that apply directly to deductive logic and are concerned with the validity of the argument. As in syllogistic argumentation, deductive logic requires a high level of precision to be deemed valid. No failure or “fudging” of logic is allowed.

There are times, though, that the logical precision required for validity cannot be achieved, and that is where inductive reasoning takes over. Inductive reasoning is reason based on inferences drawn from a given situation and thus certain things are assumed and otherwise imported into the argument.² Yet, while logical validity may not be possible for inductive arguments, there still are criteria upon which an argument's strength or legitimacy may be judged. These criteria are referred to as “informal fallacies.” While deductive arguments are referred to as either valid or invalid, inductive arguments are typically referred to as “strong” or “weak” based on the presence of fallacies.

Formal Fallacies:

Though there are a number of different formal fallacies that one could cite, depending on the kind of logical system being employed, but for the purpose of this workbook, I am only going to mention two examples of formal fallacies: that of a Fallacious Premise and Syllogistic Errors.

² A note about the use of inductive logic: there are some who object to the use of inductive reasoning at all because of the imprecision that can be found within it. Yet, without the use of inductive reasoning, we cannot derive any “ought” statements—in other words applications of morality or principle come from the use of inductive, not deductive reasoning. Even though some reject inductive reasoning, you will yet find in practice that they regularly employ inductive reasoning in life, making their position inconsistent with their practice (and even at times, rather silly).

A Fallacious Premise is simply a case of bad reasoning where the premise or proposition is faulty. One might make the following statement: “all animals are pink.” In its formal construction, there are no errors, but the statement is just plain wrong—something that invalidates the entire argument. Here is another area where the Law of Non-Contradiction proves useful, for a premise cannot be true if it contradicts itself.

Syllogistic errors are more involved, but these errors will invalidate a logical argument. There are five syllogistic errors³:

1. Two negative premises do not imply a conclusion.
2. Two affirmative premises do not imply a negative conclusion.
3. An affirmative and a negative premise do not imply an affirmative conclusion.
4. The middle (meson) is undistributed (in other words, for a logical syllogistic construction to be valid, the middle term (the term which bridges the two premises) must show up as the subject of one premise and as the predicate in the other.
5. If a given term (the akron) is distributed in the conclusion. In other words, an akron which is the subject of premise one must also be the subject of the conclusion.

Fancy Shoes

New shoes aren’t found at this hour of the night unless they have already been claimed by feet. So that task would have to be done in the morning. For now, the M.E. would soon collect the mark and file their report in the morning. No chance of witnesses—at least not here, so my best bet is to wring myself out and saw a few logs, then in the morning start hitting the pavement and find me a shoe salesman.

By morning, the weather had improved but my mood hadn’t. The Coroner had left a message and I figured I better check that out first—nothing like the smell of formaldehyde to start your day—and right after breakfast. But a strong stomach is part of the job description and it had become a part of my life—though an unwelcome part.

Two things he had noticed—first, the knife was the cause of death (surprise, surprise...) and time of death was approximately 10:30 the prior night—give or take an hour or so due to the cold rain and soggy clothes. That places the death approximately two hours before the body was found—plenty of time to kill a man and dump him in another part of the city. But the Coroner did not need to call me down here for that bit of info.

That led to the second thing—it is always the “second thing” that proves interesting. The gravel, he said, was the kind used as base rock upon which building construction can take place.

“The rock crushing plant just outside of the city...” I interrupted.

“No, that is what I thought at first. But look at these tension lines under the microscope. This does not come from compression, but from rollers crushing the rock

³ Note that some texts argue for a sixth syllogistic error: that of having 4 terms. Yet, by definition, a syllogism has only three terms, so the very definition of a syllogism precludes the legitimacy of a 4 term argument, making this sixth error unnecessary.

with tension, like what you would find from a small, portable crusher. Plus, not a lot of dust. The gravel was in the wound, too, pretty deep.”

“Great, no dust and no pressure to crush, that rules out the crusher outside of town... How small is this portable crusher? Bigger than a breadbox, I guess...”

“Lots of breadboxes. Think something on the front of a skidloader.”

Now, I had something to work with...well, or at least a place to start looking. It wasn't a lot, but it narrowed the places I needed to poke my nose down to about a half-dozen smaller construction sites—the kinds of places where they were tearing down some small buildings—hence the need for a crusher. If the crusher is portable, why not put the body through it rather than dumping it—would make a mess, but mixed with some concrete, the evidence would be as good as gone.

But I still had a body, it had gravel in it and it had new shoes...the shoes! I needed to check on the shoes now that they were dry and in the light. Turns out that they were Brit shoes! Crockett and Jones out of Northampton, England...what is a hardware salesman doing wearing shoes that probably cost more than \$500? Of course, he wasn't wearing them, that's the point—why did someone give this dead mark a pair of fancy shoes? And I checked—probably two sizes too big—they were never meant for him. What a waste... Things were just not adding up.

What I did know, was that a dead man cannot change his own shoes, and no prints were on them and brand new shoes—without even the slightest scuffing—could not have been worn while being murdered on a construction site. That was simple enough logic. A fall amongst the gravel could also explain the bits inside of the wound. It is just these shoes...the old shoes had to tell a story that these new ones could not... Had to find the old shoes. Time to go shopping...

Informal Fallacies:

There are a variety of ways to organize informal fallacies, but often they are broken into three categories: Fallacies of Relevance, Fallacies of Ambiguity, and Fallacies of Presumption.

Fallacies of Relevance are arguments that present information that is not directly relevant to the argument being made. Such is designed to mislead or discredit and cause your attention to shift from the matter at hand. This is a common tactic not only in crimes, but also in politics, where the politician is not interested in debating the facts, but only in garnering your support.

At the onset, Fallacies of Ambiguity appear to be legitimate arguments, yet they contain ambiguous language that can lead people astray. This is a common tactic of children with their parents—they do not wish to lie to Mom and Dad, but they word things in such a way that what is said leads the listener to believe something different than what is actually meant.

Fallacies of Presumption are fallacies that contain intentionally misleading information, falsifying the premise of the argument. While we did discuss a Fallacious Premise as a kind of formal fallacy, these fallacies are not nearly so obvious at the onset and sometimes may seem to be true at least in a sense. The terms are not ambiguous per say, but they are misleading and sometimes downright dishonest.

Assignment:

For the rest of the Fallacy Files, we will explore specific fallacies within these three categories. Fallacies will be explained and an example will be given—many of which from the life of our Detective, Mike Justice, as he tries to solve this case.

At the end of each of these three categories, there will be a worksheet where you will be asked to identify which informal fallacy is present in a series of examples, your Fallacy Files Journal will be periodically checked to make sure that you are working on these exercises.

A second element of the Fallacy Files is that the page next to each new Fallacy is left blank. During the course of the semester, you are required to locate examples of 8 different fallacies that are covered in this journal. These fallacies may be from a newspaper, magazine, book, or internet site; they may be from articles or advertisements; they may be from anything in the world around us that can be documented (you can even take a picture of a sign, for example, that illustrates one of these fallacies). The blank page is for you to insert your findings. The purpose of this assignment is to get you to look more critically at the world around us and to see the errors that people routinely make.



The Fallacy of the Personal Attack

Proper Name: Ad Hominem Argument

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: This fallacy, called “Bulverism” by C.S. Lewis, seeks to discredit the argument by discrediting the person who is advancing the argument. Often this can be malicious, though sometimes it is employed without even thinking about what one is saying. It is very common, especially when a debate has turned into an argument. The big problem with this fallacy is that it does not address the question at hand.

Examples:

- When a husband is mad because his wife wants him to go shopping instead of watching football, he might say, “You just think that way because you are a woman...”
- People who hold to Creation rather than Evolution are often argued against in this way: “You just think that way because you are a Christian,” or, “If you weren’t a Christian you would agree with me.”
- Students sometimes say, “I never pass Mr. Brockovitch’s tests because he doesn’t like me.”

Notes:

Real Life Example:

The Bandwagon Fallacy

Proper Name: Bandwagon Fallacy

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: In the old days, a bandwagon was a wagon large enough to carry an entire musical troupe; later on they were used by politicians who were seeking office. People would “get on the bandwagon” to demonstrate their support for the particular politician. In logic, the Bandwagon fallacy refers to a statement that appeals to the popularity of a view rather than to the actual merits of the view itself.

Examples:

- “More and more people are beginning to see the merits of the Intelligent Design movement; surely it must be true.”
- “More Dentists recommend Eclipse Sugar-Free gum.”
- “No other teachers ever care whether my planner has been signed...”

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Fallacy of Composition

Proper Name: Fallacy of Composition

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: This fallacy is one where it is inferred that if every part of an object or idea has a given attribute, then the attribute also applies to the whole object or idea. Now, it should be noted that sometimes this is true—for example if every part of my body is composed of cells, it is safe to say that my body as a whole is made up of cells. At the same time, this fallacy can lead to false conclusions. For example, while all atoms are invisible to the naked eye, a table that is composed of atoms is not invisible to the naked eye.

The key to identifying this fallacy lies not only with using a degree of common sense and making sure that terms are defined well.

Examples:

- Every student in the class earned between 85 to 90 points on this test; thus the class as a whole scored a total of 85 to 90 points on this test.
- Every football player at our school eats more food than any other student at school; therefore the football team as a whole eats more food than the school as a whole.
- “Look, you like chicken, you like potatoes, you like onions, and you like peppers—you like everything in this casserole; you will like the casserole as a whole!”

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Fallacy of Division

Proper Name: Fallacy of Division

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: This is the exact opposite of the Fallacy of Composition. Just because the item or idea as a whole has certain characteristics does not mean that each part has the same characteristics.

Examples:

- A bird can fly, thus bird parts are able to fly.
- Sodium Chloride (table salt) may be safely eaten; therefore its constituent parts, Sodium and Chloride, may be safely eaten.
- A triple-braided nylon rope can support over a thousand pounds of weight; thus each strand can hold 1000 lbs of weight.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Shopping for a Shoe

And now here I was, looking for where these shoes had been gotten. Not too many places in the city that sold Crockett and James footwear—leather shoes from Britain for lots of cash. Probably not much better than the stuff I buy at Wal Mart, but some people are willing to pay big bucks just to advertise for someone else. Only one store sold them in the city limits, so I decided to check them out.

I went in and asked for the manager—was not in the mood for a long conversation with a pimple-faced sales clerk whose interests were more in line with the current cinema showings than with helping me figure out the case.

“Yes, sir,” came the slightly nasal voice from the suited man coming out of the office. I wondered whether he had been born speaking like that or whether the sound of arrogance was the result of long and intense training. Probably both. His nose was so turned up that I wasn’t sure how he got home without drowning in yesterday’s rain.

“I am looking for who bought these,” I said, handing him the shoes.

The manager took them, looked at me and then at them with his beady-eyes. And then, almost as quickly as he took them, he handed them back, and said, “not here.”

“But you are the only one in the city that sells stuff like this.”

“Not stuff, sir, but the highest quality imported leather.”

“But I don’t understand, these shoes still have the black paint on the bottoms—they have to be new.”

“No sir”, the salesman said, these are not new, but soles and uppers have been replaced—these shoes have seen better days—just because they look new, does not mean they are replaced. Just because the parts are new leather does not mean the whole is as well. You need to find yourself a cobbler to talk to.”

So, it’s the run-around. Old shoes look new because they have been redone—expertly redone—but still not worn and still expensive shoes. If the salesman didn’t know whose shoes they were, then, perhaps the cobbler would—of course, finding the right cobbler might not be as easy as finding the right store...my day was getting jollier by the moment. Maybe someone will shoot at me before the day’s out.

The Gambler's Fallacy

Proper Name: The Gambler's Fallacy

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: The Gambler's fallacy is based on statistics in a series of events. For example, if a coin is tossed in the air, it has a 50/50 chance of landing heads up. The Gambler's fallacy assumes that since the coin toss is 50/50, if a series of tosses has yielded all heads, then chances are the next flip will be tails. While this might seem reasonable at the onset, when you realize that the chance of an individual coin turning up heads is 50/50 no matter how many tosses have preceded it, you can see the error.

Note that there is also a reverse form of this fallacy that assumes if a particular group of events has produced a run (a whole series of heads from coin tosses), then there is a likelihood that the run will continue. Again, this logic fails for the same reason and the casinos stay in business.

Examples:

- William has been buying Lottery tickets for years. Even though he has always lost, he is convinced that since he has lost so many times he is sure to hit the Lottery soon.
- Shannon is given \$5 in Lottery tickets for her birthday. She wins \$50 when she turns them in. Convinced that her "luck" will continue, she turns and spends the whole \$50 in Lottery tickets.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

The Fallacist's Fallacy

Proper Name: The Fallacist's Fallacy

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: Sometimes true ideas or principles are rejected as fallacious simply because the form of the argument that they are presented with is false. Truth should be accepted because it is truth, even if its presentation is faulty.

Examples:

- "I believe that the Empire State Building is 1250 feet tall because that is what the brochure said." (*this is an appeal to authority*)
- "Everyone I have ever met has said that the moon reflects the light of the sun." (*this is an appeal to popularity—one could also argue for a Bandwagon fallacy here*)
- "I do not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity because many of the people who articulated that doctrine were corrupt." (*this is a genetic fallacy*)

Notes:

Real Life Example:

The Genetic Fallacy

Proper Name: Genetic Fallacy

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: This fallacy rejects a premise or a conclusion on the basis of who it comes from. In other words, I don't trust him, so nothing that comes from him could be seen as being true. Yet, even the Devil operates in half-truths. While good sources sometimes produce wrong conclusions, often bad sources can produce some accurate conclusions. Similar to C.S. Lewis' Bulverism (mentioned under the Fallacy of a Personal Attack), it argues on the basis of the source and not on the strength of the argument.

Sometimes a Genetic fallacy does just the opposite and accepts a premise on the basis of who is saying it—thus children often believe in Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy because their parents are telling them that one or the other exists. The belief is a form of Genetic Fallacy, though it is probably more accurately an appeal to a false authority.

Examples:

- “The Christian can learn nothing from reading Plato because Plato was a pagan.”
- “The Bible is so old that it cannot be trusted.” (*this is also known as Chronological Snobbery*)
- “I am not going to support a bill proposed by that candidate, he is a (insert political party of your choice).”

Notes:

Real Life Example:

The Fallacy of an Irrelevant Appeal

Proper Name: Irrelevant Appeal

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: Oftentimes we appeal to sources outside of ourselves or of our experience to make an argument. In principle, this is not wrong, and rather, typically is necessary to prove a point. Yet, sometimes the appeal is improper or used deceptively to win an argument and make one's position appear stronger.

Examples:

- **An Appeal to Authority:** If both people in the discussion do not agree that the authority appealed to is reliable, then the argument falls flat. For example, I cannot try and convince someone about the atoning work of Christ on the Basis of the Bible until the person I am speaking with trusts the reliability of the Bible.
- **An Appeal to Consequences:** This is where I try and sway your opinion on a position on the basis of the consequences of holding that belief—trying to convince someone to become a Christian because of the consequence of possibly going to Hell is a form of appeal to consequences.
- **An Appeal to Pity:** This form of argumentation essentially appeals to the emotions; the recipient is caused to feel sorry for the situation and as a result becomes more sympathetic to the view. This is extremely common in political circles or when dealing with controversial issues. Instead of dealing with the ethical question of what is right or wrong, one puts a sad example before you to sway your emotions.
- **An Appeal to Tradition or to a Novelty:** These are both forms of Chronological snobbery. Essentially the mindset is if it is old it is good or if it is new it is good. Once again, this does not address the question but instead manipulates the prejudices of an individual. How many “new and improved” signs do we see when we go to the grocery store? How many times have people chosen to attend a particular church or denomination on the basis that it was the church all of their ancestors attended?
- **An Appeal through Force:** In Latin, this is referred to as *argumentum ad baculum*, which translates as, “argument with a cudgel.” This appeal is similar to an Appeal to Consequences, but it carries with it a more immediate threat. The Spanish Inquisition is a great illustration for the nature of this logical fallacy.
- **An Appeal to Popularity:** This is very similar to a Bandwagon Fallacy, except that the appeal tends to be focused more on polls and statistics. Ninety percent of America believes in God, some have argued. Well, so what? Does that mean that I should believe in God? Statistics frequently are manipulated to show a variety of things—all of this is an appeal to popularity.
- **An Appeal to Poverty or Wealth:** The idea is that because the wealthy believe this or because the poor believe this, it must be the right thing to believe. Not only is this a fallacy, it also propagates class stereotypes and prejudices and causes more damage than we might expect.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Real Life Example:

The Moralistic & Natural Fallacies

Proper Name: *Moralistic Fallacy & Natural Fallacy*

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: Sometimes, things aren't what they ought to be. A moralistic fallacy is when one assumes that because something is moral or right, such is the way it always is. In contrast, a natural fallacy is when one assumes that because things do operate in a certain way, then things ought to do so in other contexts.

The 18th century British philosopher, David Hume, emphasized this point to its logical extreme arguing that you can never derive an "ought" from an "is" or visa versa. This is what logicians call "Hume's Guillotine." Hume, as you may have guessed, was not a Christian, thus had a motive to try and eliminate "oughts" from philosophical discourse. "Ought" implies obligation and an authority outside of the person; such is not consistent with atheism and secularism. What Hume ended up doing was to refer to "oughts" as simply conventional habits that had no inherent meaning of their own. Ultimately, in his thinking, he overlooked the fact that these fallacies are informal and not formal fallacies; thus they do not invalidate an argument even if they might weaken it.

Examples:

- Assuming that a car won't hit you if you are walking in a crosswalk is an example of a moralistic fallacy.
- Assuming that your friend won't cheat at a game to beat you is an example of a moralistic fallacy.
- Holding that because the wilderness follows the principle of the survival of the fittest, men also ought to do so is a naturalistic fallacy.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Not a Cherry Cobbler

The phone book had 14 listings for people who resoled shoes—more than I had hoped...did not think that there was much of a business for that kind of thing. Then again, if President John F. Kennedy was willing to wear resoled shoes on the day he was shot, why not our stiff? Then again, Kennedy's were worn; these were not. So off to find me some cobblers to talk to.

And run around I did; by the time I found the guy I was looking for I was considering having my own shoes given a new sole—hey, born again shoes...go figure. The man in question was one William Smythe: "Willie's Shoe Repair: New Life for Weary Soles"... How clever.

Willie was a small man—in height at least, if not in the waist, with thin strands of hair combed across his bald brow. The old leather smock gave him away, though the rest of his appearance did little to flatter his dull looks. His vocabulary did not do much to help matters either—especially accompanied by the little bits of spit protruding from his sloppy little mouth. His already bulbous eyes became saucers and his demeanor became sour when I showed him the shoes.

"Where did you get these." The man snorted as he grabbed them with stubby fingers.

"I was hoping you might tell me," I returned.

He eyed me with obvious distrust. "What're you talking about. This is good work—best that you will find. I even cleaned out the stains and scuffing from the leather. A good job I did, and that moron flat stiffed me—grabbed them right out of my hands! When I tried to take them back, he nearly broke my nose. Sorry ape, caught me by surprise; I was a boxer, you know. If I get my paws on him...got a crowbar with his name on it behind the counter, too. I'll teach him to come in at closing time and then stiff me two hours later after a rush job. Bah...

I let the man calm down for a minute, though I was starting to connect the dots through his rambles, and asked, "so he came in last night at closing time?"

All of a sudden it was as if a little light went off inside the man's greasy skull. "Did I do something wrong? I'm just trying to earn a dime...I do good work...why are you asking me these questions?"

"Just answer the question, what time is closing time?"

"6:00"

"So he dropped the shoes off at 6:00, said he had a rush job, and you agreed to stay late and do them. Is that right?"

"Yes..." Willie scratched his head for a minute with stained hands and looked at me. "I'm gonna get the shoes back, right."

"Sorry, they are case evidence."

"No! I did the work; I got stiffed; I get to sell the shoes! That's the way it is done!"

"Not really, not at least in cases like these..."

"That's not right," he demanded. "I am out time and money and supplies, I *ought* to be able to get my money out of those shoes."

"It doesn't matter what you think 'ought' to be taking place," I asserted, "what *is* taking place is that these *are* case evidence in a murder trial, and thus I *am* taking them

with me when I leave.” And just to make my point clear, I finished, “And now you *will* come down to the station with me and describe this man you saw last night to a sketch artist, and he *will* draw us a picture so that we can see what he looks like. Capiche?”

Willie snorted, I guess that I should not have expected much better...such is life. “One more thing,” I said as Willie began to pack up, “you don’t happen to have a security camera or a receipt with his signature or handwriting on it?”

“Cash sale and no, never needed to have a camera...”

“Just asking.”

It’s funny how often I get people crying about what ought to be or about what ought not to be in this line of business. Things in reality are rarely what they ought—at least what they ought in most people’s minds. What actually “is” tends to be far harsher and colder than most people are comfortable with—like a steel blade coming into contact with fired clay...something is going to break...and it won’t be the steel.

Anyway, I got ol’ Willie set up with a forensic artist and then it would be time for me to get over to the vic’s house, see what I could turn up beyond what the typical investigators would see. I decided not to tell Willie that his little shoe shop would soon be the home of a forensic team looking for bits of what he cleaned off those shoes...what he doesn’t know now won’t hurt him and it will keep my drive to the station a little more calm.

Then again, what is it about these shoes. If these were his, it would bump up the time of death significantly. Yet, they couldn’t be his because they were the wrong size. Then whose were they...did they belong to the ape? Was there something on the shoes that would tell me a story? Maybe. But I was beginning to feel like I had been thrown a red herring...

The Red Herring Fallacy

Formal Name: Irrelevant Thesis

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: This fallacy comes from training dogs for fox hunting. Essentially, in fox hunting, a fox would be caught and then let loose with dogs chasing it and people on horseback chasing after the dogs. When training a dog to chase a fox, red herrings, a particularly strong smelling fish, would be dragged across the path of the scent of the fox. The principle is to train the dog not to be distracted by the stronger odor.

In argumentation, a tactic that people often use is that of throwing out a red herring—a distraction that is irrelevant to the discussion at hand—with the aim of throwing their opponent off on a tangent. Sometimes Red Herrings also take other forms, like an appeal to pity or attacking the person.

Examples

- In a debate on evolution, the person attacks Christians, saying that their only goal is to convert people. There may be some truth in this statement, but it distracts from the real issue at hand, that of whether evolution is a legitimate theory based on the evidence.
- Recently I had a debate with a homosexual man about the legitimacy of same-sex marriage. He argued that to legalize same-sex marriages would “increase the happiness of society...” When I posed the question of why “happiness” had anything to do with a discussion on morality, he immediately called me a bigot and narrow-minded. Even if I were bigoted and narrow minded, that has nothing to do with the question at hand.
- Flattery is often employed as a form of Red Herring, centering the focus on the person and not on the question at hand.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

The Fallacy of a False Analogy

Formal Name: False Analogy

Division: Fallacy of Relevance

Explanation: We use analogies all of the time to understand things that are bigger than we are—for example, when we think of the city in which we live, we do not think of the whole of the city, but usually representative images come to mind (special places, a church, or a school, perhaps). This is especially true when we are speaking of infinite and eternal matters, like God and his character. Ultimately, though, even the best analogies break down because they are finite. Yet, just because an analogy breaks down does not invalidate the truth to which it points.

Yet, at times people will set up a false analogy to make an argument look stronger than it really is. That is where analogies move from being useful tools to being fallacious argumentation.

Examples:

- People often argue that evil is nothing more than a privation of good. At first this analogy sounds good, but think of the ramifications of this analogy: since God is the source of all goodness, does that mean that God is somehow absent when evil things happen to his people?
- The “Watchmaker Analogy” is one that Christians also point forward to argue for a designed universe. Yet, a watchmaker’s job is complete when the watch is complete; is this what we want to be saying about the character of God?
- One analogy for the Trinity is that of the egg—three parts (yolk, white, and shell) but one egg. Yet, the parts are separable and the two inner parts are easily mixed together into a single blend. Each part also has distinct characteristics that the other parts do not have. This is not the doctrine of the Trinity, but a form of tritheism.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Worksheet:

Please **identify** the following Informal Logical Fallacies and briefly **explain why** they are fallacious.

1. "Look, you haven't been given a ticket for speeding yet, don't sweat it, you won't be given one now."
2. "If you weren't a Christian, you would be able to think rationally about these issues."
3. "You like celery in vegetable soup, why not plain?"
4. "We can't do things that way, we have never done that before."
5. "Nine out of ten people said that they preferred Coke over Pepsi."

6. “Look, Donald Trump made all of his money by doing these things, why shouldn’t I?”

7. “Christians should not have to obey the laws because they were just made by corrupt politicians.”

8. “Surely you Christians cannot really think that you are monotheistic; one plus one plus one equals three. You have three gods, not one.”

9. The Police Officer: “Ma’am, may I please see your driver’s license, registration, and proof of insurance.”

Driver: “Did I do something wrong, officer?”

10. “If you act out again, I am going to make your life miserable.”

A Man's Home is...Well, it is a stuffy old Apartment

I found the vic's apartment without too much grief, though the landlady was in no mood to answer questions in a friendly way—seems that I interrupted her “ladies fellowship” from church, though it didn't look like much more than a bridge club, just later in the afternoon.

Apparently, Warner was divorced, no kids, not interested in much of a social life, was quiet, paid on time, and had lived in the apartment without making too much of a fuss for the last 5 years. Not much help there, plus there wasn't a good view between the landlady's apartment and the victim's; someone could easily get in and out without her noticing...neighbors probably don't know much either, but worth knocking on a few doors.

The boys from the crime lab had done their duty, scouring the place for fingerprints, lost buttons, phone messages, and other clues that might be useful in unraveling this mystery. Nothing was too useful in this case, but no surprises there. The answering machine had been recently erased, but that doesn't mean much. The geeks are seeing if they can figure out what was on it before the delete button was pushed.

Out of curiosity I took a look at his shoes. Three pairs in the closet—two cheap pairs of tennis shoes and a pair of work boots—all run of the mill brands, nothing fancy. His Crockett and Jones' would make number four, but a very expensive number four. Again, didn't add up. Why would a hardware salesman even want a pair of \$600 shoes? They just didn't fit with everything else that the man surrounded himself with.

The more I thought about the shoes, the crazier the scenario seemed, so to take my mind off of footwear, I turned my attention to the apartment once more. It was orderly but not what I would call neat—for neat you usually need a woman's touch—that I knew from personal experience. The place was clean enough for most men, but it would never be enough for a lady. Dishes were either in the sink or in the dishwasher—probably lived out of one of the two as there were not too many in the cupboard.

Then I noticed something that stood out—the bathtub was clean. Not that he would have never cleaned his tub, but this was really clean—no soap scum, no ring, no nothing; this tub had been cleaned intentionally and likely not by the man who lived in and cleaned the rest of the house—he would never have bothered with that. Sometimes the best clues lie not in the things that are way out of place, but in the things that are as they should be, but then again, are just a little bit off. Time to get the crime guys back here not just to look at the tub, but to pull out the pipes below—I wanted to see what was left in the water-trap. Maybe there would be some help here after all...

I was on my way out when I walked by the sliding glass door to the porch. Not much of a view, but who really wants a view of downtown anyway. Then something struck me. There was a cigarette but in the corner of one of the plants. Odd...didn't remember the vic having a pack of cigarettes on him and the apartment certainly didn't have the smell of stale smoke, and no, the walls weren't stained by the nicotine either. The killer's maybe? Not likely...too sloppy for this case. Maybe it was a homicidal shoe salesman...unlikely. Was there someone else in this picture? Wounds in the house of a friend, indeed... What interesting things will fall out of place next? Oh, be still my heart...

Accent Fallacies

Proper Name: Accent Fallacy

Division: Fallacy of Ambiguity

Explanation: When we speak, we naturally accent words or phrases to make our point. Yet sometimes, if the emphasis is misunderstood or placed in the wrong area, this can lead to a great deal of confusion. Sometimes, we may intentionally place our emphasis on other parts of a statement for the purpose of misleading someone else, while not lying in the most technical sense.

Examples:

- “You will be fortunate to have Jim come and work for you.” We have seen this earlier on when we spoke of defining terms—would you be fortunate to have Jim on your team of employees or should you consider yourself fortunate if Jim actually works once he is made a part of your team of employees.
- “I can imagine him doing that...” Think about the word imagine. At first, most people would read this statement as an affirmation that the speaker thinks the person in question would do x, y, or z. Yet, if you emphasize the word “imagine” in a sarcastic way, one has just the opposite response, for it conveys that imagination is the only way you can see this person doing said thing.
- Oftentimes tone is very difficult to convey in an email or other form of written communication where body language or intonation of words is erased from the equation—hence the common misinterpretation of such mediums, usually for the negative.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

The Fallacy of Equivocation

Proper Name: Equivocation

Division: Fallacy of Ambiguity

Explanation: This fallacy is committed when a single term is used with different senses in the debate. We have already discussed the importance of defining terms, this fallacy further emphasizes that point.

Examples:

- Jesus said that we are to worship in “spirit and truth.” Since alcoholic beverages are referred to as “spirits,” then does that imply we are to worship while intoxicated?
- “Since cod oil comes from cod and olive oil comes from olives, baby oil must come from babies.”
- In a funny sense, this is the fallacy that puns are made of: “Do you know that some snakes cannot multiply? They are Adders.”

Notes:

Real Life Example:

The Bunkie

As the techies headed back to the vic's apartment, my next stop was to go downtown and check out where Warner worked...see where he stood with his co-workers; maybe this was an inside job or a matter of territory...unlikely, but then again, some people will do anything for a buck—or for a thicker slice of the pie.

J.G. Davidson Supplies is a contractor's warehouse that supplies most of the construction companies in the area—seems our friend Warner was one of their reps. When I got downtown I surveyed the fenced in lot—a goodly-sized warehouse, two tractor trailers pulled into bays, likely unloading as they were not marked with Davidson's logo—that was reserved for several smaller trucks and a flatbed. One unmarked extension van was parked at the bay closest to the office...probably a small contractor. Two box trailers were parked at the back of the lot by some roll-away dumpsters—probably there for storage. No portable tension crushers in sight...

I walked into the dingy, grey building, the office door being to the left of the long loading dock. The office was pretty quiet, but I wouldn't expect much different in the afternoon; most of their business probably takes place between six and eight in the morning when the worker-bees head out of their hives. Boxes of nails, studs, trowels, and other odds and ends lined the shelves like a Roman phalanx, straight and square and well supplied—somebody has cleaned up after the morning rush; perhaps their records would be as orderly as their shelves. Not likely, model homes usually have termites.

The lady nestled behind the desk paid little attention to me until I approached her with my badge...funny the affect that has on people.

"What'cha want?" were the first words from her lips. I suppose that verbal eloquence is not high on the list of qualifications when you spend your days dealing with contractors and construction types. I guess you could call her pretty, but not in a glamorous or elegant way; she was probably used to holding her own against men twice her size.

"Hello to you, too." I responded with no small amount of sarcasm. "Where's your boss, I need to talk to him—police business."

I wasn't sure if the "police business" registered in her mind or whether her slow response was just a matter of irritation or boredom, but eventually she went back into an office and after about five minutes she returned with an older man grumbling behind her. He was about five foot seven, overweight but still with some strength to his muscles, and had lost most of his hair on the top. By the way he carried himself, opening this supply distributorship had been his way of hanging up his own tools before his body gave out on him—this warehouse would probably buy him a fair retirement...good for him, a lot of tradesmen never get this far. Of course, his body was paying the price of working in a chair instead of on a job site—that and too many fried chicken lunches and beers on the weekend.

What he said, though, surprised me.

"I guess you found my other salesman." Is what came in a quick staccato.

"Excuse me?" I replied having been caught off guard.

"I read the paper this morning and saw that someone killed Lewis Warner. Bill Kirkpatrick was supposed to be staying with him. When Kirkpatrick didn't show up for work this morning, I figured that someone capped him as well. Look, Mister..." he

looked down at the badge that I had been holding out in my hand, “Look, Mister Justice, I ain’t gonna get all sappy about this, but I am down two good salesmen right now, so I’ve got my hands full; if you need something, try and make it quick, I don’t have time for a Colombo routine.”

A second person at Warner’s house—things were about to get very interesting.

“Was this Kirkpatrick a smoker?”

“Most of my salesmen are,” was the quick response, “Warner is one of the few that I have who doesn’t. I think he had a dad who died of lung cancer or something—made an impression on him and was always telling us to quit. He could be a real pain about it; everybody has to have their vice.”

That might place Kirkpatrick at Warner’s apartment, but where was he now?

“Did Kirkpatrick have a family?”

“A wife, two or three kids, I don’t know for sure, he has pictures in his office.” Was the manager’s reply. “Word is that Bill’s marriage was on the rocks, he and his wife had decided to separate, and since Lewis had space, Bill was going to stay with him for a while. I don’t know what they were messed up in, but it can’t be good, seeing what it earned him.”

“And no one’s heard from Kirkpatrick?”

“When he did not show up, I tried the house, but his wife wasn’t too cooperative. She thinks that he has a girlfriend on the side, but if that is the case we are clueless. Around here, if you don’t show up for work, you better have a good reason or you won’t be drawing a check for much longer. Anything else, I have calls to make.”

“One more thing...can I have your permission to look through their files?”

“Help yourself, just don’t make a mess of things. I have to find salesmen to cover those accounts.”

When I saw the offices, more like closets with a computer and a window and an avalanche of papers and sticky-notes, I realized that I should have packed a picnic supper. I knew that I needed to have someone stop by and talk to Kirkpatrick’s wife because I would be stuck here for a while...a long while. I stepped into Kirkpatrick’s office to make the call when I saw the picture...or not so much the picture, but the shoes Kirkpatrick was sporting in almost every picture. I might be wrong, but those looked an awful lot like our Crockett and Jones’. I called the precinct and told them to send a detective here. I would leave the joys of figuring out these boys’ accounts to someone else; the conversation with the wife was a conversation that I wanted to have...personally.

The Straw Man Argument

Proper Name: Straw Man

Division: Fallacy of Ambiguity

Explanation: This is one of the most familiar of the logical fallacies, at least by name, though it is not always well understood. Essentially a Straw Man is a tactic where one person deliberately misrepresents the view of another party with the intent of knocking the view down. It can be very effective in a debate if people do not recognize it, but it is a dishonest approach none-the-less.

Examples:

- One common claim that Muslims make against the doctrine of the Trinity is that since God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and $1+1+1=3$, the doctrine of the Trinity must be false since it teaches $1+1+1=1$.
- Many Christians reject the doctrine of Total Depravity on the basis that we are not as bad as we can possibly be—we can always be worse.
- Many people reject the idea that before a person becomes a Christian, all they can do is sin on the basis that they see many non-Christians doing some kind and benevolent things.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Fallacies of Ambiguity Worksheet:

Please ***identify*** the following Informal Logical Fallacies and briefly ***explain why*** they are fallacious.

1. "I do not go to church because Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites."

2. Frank: "So, Bill, do you believe in God?"
Bill: "Sure, of course I believe in God...God is everywhere and in everything."

3. "What is wrong with you, you would never have chosen to do that if your head were screwed on properly!"

4. There is a story that someone once asked Mark Twain whether he believed in infant baptism, his response was: "Believe in it, heck, I've seen it!"

5. "Things have never been the same since Harrison left our school."

The Great Knock

It was closing in on supper, so I decided to stop for a quick burger on the way over to Kirkpatrick's house. The greasy spoon was beginning to fill up when I got there, but cops get privileges that truckers don't get—at least here. Rosie anticipated my regular order almost as soon as I walked in the door and almost by the time I sat down she slid a plate of cardiac arrest in front of me along with a coffee and a coke.

"Anything else, hotshot," she said, staring at me from behind eyes that told a story of a hard life and a nametag that was as faded as her uniform. This place has been her life for too many years and it would probably be my death if I kept eating like this.

"No, this is good," I said, looking down at the burger and fries on my plate. Most people don't like the "atmosphere" of places like this; I guess that I have become a connoisseur of joints like this. Not the Ritz, but better than home cooking...or at least better than my home cooking.

It wasn't long after I sat down that I got the call... Apparently one Bill Kirkpatrick had been pulled out of the bay, his bloated body was sighted by a fisherman—not quite what was supposed to be meant by "fishers of men." I told them that I would collect the wife for a positive ID. So much for a sit-down meal. I signaled to Rosie that I would need a "to-go" box and hung up the phone. It would be another long night.

One thing that did seem odd, though, was how fast Kirkpatrick surfaced in the bay. Given the cool weather and cold rain, it should have taken at least a week or so to surface. If our time of death for Warner was right then the time of death for Kirkpatrick would have been about the same time or slightly after, placing it barely two days ago. In the heat of summertime, maybe that was enough time, but not now, not unless he did not die in the drink of the bay. The autopsy would have to tell more of that story...clues were coming to the surface—literally!—but they were not lining up neatly. I headed for my car.

I arrived at the Kirkpatrick house about 6:30, but found it dark. I knocked on the door but got no answer. I knocked louder, but no one responded. I checked the door knob...it was unlocked. I slowly edged the door open and called out, "Hello! Police! Mrs. Kirkpatrick!" I was greeted only with silence and the very slight echo of my own voice in the empty foyer. I turned on a light and was greeted by the sight of a mess. Someone had ransacked the place. Everything that once had been standing had been knocked over or overturned. This was no robbery, they were looking for something...or someone... But where was that someone? Time to put the crime lab boys back to work...

Time for me to return home to knock off a couple of Zzzzzzs while the techies do their work.

Affirming the Consequent

Proper Name: Affirming the Consequent

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: This fallacy reflects the following flow of logic: If A is true then B must also be true; therefore, if B is true, A is also true. Essentially, the break in logic exists by a failure to recognize that more than one element might bring about “B,” thus it presumes a conclusion that may or may not be true.

Examples:

- If you want to get an “A” on a research paper for Mr. Groseclose, then you probably ought to have him proofread it for you ahead of time. Therefore, if you had it proofread, you are guaranteed an A.
- If Jessica wanted to get Julia in trouble, she would need to talk to the principal about her. Jessica was talking to the principal about Julia which means that Jessica must want Julia to get into trouble.
- If Dan told Shannon about the secret I told him, soon everyone at the school would know about it. Everyone now knows my secret so Dan must have told Shannon about it.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

An Argument from Ignorance

Proper Name: Argument from Ignorance

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: This is sometimes referred to as an “Argument from Silence,” and represents the affirmation of a point as fact because there is no evidence to disprove it. In many cases, these arguments may very well be true, it is just that it cannot logically be proven one way or the other. This can work the other way around as well, for one also cannot totally reject an argument on the basis of a lack of proof, either.

Examples:

- The argument for the Baptism of children is often made on the basis of the household baptisms that take place in the Book of Acts (Acts 16:15,33; 18:8; also 1 Corinthians 1:16). Yet, the question as to whether these households had small children is unsolvable; we cannot know as the Scripture does not tell us. Thus, to make an argument either for or against infant baptism from this passage is fallacious.
- For several hundred years there have been some people who claim that there is a monster in Loch Ness in northern Scotland, yet there is not any conclusive evidence to support or refute the claim. Many people have claimed observing “something,” but what that “something” is that they observed

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Night Shift

It has been said that the boys who work the night shift are the real heroes of the day. I was hoping that this was the case after I awoke from a much needed night's rest. Caffeine just wasn't working like it used to—either that or I was getting older than I used to be...funny how that works.

I checked in by phone about 7:00am to see how things were going. Not much had turned up in Warner and Kirkpatrick's offices. Warner did lease a portable concrete crushing machine to one John Haldane of Haldane construction which was doing a rebuilding project downtown...a likely candidate for a murder site. I asked the detective doing the research if he could get me a list of personal contacts off of Kirkpatrick's computer. He said he would email that to me at the precinct.

The coroner's had finished their autopsy of Kirkpatrick. They ruled the death as a drowning, but the water in his lungs was not that of the bay...too clean. No chlorine, so not a swimming pool either. I was putting puzzle pieces together while they talked, I guessed that it might be the bath tub at Warner's. I asked about the quick rise to the surface. They said that the original maceration of the skin indicated that he probably died in fairly hot water. Also, there was a froth cone in tact, indicating that the body had died prior to being dropped in the bay. Warner's tub was going to be the next best candidate. This was confirmed when I got the call from techs looking into the water trap of the tub in the apartment and they found residue of bleach as well as a little bit of blood caught on the hair and whatnot in the trap. The M.E. said that there was also soft tissue damage on the larynx, which implied a struggle. Interesting...

The final piece of the puzzle fell into place when the techies were able to restore the message on the answering machine. The message probably contained some of Warner's final words as the message was cut off. It was recorded about 5:00 the evening of the murder and took less than 30 seconds...

"Bill! Bill! Answer the phone, man!" Warner's voice desperately said. "Get out of there, go, run! I saw Haldane pay off someone—overheard something about government contracts...Bill, pick up, I know you are there—it looked like Melton...Mayo..."

The line went dead, but the last word was clear enough to make out... "Mayor." If Warner had stumbled upon a political bribe, there is motive for murder. When I got into the precinct, I called the phone company and checked the phone log from the Kirkpatrick house. A phone call came into the house about 5:15 pm that lasted only about 3 minutes. A phone call was then made immediately afterwards to an area about 90 miles outside of the city. I cross referenced that number with the numbers in Kirkpatrick's phone directory and found that the number belonged to a "Sarah Bowlin"—perhaps a friend or a relative, not sure, but would soon find out. I figured that a drive would help clear the muddle of my mind anyway.

Circular Reasoning

Proper Name: Circular Reasoning

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: Often, when people make their arguments, they end up including their conclusion as one of the premises, thus assuming what it is trying to prove in the first place). One might argue that at some very basic, presuppositional level, all logic ends up being circular, for some authority is appealed to. Even so, circular reasoning ought not flow from even our most basic circular presuppositions. Ultimately, in circular reasoning, if one rejects the conclusion, they have also rejected the premise and the argument fails.

Examples:

- “Evolution demands a very old earth. Evolution is true; therefore, the earth is very old.”
- “The Bible claims to be God’s word. Everything the Bible says is true, therefore, the Bible is God’s word.
- “Women have the right to choose whether or not to have an abortion; therefore, abortion should be allowed.” (this is also a Moralistic Fallacy)

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Complex Question Fallacy

Proper Name: Complex Question

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: This fallacy arises when one asks a leading question that is based on a questionable assumption. Thus, any answer that the person gives will validate the assumption. This fallacy is related to the “False Dilemma Fallacy.”

Examples:

- “Statistics show that 85% of people break the speed limit when they drive and the other 15% simply won’t admit to it; which category do you fit into?”
- “Are you ever going to admit that you are wrong?”
- “Have you stopped cheating on your assignments?”

Notes:

Real Life Example:

The Cum Hoc Fallacy

Proper Name: Cum Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: This Latin phrase literally means: “Together with this; therefore, on account of this.” Essentially, what this communicates is the idea that if “A” happens along with “B” happening, then “A” must have been the cause of “B.” The problem with this line of thinking is that two things can go together without one being the cause of another.

Examples:

- “My great grandfather ate bacon every day, cooked with lard, and he lived to be 93 years old. Therefore, I should be able to eat in the same way.”
- Many people argue for a “Rule of Three,” which holds that bad things happen in groups of three. Yet, that is superstition, not fact, as bad things happen in groups of one, two, four, and five as well. Thus, because two bad things have happened, assuming that a third is soon to come is a Cum Hoc fallacy.
- There is such a thing as a “Self-Fulfilling Prophecy” in discussions of psychology. Essentially the premise is that someone tells themselves that they are unable to do a particular task and then when they fail at the task, they say, “see.” Yet one’s telling oneself that he or she cannot do a task may have an influence on their attitude, but it has no impact on their ability. Thus it is a Cum Hoc fallacy.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

The False Dilemma Fallacy

Proper Name: Bifurcation

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: This is a situation where someone is given only two options to choose from when a third is available. These dilemmas are usually designed to lead a person into affirming something that they do not hold, much like a Complex Question, and one should be careful when False Dilemmas arise, for their authors typically have a motive for leading you down such a path.

Examples:

- “Either the universe was brought into existence by God or it came to be out of nothing.” While these are two different positions, this either-or statement does not include the possibility that our universe might have been created by aliens or that it could have eternally existed.
- “You are either for us against us in this war.” Such a statement rules out the legitimate possibility of remaining neutral in a political sense.
- Though inconsistent use of a term or idea is in itself a fallacy, some people accuse Christians of forcing a False Dilemma upon them (for example when discussing the idea of absolute morality) when they are perfectly content in being inconsistent in their logic and life.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Hasty and Sweeping Generalizations

Proper Name: Hasty Generalization / Sweeping Generalization

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: Hasty generalizations posit a norm on the basis of an exceptional case, oftentimes assuming a norm based solely on a single example. In contrast, a sweeping generalization is one where a very general statement is applied to every particular instance.

Examples:

- I have a personal dislike for horseback riding, but that dislike is based solely on two occasions on horseback. My dislike is really a Hasty Generalization.
- Some Christians will base an argument for female leadership in the church on the fact that Deborah was a female judge. Yet, Deborah was the only female judge in ancient Israel, thus this particular line of logic is a Hasty Generalization.
- In contrast, there are some Christians who would argue that because later Christian writers seem to emphasize male leadership in the church, that Deborah could not have been in a position of spiritual authority in ancient Israel. This line of argumentation is a Sweeping Generalization.
- Typically, I do not like Comedy or Romantic movies (or any combination thereof—if it doesn't have guns, bombs, or martial arts, it isn't much of a movie! ☺), but it would be a Sweeping Generalization for me to arbitrarily write off a romance or a comedy based on this generalization.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

“No True Scotsman” Fallacy

Proper Name: No True Scotsman

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: This is a fallacy where exceptions to the rule are simply dismissed as inapplicable or written off (a form of ad hominem argument). Essentially a rule is given and it is assumed that anything that might seem counter to the rule is of no consequence. This is similar to a Sweeping Generalization but different in that while a Sweeping Generalization simply assumes a principle has no exceptions, the ‘No True Scotsman’ Fallacy rejects it as even an exception to the rule.

Examples:

- “All Scotsman like Hagus; Angus is a Scotsman who does not like Hagus; therefore, Angus must not be a *true* Scotsman.
- There was a saying when I was in High School that “Real Men don’t Eat Quiche.” The logic is that if you find a man eating quiche, he must not be a *real* man.
- Atheists often accuse Christians of using this fallacy when Christians speak of not being able to lose saving faith, for when examples of people who walk away from the faith are brought up, Christians typically respond that they must not have been *genuine* believers. What the atheist fails to recognize is that saving faith is not generated from within, but is given from above, thus as we cannot see the heart, we cannot absolutely tell a *genuine* Christian from one who may be having an emotional response to something said. Jesus told a parable that illustrates this truth: (Matthew 13:3-9,18-23).

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Post Hoc Fallacy

Proper Name: Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: Literally this phrase means, “After this, therefore, because of this.” This fallacy refers to an assumption that is made that because “x” happens to follow “y” then “y” causes “x.” Yet, a succession in time does not demand a causal connection. It is very closely related to the Cum Hoc fallacy with the difference being the presence of a temporal succession in the Post Hoc fallacy.

Examples:

- It has been found that people with high IQs tend to live longer than people who have lower IQs. Yet it does not follow that the presence of a high IQ will bring a long life.
- There are some people who avoid hospitals because, “people die in hospitals.” Just because someone dies in a hospital does not mean that the hospital caused their death.
- Superstitions largely fall into this category, just because you walk under a ladder and then something bad happened does not mean that the walk under the ladder caused the bad event (unless you bumped the ladder and the man on the ladder fell on top of you—then the bad event needs to be connected to your clumsiness, not to the action of walking under a ladder.

Notes:

Real Life Examples:

After This, then Everything Hits the Fan

The drive into the country was not as productive as I had hoped, but I started putting a timeline together. For some reason, Warner was at the Haldane construction site about 5:00 pm on the night of his murder. It was a classic case of being at the right place at the wrong time, and he witnessed something that he shouldn't have seen and likely got spotted. He called his friend, Kirkpatrick, who happened to be staying at his apartment that night because his wife had kicked him out.

Kirkpatrick did not hear the phone so the answering machine picked up and hence the message. Either Kirkpatrick wasn't there, or...no, or Kirkpatrick was on the deck smoking, hence the cigarette butt in the planter. Kirkpatrick goes in when he is done smoking, probably wondering where his friend is sees the answering machine and listens to the message. He panics, calls his wife to warn her, she flees town with the kids and he seeks to beat feat, likely too late. Haldane holds on to Warner until he is assured that whoever that Warner was talking to is silenced and then later silences Warner...permanently.

I was still confused as to why Kirkpatrick was killed in the bathtub and as to why his shoes were taken, reworked, and then put on Warner. I also wanted to know why Warner was at the job site at closing time, this made little sense to me. And I hoped that Kirkpatrick's widow might be able to shed some light on this for me. Then again, why would I expect her to know anything like this, Kirkpatrick seemed to be the guy at the wrong place at the wrong time...kind of stinks to be him.

I got to Bowlin's place a little before lunch and knocked on the door, this time a tall woman with blond hair answered the door with a suspicious look.

"Mrs. Bowlin?" I said, producing my badge.

"Yes." She replied coolly.

"I am Detective Justice, I am investigating the death of a Bill Kirkpatrick, is Mrs. Kirkpatrick here?"

At the word "death," the woman at the door visibly winced. She was clearly family.

"Yes." She said. "Come in."

I entered the hallway and was escorted to the living room where Mrs. Bowlin indicated that I should sit down while she fetched her "sister." Now the connection was made. Mrs. Kirkpatrick came out several minutes later, clearly distraught, but willing to talk privately. She also brought out a briefcase.

"Ma'am," I said, trying to put on a diplomatic and sensitive face...something that does not come naturally. "Can I ask you some questions?"

"Yes," came the quiet, but guarded reply. "What do you want to know?"

"Can you tell me why your husband was at Warner's apartment? His co-workers said..." She cut me off.

"I know what the co-workers said, and they are wrong, all wrong. Those idiots wouldn't know their right from their left if it weren't written on their sleeves. Sure, we were under a lot of stress, but every couple goes through times like that."

I nodded in agreement; had my own marriage lasted, I would have been more sympathetic.

“Bill and Lewis were spending a lot of time working on a private project to make some money on the side. I don’t know what it was, but they spent a lot of time together on this and did not talk to me about it. Before Bill went over Lewis’ that night...” She started to tear up again...

“Take a breath and take your time,” I encouraged her softly.

“Lewis brought this briefcase by and dropped it off ‘for safe keeping.’”

“Do you know what is in it?” I asked, now much more interested in what she had to say.

“I don’t have the combination.”

“May I see it?” I asked carefully.

She handed me the briefcase, a standard business case with a combination lock by the handle. I removed the Leatherman from my jacket and began to pry the lock with my knife-blade. Eventually, I was able to get the case open.

“What do we have here?” I said to myself as I opened up the case. Within the pouches were numerous pictures of Mayor Melton with Mr. Haldane, several of the pictures where money was clearly passing hands from Haldane to the Mayor. There were also orders of supplies and manifests for building projects that Haldane was involved in as well as newspaper articles reporting how Haldane Construction was winning all of the primary bids to do city re-furbishing projects. When put together, these projects were worth millions of dollars to Haldane Construction.

Then I realized just what was going on that night; Warner hadn’t accidentally been at the wrong place at the wrong time, but he had been trying to blackmail Haldane to get a cut of the action. Obviously Haldane didn’t like that... Kirkpatrick must have been in on it with Warner, hence his involvement and presence at Warner’s apartment. Now, the pieces were finally starting to fall together.

Slippery Slope Fallacy

Proper Name: Slippery Slope

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: A Slippery Slope Fallacy is built on the assumption that if you begin doing one thing, that will lead you down a road to destruction. The reason that it is a fallacy is that it assumes no restraint or self-discipline on the behalf of the individual. It is worth mentioning, though, that there really are some things that are legitimate slippery slopes, so there are some cases where this fallacy can legitimately be used (see below).

Examples:

- Lord Acton (1834-1902) is famous for his statement to Bishop Creighton that “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” While the legitimacy of his statement may be attested to in history, it is still the fallacy of the slippery slope—just because a man is given power does not mean he will be corrupted by it.
- The statement mentioned above is sometimes used by non-Christians, when arguing against the Christian definition of God. They argue that since God has the most absolute power by the Christian definition, he must then be absolutely corrupt. Such a view neglects both the infinite goodness of God as well as the infinite self-discipline of God as they try and set up a slippery slope argument.
- On a more benign level, it is often argued by well-meaning Christians that one should not listen to Rock music because of its potential influence. Yet, just because someone buys an Iron Maiden album does not mean that they will soon turn into a long-haired, head-banging, metal-head (though that sometimes happens).
- For a case where it is legitimate to use a Slippery Slope argument, note a warning against the use of crack cocaine. This drug is so addictive that many people find themselves addicted after only one dose. Thus, to say, “Don’t use crack cocaine” is acceptable while being a logical fallacy.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right Fallacy

Proper Name: Tu Quoque

Division: Fallacy of Presumption

Explanation: Tu Quoque literally means, “You also?” and comes from Suetonius’ record of Julius Caesar’s last words, “Tu quoque, Brute, fili mi” – “You too, Brutus, my child?” Though this is probably not used in logical debate much, it is a fallacy that we find many use in practice. Essentially, this is where one person excuses their wrong action (or thinking) on the basis of someone else who has made the same mistake—“But Emily did it too!” Yet, if something is wrong, it is wrong, and unlike the multiplication of negatives (which makes a positive), two wrongs don’t make a right.

Examples:

- This is a very common fallacy used in politics, for when politicians get caught doing something they are not supposed to be doing, typically, they are not the first politician to make the mistake—only the first to get caught making the mistake. They assume that since the “political game” is played in a certain way, that it is okay for them to do so as well.
- Athletic franchises are known for committing this kind of fallacy. When other franchises begin raising ticket prices, it seems that most of the rest soon follow suit—justifying the increase on the basis that they are consistent with other teams in the league.
- The fallacy of the Irrelevant Appeal to Popularity can often be a form of Tu Quoque fallacy if the “popular” decision or action that is being appealed to is false to begin with.

Notes:

Real Life Example:

Review of Fallacies of Presumption Worksheet

Please **identify** the following Informal Logical Fallacies and briefly **explain why** they are fallacious.

1. “You can’t give me a C! I am an A student!”

2. “I know that you are lying, why won’t you just admit to it?”

3. “Violent crimes in our society are usually committed with guns; therefore, guns cause violent crimes.”

4. “Eating dark chocolate is good for your heart because it is high in anti-oxidants; therefore, since I eat dark chocolate, I must have a good heart.

5. The “Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence” (SETI) spends millions of dollars every year seeking life on other planets even though there is little evidence to support such existence.

6. “You are either for us or against us...”

7. “I think; therefore, I am.”

Epilogue: Playing with Fire and Getting Smoked

Sometimes the facts do more work to reveal the truth than the detective...my job is simply to arrange the facts in a way that the story can be retold accurately. And so it was with this case.

Within the briefcase was enough evidence to arrest Haldane for bribing a political official and to begin impeachment hearings against the Mayor. Warner and Kirkpatrick had been planning on bribing Haldane, but Haldane had his men nab Warner, though not before Warner got off a phone call to Kirkpatrick (at least via an answering machine). Kirkpatrick was on the porch smoking when the call came in, so the answering machine took the call.

The hardest part to piece together is what happened at the apartment, but on further investigation of the apartment, there was some minor evidence of struggle. Kirkpatrick warned his wife to leave town and then gathered his stuff to follow her, but gathered up things too late. By the time he got ready to go, a goon had arrived from a local part of town. As best as I can piece together, Kirkpatrick turned on the shower to make noise and then hid in another room to surprise the goon and probably try and figure out how to help his friend. The struggle ensued and Kirkpatrick lost, dying of suffocation in the bath water he was trying to lure the bad guy into.

Once Kirkpatrick was safely "out of the way," Warner was executed. Both bodies were disposed of with Kirkpatrick becoming "buoyant" sooner than expected because the warm water of the bath. Funny how that happens.

That leaves the shoes...they were simply meant as a red herring...