CHAPTER 7
INFORMAL FALLACIES

A **deductive fallacy** is committed whenever it is suggested that the truth of the conclusion of an argument necessarily follows from the truth of the premises given, when in fact that conclusion does not necessarily follow from those premises. An **inductive fallacy** is committed whenever it is suggested that the truth of the conclusion of an argument is made more probable by its relationship with the premises of the argument, when in fact it is not. We will cover two kinds of fallacies: formal fallacies and informal fallacies. An argument commits a formal fallacy if it has an invalid argument form. An argument commits an informal fallacy when it has a valid argument form but derives from unacceptable premises.

A. **Fallacies with Invalid Argument Forms**

Consider the following arguments:

1. All Europeans are racist because most Europeans believe that Africans are inferior to Europeans and all people who believe that Africans are inferior to Europeans are racist.

2. Since no dogs are cats and no cats are rats, it follows that no dogs are rats.

3. If today is Thursday, then I'm a monkey's uncle. But, today is not Thursday. Therefore, I'm not a monkey's uncle.

4. Some rich people are not elitist because some elitists are not rich.
These arguments have the following argument forms:

(1) Some X are Y
   All Y are Z
   All X are Z

(2) No X are Y
   No Y are Z
   No X are Z

(3) If P then Q
    not-P
    not-Q

(4) Some E are not R
    Some R are not E

Each of these argument forms is deductively invalid, and any actual argument with such a form would be fallacious. There are many other forms that an argument might have that would make it invalid (and thereby fallacious), and it was the purpose of Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 to provide us with procedures for describing and testing the formal validity of argument forms.

One common kind of formal fallacy derives from the use of ambiguous terms. In Chapter 3, we explored how such fallacies derived from a faulty middle term in a syllogism. Thus, “Every lion is ferocious and Haile Sellassie was the Lion of Judah so Haile Sellassie must have been ferocious” has the syllogistic form:

All L are F  (major premise)
All HS are L’ (minor premise)
All HS are F  (conclusion)
The fallacy involves treating L as if it were the same as L', thus suggesting that the argument has the valid form:

All Y are Z
All X are Y
All X are Z

Whenever an ambiguous word or phrase or sentence is used in more than one sense to draw a particular conclusion, we have a fallacy resulting from ambiguity. This pattern is exhibited in the fallacies of Equivocation, Amphiboly, and Accent.

I. Fallacy of Equivocation

A term (i.e., word or phrase) is equivocal if it has different meanings in different contexts. The fallacy of equivocation arises when alternate meanings of the term are used to gain acceptance of the premises and draw the conclusion offered.

Examples:

(1) The rich farmer told the pretty young woman that he would give her everything he had in his banks if she would marry him. She agreed, and after the wedding she did everything to please. Finally, she wanted to know how much was hers, as had been promised. The farmer took her to the river that ran through the middle of his great farm and told her, “Everything you see in those banks is yours. I suppose it's about 20,000 gallons of water a day, all yours.”

(2) No government that is divided can stand. But the U.S. Government is divided into legislative, judicial, and executive branches. So, the U. S. Government cannot stand.

(3) Every kid needs to learn to read and write. Baby goats are kids. Therefore, baby goats need to learn to read and write.
The first example involves an equivocation on the word “bank” and its meaning as: (a) a financial institution for storing and preserving money and valuables, and (b) as the sides of a stream, river, lake, sea or other substantial body of water. Example (2) involves equivocation on the phrase “government that is divided.” The phrase is used initially to suggest the meaning “Government that is divided between warring factions” but afterwards, it is used to mean “government that is divided into branches with different functions.” The final example involves an equivocation on the term “kid,” which is used initially to mean “a young human being”, but subsequently is used to mean "a young goat.”

6. A. 1. Exercise:

Explain how the terms pitcher, bat, bank, spoke, fish, dig, square, bad, could be ambiguous. Try to formulate arguments in which these terms are used ambiguously.

A common way of describing groups is in terms of group averages. But different concepts of averages can be used equivocally to lead to a particular conclusion that in fact does not follow. Thus, suppose firm A has 10 employees where 9 make $10,000 p/y and the president makes $110,000 p/y. The total salary is $2,00,000 for the 10 employees, gives an average salary of $20,000 per employee. The president of a firm can truthfully say that the average salary is $20,000 p/y. The average being used by the president is the mean, which is the total amount paid in salaries divided by the total number of workers. But the mean tells us nothing about how salaries are distributed in firm A. On the other hand, the union will stress that the average salary is 1/11 the salary of the president.

Suppose that firm B has 10 employees, each making $20,000 p/y. B also has a mean salary of $20,00 p/y. but the mean in firm B is much more indicative of what the ‘average’ worker actually earns. The mean, mode and median are different ways of
talking about group averages. The mean salary is the total paid in salaries divided by the number of individuals paid. The modal salary is the salary that most employees make. The modal salary for A is $10,000 p/y. The modal salary for firm B is $20,000, twice the modal salary in A. Yet each has the same average in terms of the mean.

Another way of characterizing a group is in terms of percentages. Equivocation in using percentages occurs when a percentage calculated on one base is used as if it applied equally to a different base. Consider the following examples:

Claim:
A survey showed that people who use Pepodent have 20% fewer cavities. Therefore, if you use Pepodent you will probably have 20% fewer cavities than if you didn’t use Pepodent.

Analysis:
It may be true that Pepodent user’s have 20% fewer cavities on average than non-Pepodent users. But this does not imply that using Pepodent will cause each user to have 20% fewer cavities.

Claim:
People who go to college make 50% more income. Therefore, if you go to college you’ll make 50% more income than if you didn’t go to college.

Analysis:
The class of people who go to college may make 50% more income. But going to college may not lead each graduate to make 50% more than if they had not gone to college.

Claim:
Suppose a merchant spends $9 on merchandise each day that she then sells for $10. Her total sales for the year are $3650. With a profit of $365, this gives her a return (on total sales) of 10%. But with an initial investment of $9 and a final profit of $365, the percentage return (on initial investment) is 500%. The company made 10% return on total sales but a 500% return on initial investment.

Analysis:
The above fallacies involve calculating a percentage on one base, then then applying it to a different base.
6. A. 2. Exercise: Analyse each of the following claims:

Claim:
20% off of list price. A week later, take an additional 30% off. Therefore, customers are receiving a 50% discount. (But in fact, they only have 44% discount.)

Claim:
10% of As are Bs. 10% of Bs are Cs. Therefore, 10% of As are Cs.

Claim:
A makes $10,000 a year and her salary is reduced by 20% to $8,000. A year later her salary is increased by 20%. Therefore, A makes the same as she originally did.

II. Fallacy of Amphiboly
A sentence that has two distinct meanings because of the way it is constructed is called an amphibolous sentence. The fallacy of amphiboly occurs when one meaning of an amphibolous sentence is used to gain acceptance of a premise and an alternative meaning is applied to the conclusion drawn.

Examples:

(1) General Hush said the terrorists must be stopped before rising from his desk. Any person who sincerely believes that people are waiting to arise from inside his desk is mentally ill. Therefore, General Hush is mentally ill.

(2) Mr. A. Don't you agree that all men are not sexist?
Ms. B. Yes.
Mr. A Then, you must be mistaken in describing me as sexist, despite my natural superioriority to women. For what is true of all men must certainly be true of me.

(3) The editor said she would lose no time in reading my manuscript. Therefore, she will probably have read it before this week is over.

In the first example, the statement “Hush said the terrorists must be stopped before rising from his desk” is ambiguous between: (a) a situation in which Hush said “The terrorists must be stopped” before he arose from his desk; and (b) a situation in which Hush said that the terrorists must be stopped before they arose from his desk. Without a doubt, (b)
depicts a rather bizarre state of affairs while (a) is perfectly ordinary. In the second example, the proposition “All men are not sexist” is ambiguous between “Some men are not sexist” and “No men are sexist.” The conclusion of the argument makes use of the second meaning though it is probably the first meaning that leads Ms. B to accept the ambiguous statement as a premise. In the third example, the locution “X will lose no time in doing Y” is ambiguous between “X will not do Y” and “X will begin doing Y immediately.”

III. Fallacy of Accent

When interpretations of a statement can be changed by placing emphasis on different syllables or terms in the statement, the statement is accent-ambiguous. The fallacy of accent is committed when one interpretation is used to gain acceptance of the premise but a different interpretation is used in drawing the conclusion.

In the following examples, the statement, “I believe that all men are created equal” is ambiguous in at least five different ways, depending on what word is accented in using the statement as a premise.

(1) I believe that all men are created equal. However, that does not require that you believe that all men are created equal. Therefore, you are not obligated to practice non-discrimination as I do.

(2) I believe that all men are created equal. However, what I believe need not be the case. Therefore, it may be that in fact all men are not equal.

(3) I believe that all men are created equal. But this certainly does not extend to women. Therefore, I oppose the Equal Rights Amendment to the constitution. The Founding Fathers didn’t believe women were equal to men either.

(4) I believe that all men are created equal. But once their creation is finished, some men work harder than others. The social equalities we see between men are no more created by God than the mighty skyscrapers we see as we drive through our nation’s capital. But just because God didn’t
create skyscrapers during the six days he took to create the solar system, that doesn't mean that we should therefore destroy them. And neither should we destroy social inequalities.

(5) I believe that all men are created equal. That means that no person has a right to certain kinds of opportunity that other people do not have an equal right to. Therefore, I believe that if a man can be operated on so that he is implanted with a functional womb, then he should be allowed the opportunity to give birth to a baby.

B. Category Fallacies

This group of fallacies - the fallacy of division and the fallacy of composition - involves equivocation between: (a) using a term to refer to a class as a whole and (b) using the term to refer to a member of that class.

The fallacy of division takes what is true of the whole to be true of all the parts. The fallacy of division arises when a concept is used as a collective unit in the premise, then a conclusion (based on the truth of that premise) is drawn in which the same concept is applied to an individual unit of the collection.

(1) America is the richest country in the world. Since you are an American, you must be rich.

(2) Smith has a better basketball team than Wellesley. Mary is a player on Smith's team. Phyllis is a player on Wellesley’s team. Therefore, Mary is a better basketball player than Phyllis.

The fallacy of composition derives from taking what is true of a part to be true of the whole. This is the reverse of the fallacy of division. Here a claim is made about the individual elements of the subject term in the premises, yet a conclusion is drawn in which the claim is applied, not to the individuals, but to the collection as a whole.

(1) Each individual on the team is over 6 feet tall. Therefore, the team is over 6 feet tall. (comment: teams do not have height.)
(2) Each apple in the basket weighs less than a pound. Therefore, the basket of apples weighs less than a pound.

(3) Each of us acting individually can do little to make institutional changes. Therefore, there is very little we can do together to make institutional changes.

(4) All material things are made of atoms and all atoms are invisible to the naked eye. Therefore, all material things are invisible to the naked eye.

6. B. 1. Exercises: Name the fallacy involved in each of the following arguments.

1. You said you'd pay $500.00 for each pound of weed I brought you. Well, I just finished mowing every lawn in the neighborhood and I have 100 pounds of weeds in these green bags. Therefore, you owe me $50,000.

2. Under normal circumstances water placed over a fire in a pan will boil. This fire is in a pan. Therefore, when I put this water over it, the water should boil.

3. Students at Amherst College are only allowed to take five courses per semester. Amherst provides the staff to teach the courses. Therefore, Amherst provides staff to teach five courses per semester.

4. Each member of the Smith basketball team is a high scorer. Therefore, the Smith basketball team will make a lot of high scores this season.

5. Since each soldier in the regiment has been well trained, it follows that the regiment must be a superb fighting unit.

6. Since you said that the food was "sick," we may conclude that you would not recommend that restaurant as having delicious food.

7. The average American family has two and a half children. You are an average American family, therefore, you have two-and-a-half children.

8. The jury was unable to come to a verdict as to whether the defendant was guilty. Therefore each of the jurors was unable to make up his or her mind.

9. Rights within the State should always be balanced by responsibilities to the State. Therefore, those with the most civil rights ought to shoulder most of the responsibilities of government.
10. Rights within the State should always be balanced by responsibilities to the State. Therefore, those who make the least contribution to the State should have the least civil rights.

11. John said that he would give Tom and Mary $5,000.00. John always tells the truth. Therefore John will give Tom $5,000.00.

12. Whooping cranes are becoming extinct. That bird is a whooping crane. Therefore, that bird is becoming extinct.

13. A brick is very small. Therefore, a building made of brick must be very small.

14. Flour tastes horrible. And since it is the main ingredient in bread, bread must taste horrible.

15. Much religious teaching is contained in the Bible. The Bible is a word of five letters. Therefore, much religious teaching is contained in a word of five letters.

16. The Consumer Report says: “We cannot recommend this car too highly.” Therefore, I should not buy that car.

17. The killing of the hunters is regrettable, my neighbor said. Therefore, my neighbor must be against hunting.

18. College graduates make on the whole more money than non-college graduates. Thus, since you are a college graduate and I am not, you must make more money than me.

19. A feather is very light. Therefore, a mountain of feathers is very light.

20. Mr. Senator, individual liberty is not being threatened or abused by the CIA because it authorizes only twenty categories of domestic and international espionage. This is a smaller number than any other country in the world. (The suggestion is that there were only twenty cases of domestic and international espionage carried out by the CIA).

21. Since I lifted each piece of wood that went into making this table, I must be able to lift the table.

22. The boss interviewing an young attractive secretary told her she could expect frequent advances. Therefore, she readily accepted the job.

23. Both hydrogen (H) and oxygen (O) are highly flammable. Therefore, H2O must be highly flammable.

24. The house that you live in is large so it must have large closets.
25. I'm not worried that the six Beasley boys are coming to fight me. I've whipped each of them, so I know I'll be able to whip them again.

C. Fallacies With Valid Argument Forms

Formal fallacies are arguments that are defective because they have invalid argument forms. But while all invalid arguments are fallacious, it is not the case that all fallacious arguments are invalid. Indeed, many fallacious arguments have valid argument forms. For instance, the argument “All dogs are from outer space because all dogs are cats and all cats are from outer space” is fallacious, even though it has a valid argument form. It is fallacious because its premises are unacceptable and therefore do not lead us to accept the conclusion as true. Whenever a conclusion is asserted to have a certain truth-value on the basis of premises that are unacceptable, the argument is unsound and therefore fallacious. Many informal fallacies are a species of unsound arguments. Generally, informal fallacies involve arguments that have faulty premises. Typically, the premises of such arguments are not stated explicitly (enthymemes), and the listener is led to accept them without careful examination. In what follows, we will introduce some of the most common forms of informal fallacies.

1. Appeal to the Person (Ad Hominem)

The fallacy of ad hominem is committed when the conclusion of an argument is rejected, not because of objections to the premises or steps connecting the premises to the conclusion, but because of objections to the character and/or circumstances of the individual presenting the argument. This is illustrated in the following examples:

1a. Mr. A: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to argue that a law requiring the mandatory sentencing of individuals convicted of drug use should not be passed. For such a law would require so much money to implement that we would have to increase taxes and cut back on the school budget, benefits for the elderly, and police and fire protection.
1b. Mr. B: Ladies and gentlemen, you should not accept Mr. A's argument against the mandatory sentencing of criminals convicted of drug use. For Mr. A is a former drug user himself, and is currently free on probation. If we had a mandatory sentencing law, Mr. A would not be here before you tonight.

2a. Mr. C: Everyone should make a sincere effort to become a true Christian because that is the only way we are going to solve the world's problems.

2b. Mr. D: I don't agree with Mr. C because I don't trust anything he says. I've known Mr. C all my life and I know for a fact that he is not a true Christian. He's just a lying hypocrite.

Of course, there is nothing wrong in questioning the reliability or credibility of a person. This is often done by lawyers in courtroom cases. To do so is not to commit the ad hominem fallacy, for the purpose of the questioning is to provide grounds for doubting the truthfulness of the witness. Thus, the following situations must be carefully distinguished:

(3a) Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, you should not accept the arguments of the attorney for the defense, because he is a known liar.

(3b) Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, you should not accept the testimony of this witness because the witness is a known liar.

The statements in (4b) speak to whether certain statements alleged to be true by the witness are in fact true. If a person is known to misrepresent truth for personal gain, psychological release, or whatever reason, then the probability increases that under current circumstances he may be misrepresenting the facts. And if the truth-value of the premises is indeterminate, then the truth-value of the conclusion of that argument is also indeterminate. On the other hand, if there is no question as to the authenticity of all the evidence presented, then it is only to the validity of the argument into which that evidence is incorporated that criticism can be directed. In this case, one must show that the facts do not fit together in one's opponent's argument. It is no good to attack the
character of the opposing attorney, as in (4a). The opposing attorney may be scrupulous in presenting witnesses that tell the truth and a genius at constructing clever arguments, yet be a scoundrel in her personal life.

4a. If A has a bad character then A’s argument should be rejected.
   A has a bad character.
   A’s argument should be rejected

4b. If A has a bad character then A’s argument should be suspect.
   A has a bad character.
   A’s argument should be suspect.

4a is an invalid argument, because an argument cannot be discredited by attacking its maker. An argument can only be challenged on two fronts: the truth-value of its premises and the validity of its form. If the truth of the assumptions proposed is guaranteed by someone whose truthfulness is suspect, then that person's guarantee is suspect. Thus, those assumptions may be considered insufficient to establish the truth of the conclusion in question. The other basis for rejecting the argument is whether the argument form is valid. But the validity of an argument form is independent of the trustworthiness of the maker of the argument, because the validity of an argument form is independent of the actual truth or falsity of the statements that make it up.

The ad hominem fallacy is also committed is in what is called the “You also!” (Tu Quoque) argument. Here, the accused defends herself by charging the accuser of having committed the same act she is being prosecuted for. The erroneous premise of such arguments is that the accused should not be held responsible for doing x if others have done x without being held equally responsible.

(5) Members of the American military should not be prosecuted for killing civilians during the war in Iraq. Al Qaeda has practiced the killing of civilians as part of its holy war tactics. Yet, Al Qaeda sympathizers have not condemned Al Qaeda. So, members of
the American military should not be condemned and punished when others are doing the same thing.

(6) Senator X has accused me of being financed by Big Business. Well, in reply let me point out that much of the money for Senator X’s campaign has come from Big Business.

(7) American presidents defended legalized segregation by pointing out that many other countries violated the rights of certain groups of their own citizens.

Observe that, in the tu quoque (you also!) argument, A argues that B’s accusation about A should be rejected because B is guilty of a similar offense. Thus, attention is redirected from the charge to the maker of the charge. But even if the counter-accusation is true, this does not imply that the original accusation was false. To answer an allegation of misconduct by citing the accuser's similar misconduct is only a means of confusing the issue. What is needed in order to meet an accusation is not a counter accusation, but an argument showing that the accusation being made is unwarranted.

II. Appeal to Authority (Ad Verecundiam)

In this fallacy, reverence for a particular authority is used to gain acceptance of a particular conclusion, without due consideration of the reasons advanced by the authority in support of that conclusion. The corrective to the fallacy of appealing to authority is to examine the argument used by the authority to come to the conclusion in question, and to base our acceptance or rejection of the conclusion on that argument, not merely on our respect for the maker of the argument. Authorities appealed to may be as varied as the Bible, one's parents, respected teachers, newspapers, a popular actor or actress, a sports celebrity and so on. Consider the following examples:

(1) The Pope has declared that from the moment of conception, the fetus is a human being and hence, that abortion is murder. Since the Pope said it, abortion must therefore be murder.

(2) Dr. John Kalk, the noted physician and Nobel Prize winner, says that up until the third month, the fetus has more in common with a monkey than with a human being, and therefore, that abortion prior, to the
third month is not murder. Since Dr. Kalk is a noted scientist, if he
says that abortion is not murder, then it must not be murder.

(3) The president said that it was necessary to relinquish the Panama
Canal in order to maintain stability in Central America. Since he's
the president, he ought to know what's best. So we may conclude that
we should have relinquished the Panama Canal.

Each of these examples has the form:

If authority A says that P is true, then P is true.
Authority A says that P is true.
P is true.

While this is a valid argument, it is not necessarily a sound one. The premise, “If
authority A says that P is true, then P is true” is not always true. Any authority may be
wrong some times. Authorities are called upon when specialized knowledge is required in
order to determine if P is true. If A has such specialized knowledge, then A's opinion
concerning the truth or falsity of P is more likely to be correct than the opinion of persons
not in possession of such knowledge. However, there are often cases where two or more
individuals with equivalent degrees of specialized knowledge nonetheless disagree as to
the truth or falsity of P. When experts disagree, then judges and juries must consider the
evidence, reasons, and arguments of representative experts.

Some further examples of appeal to authority are:

(4) Hyrd station wagons are superior to other brands of station wagons
because Knut Ruckney, football coach of Notre Dame, drives a Hyrd
and says that Hyrd makes the best station wagon in the world.

(5) Doxema is the best shave cream on the market because Eli Kanning, the
well-known quarterback, uses it.

These examples illustrate how the proposition “If authority A says that P is true, then P
is true” is not always true. The fact that Knut Ruckney might be an authority on football
does not mean that he is an authority on automobiles. An authority in one field is not
necessarily an authority in another. Yet, advertising suggests that an authority in one field is equally an authority in another when individuals who excel in one area (sports, music, science, etc.) are asked to testify concerning issues in an entirely different area.

III. **Appeal to Ignorance (Ad Ignorantiuam)**

This fallacy arises when an argument is accepted (or rejected), not as a result of an examination of the relationship between its premises and conclusion, but rather as a result of ignorance of key concepts used in the argument. Because of the need for specialized knowledge, this fallacy is often combined with an appeal to authority.

(1) Amplifier A has 25 KMI per channel. Amplifier B has 40 KMT per channel. They cost the same. Therefore, Amplifier B is the best buy. (more examples needed)

IV. **Appeal to the Mob (Ad Populum)**

This fallacy is committed when an audience is induced to accept a certain conclusion on the basis of appeal to interests, preferences, and values common to the speaker and the audience. Such arguments have the following general form:

If we have the same values and interests, then P is true.  
We have the same values and interests.  
P is true.

Speaker: “Do you want freedom of speech?”  
Crowd: “Yes!”  
Speaker: “Do you want to be ruled by a dictatorship?”  
Crowd: “No!”  
Speaker: “Do you want a decent living?”  
Crowd: “Yes!”  
Speaker: “Then we want the same things. So vote for me and let's make the world safe for democracy.”

Rufus Dufus was caught at the scene of the crime. A good, upstanding woman just like our wives, sisters and mothers, said she was assaulted. Is this what we want for our womenfolk? Is this what we are going to allow our
daughters to face when they grew up. No! We must have law and order and safety for our loved ones. We have to let vicious criminals know that we will not stand for such atrocities. So let's string Rufus up now and set an example that such will not be tolerated in this town.

V. Appeal to Pity (Ad Misericordiam)

Compassion is an important human emotion. It is good and necessary that we should feel concern for the plight of others. But this does not mean that our actions must always be guided by our feelings. Unfortunately, there is often sincere confusion on this point. To illustrate, suppose A is approached by a handicapped beggar and A gives him money. She might explain her action by saying that she was moved by pity to help the beggar. The framework for her action would then be given the following argument:

If I feel pity for x, then I should help x.
I feel pity for x.
I should help x.

This is certainly a valid argument, but not always a sound one. It is possible that she might be moved to feel pity by an imposter. Though she felt pity, it is unlikely that she would help the imposter purely because of what she felt. A more suitable justification for her act of compassion would be:

If I believe x needs help, then I should help x.
I believe x needs help.
I should help x.

If what we believe provides the framework for our actions, then whether we feel pity or not becomes irrelevant to whether we try to provide aid. We may feel pity but believe that help is not needed or we may believe help is needed without feeling pity. Logic encourages us to guide our actions, not merely by our feelings, but by our assessment of the situation and the moral principles we are committed to. The following examples
illustrate situations in which a fallacious appeal to pity is made the basis for accepting a particular conclusion.

(1a) Student:
“Professor, I lost my job last week, my mother became seriously ill, and now it seems that I may not pass your course. If I fail, I don't know if I will be able to stand the strain of all my bad luck. If you have any feelings at all you should give me a passing grade in this course.”

(1b) Professor:
“I sympathize with your bad luck, Ms. Student, but I am prohibited from allowing my feelings about you to influence the grade that I give for this course.”

(2a) Defense:
“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, my client was born in poverty. His father was killed in Iraq and his mother was afflicted with multiple sclerosis when he was three years old. He tried hard to stay in school but was forced to work in order to bring food home to his sick mother. I ask you, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, not to impose yet another burden on my client. I ask you to find him not guilty of the crime he is accused of.”

(2b) Prosecutor:
“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I share with the defense a concern for the misfortunes that the accused has suffered. But that has nothing to do with the actual fact of whether or not he committed the crime he is accused of. All the evidence points to the conclusion that he did commit that crime. Therefore, we are bound by law to find the defendant guilty.”

In example (1b) the professor may believe that the student deserves aid because of her unfortunate situation, but he is expressly forbidden by the code of the university from offering a passing grade as aid. Likewise, the members of the jury in example (2b) may feel compassion for the defendant, but they too are expressly forbidden by the codes of law from acquitting the defendant purely on the basis of their feeling of compassion and
belief that he deserves aid. These examples show how the kind of aid we are allowed to
give is often limited by the codes, principles, and rules governing our social roles. The
professor is prohibited from giving a grade on any criteria except that of classroom
performance. A jury is prohibited from acquitting a defendant on any grounds except
insufficient evidence. The fact that a store clerk feels or believes that the destitute person
outside the store needs help is not a legitimate justification for giving that person
merchandise that has not been paid for.

VI. Appeal to Force (Ad Baculum)

When it is suggested to a person that dire consequences will befall her if she does not
accept (or reject) a given conclusion, we have an appeal to force. In such cases, the
conclusion is accepted (or rejected) on the basis of fear induced by a suggested threat.

If you do not wish to suffer harm, then you will do x.
You do not wish to suffer harm.
You will do x.

While this is a valid argument, there are nonetheless many situations in which one is
expressly forbidden from acting on the basis of the premise “If you do not wish to suffer
harm, then you will do x.”

(1a) Student:
“Professor, I beat a man up real bad who didn’t
give me what I wanted. Therefore, you'd better
give me a passing grade in this course.”

(1b) Professor:
“I certainly do not want to be beaten up.
But nonetheless I am expressly forbidden from
awarding you a passing grade in this course for
such a reason.”
(2) Mr. B:  
“Jones, you've been an employee of mine for a long time and I know you want to keep your job. Therefore, I hope you'll find time to help my friend, Senator Tydings, in his re-election campaign.”

(3) Mafia Boss:  
“Ms. Smith, you've had this store for many years without any serious accidents. I know you want to keep it that way. But a number of store owners who don't carry my insurance policy have recently experienced horrible fires that have closed down their businesses. I hope you'll buy my insurance policy.”

VII. Appeal to Pride  
In the appeal to pride, the attempt is made to influence a person's acceptance or rejection of a certain conclusion by making that conclusion appear as a reflection of the person's character. The person's desire to improve and enhance his or her self-image becomes the primary factor determining the acceptance or rejection of the conclusion in question. Arguments that appeal to pride generally have the following form:

If you want to be admired then you will do X.  
You want to be admired.  
You will do X.

Examples:

(1) Student:  
“Professor, I know you wouldn't want people to think that I failed your course because of the inadequacy of your teaching. Therefore, you should give me at least a passing grade in this course.”

(2) Salesman:  
“Mr. Stowson, you look to be a man of quality. Therefore, I know you will only want the best that we have to offer.”
(3) Friend:
“Socrates, if you do not escape with us tonight, people will think you do no value your life. Therefore, you must try to escape with us.”

6.C.1. Exercises:
Name the fallacy involved in each of the following arguments:

1. Jones’ argument should not be accepted because Jones is a drug addict and an alcoholic.

2. My parents always voted for the Democratic party and what was good enough for my parents is good enough for me.

3. The Bible says that the Children of Israel are the chosen people. Therefore, Israel is the land of the chosen people.

4. We all have families. We have churches and schools that we attend together. And we have our right as citizens to choose our government representatives. For me, that choice will be Bill Brent, and I know you’ll make him your choice as well.

5. Car A has a 470 cubic inch motor while car B has a 370 cubic inch motor. You should choose car A because it gives you more engine volume.

6. Everybody is smoking weed, so it must be good for you.

7. Native American people have suffered ever since Europeans came to this country. That is why Native American people should be given more welfare benefits.

8. The Venezuelan government should not nationalize oil production in Venezuela because the United States will consider that an economic threat and might move to destabilize the Venezuelan government.

9. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, this young man comes from a family of convicted criminals. His mother, father, and each of seven sisters and brothers have been convicted of charges from murder to stock market fraud. Therefore, his attorney’s arguments in his behalf should be ignored, and the evidence accepted as proving him guilty of the charges being brought against him.
10. The doctor says that I need an operation. Well, I suppose since he's the doctor, he ought to know. So I guess I'll have to have it.

11. Seventy percent of the people of Falls Point, Virginia own Yototas. Isn't that reason enough for you to make a Yotota your next car?

12. IQ test scores have shown a positive correlation of 0.25 with academic performance and professional success. That is why they should be continued in all our schools.

13. Since you have a wife and four children and you want to keep your job, I believe you should contribute to mayor Rabby's campaign fund.

14. Jim broke both his legs during the war. He hasn't spoken to any of his friends since he's been out of the hospital. But when he saw you, his whole personality changed. That's why you should go out with him tonight.

15. Dr. Joan Saudelby, noted psychiatrist, recommends extramarital sex for release of tension. Therefore, married couples would be more relaxed if they engaged in more extramarital affairs.

16. One thousand, one hundred, and twenty-six cross tabulations of significant data has shown that Michton shock absorbers out-perform all its major competitors. So you should buy Michton.

17. Most people in my hometown don't agree with same-sex marriage. That's why I'm against it.

18. Dr. Philip Whatley, noted ophthalmologist, considers La Plume de la France to be the best restaurant in town. Therefore, it must serve excellent food and give excellent service, for Dr. Whatley is famous around the world.

19. Sheriff, you should not charge me with jaywalking because I've seen you do it hundreds of times.
20. Yes, I knew I've been late to work everyday this month. But how could you fire me? I have a child and I have to get up and dress the child and get her to a babysitter. If I don't have a job, how can I take care of my baby? You just can't fire me.

21. Ms. Priscilla, I know you need to pass this course in order to graduate, but your work and attendance has been marginal. Therefore, I suggest that you meet me this evening so that we can pursue this matter further.

22. I don't feel that I'm guilty of adultery because my wife is doing the same thing that I am doing.

23. What were the most memorable events of your life? When you made that great play that saved the game? When you graduated from high school? When you got married? When you had your first baby? To these you will add your first experience of Dogen Mavid after-dinner wine. So try some today.

24. Independent laboratory tests of ninety-seven random samples of Create natural deodorant did not vary by more than 0.3% from natural body odor. That’s why you should switch to Create deodorant.

25. Archie Ali, the new heavyweight boxing champ of the world says that if you want the heavyweight champ of car waxes, get DuraBond Carwax.

D. Miscellaneous Fallacies

a. Fallacy of Contradictory Precepts

The fallacy of contradictory precepts occurs when incompatible premises are used to draw a certain conclusion. The problem is that from incompatible premises, any conclusion whatsoever can be validly deduced.

“Give to the church”, cried the minister. “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. So, if you are able to
give, you had better give. And remember too, whatever riches you give to God, He will give back to you tenfold. So give all you have.”

(More Examples Needed)

b. **Arguing in a Circle (Vicious Circle)**

An argument is circular if the conclusion of the argument occurs as one of the premises of the argument.

(1) Heroin causes addiction because it has addictive powers.

(2) Capitalism causes misery because its basic tendency is to make people suffer.

c. **Complex Question**

A question is “complex” when any attempt to answer it implies the acceptance of statements that are themselves in question.

Examples:

Lawyer to Accused: “Tell the court, Sir, how it felt to have so much money after the holdup?”

Why is it that wealthy people are more intelligent than poor people?

d. **Idealization of the Future**

Here, one is influenced to accept a conclusion by appeal to some idealized future outcome that one is prone to hope for.

(1) “John, you ought to go to college because when you graduate, you can get a good job and never have any more financial problems.”

(2) “Bill, you don't need to go to school because everything is crumbling and we’ll all be given enough to eat by the government.”

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1 The first premise implies that a person should give to the church in order to avoid being rich, while the second premise implies that a person should give to the church in order to receive even greater riches.
e. Idealization of the Past
Here, one is influenced to accept a framework for acting by appeal to some idealized past state of affairs that one is prone to accept.

(1) Europeans should be eliminated from America because before they came, Native Americans lived in harmony with nature.

(2) The Black man should be eliminated from America because, before slavery, all Europeans were industrious and hard working.

f. Fallacy of the Special Case (Hasty Generalization)
To argue that whatever is true of one special case must be true of all cases of that general kind is to commit the fallacy of the special case. What is true of one individual need not be true of all individuals of a like kind. Just because one presidential administration was deceitful, we should not conclude that all presidential administrations are and will be deceitful.

Examples:

Bill Clinton was unfaithful while in office. We need to be wary of southern politicians.

Often, extreme cases are presented as the standard by which some present issue or activity is to be compared:

“I'm not a genius. Therefore, you can't expect me to always think before I act.”

SUMMARY

The validity of an argument or explanation is determined by the relationship between its premises and conclusion, and is independent of how we feel about the situation or subject matter. The logician is like a building inspector whose job is to determine whether a house has a sound structure, irrespective of whether the house is personally appealing or not. Thus, an argument may be valid though one does not wish to accept it. This is like
finding a solidly constructed house that nonetheless you would not want to live in. On the other hand, an argument may appeal to one even though (upon inspection) we find that the argument is not valid. This is like finding a house that you would like to live in, only to find (upon inspection) that the house is not soundly constructed. Even if the house is structurally sound, it may be constructed of materials that are toxic.

In this chapter we have been concerned with the various means whereby one can be influenced to accept an argument or explanation without carefully inspecting the argument for its validity and soundness. By manipulating the attention of the listener, a presenter might be able to influence the listener to accept or reject an argument without checking it for soundness. Likewise, a realtor may emphasize the beautiful view from the living room window, but this does not mean that the house is soundly constructed.

6.C.2. Exercises: Name the fallacy involved in the following examples.

1. Why is abortion murder? Because it is the killing of an innocent human being.

2. Defense lawyer cross-examining a witness: “When did you stop beating your wife?”

3. As a candidate for governor of this state, I will treat all citizens equally and I will fight for the interests of big business.

4. Tying a game is like kissing your mother. It is not much of a victory.

5. If only Jack Pardee, the Washington Redskins football coach, had not been so conservative with his offense, the team could have won more games and Pardee would not have been fired.

6. If you go to college and earn a B.A. degree, then you will surely get a better paying job and be able to support your family better.

7. Back in my day, we rode bicycles to school. Kids today should ride bicycles, not buses to school.

8. This action is ethical because it is morally right. And we know it is morally right because it is not unethical.