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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

LOGIC – Lesson 12: Collective and Divisive Terms

The goal of these logic lessons is to enable the believer to become more logical and thus see and appreciate Truth as such as well as defend Truth in our hostile public square. It is unfortunate that we live in such an anti-intellectual period of history. As I have mentioned: if you cannot tell someone *logically* what you believe, why you believe it, and why it can't be otherwise, then you really do not know it. You might believe it, but if you cannot put it in logical propositions, you really do not *know* it, at least as you should. What we are going through now are the very basics of logic. It will be a while before we get to syllogisms. Since I recently mentioned the need to be skilled at syllogisms in the last Bible class, I have received questions about what they are. Here is an illustration of a syllogism:

All men are mortal.
Socrates is a man.
Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

A few basic points on syllogisms.

- A syllogism must have only three propositions and only three terms.
- The subject of the conclusion is the minor term and points to the minor premise
- The predicate of the conclusion is major term and points to the major premise.
- The middle term (man) must be distributed and not be in the conclusion.
- For a syllogism to be valid, it must not break any of Aristotle's 6 rules.

After we complete this logic course, you will be able to construct a valid syllogism on anything as well as check other syllogisms. This would constitute your logical argument for your views. If you do not feel you need these basics, try to build a syllogism according to the above example with the conclusion of "Therefore, God exists" or "Therefore, Darwinian evolution is false" or "Therefore, Bible doctrine is important" or "Therefore, I love Jesus Christ." Surely, you could give precise, sound logical statements of these basic truths that you love. If not, why not? If you cannot construct a solid syllogism for these truths, are you as logical as might *feel*;-) After you complete these lessons, you will be able to do it "on the fly" and see all of the fallacies that saturate our post-modern world.

More basics on logic:

Terms designating groups of things are used either *collectively* or *divisively*. When I use a term collectively, I mean the group as a whole; when I use a term divisively, I mean each individual member of the group. A collective term refers to a number of individuals looked at as a single group, like the soldiers in an army or the crew of a ship.

Only terms designating groups can be either collective or divisive. Which of the two it is, is determined, by use, by how the term is used in a sentence. For instance, “library” is used collectively in the sentence “This library is composed of ten thousand books,” but the same term is used divisively in the sentence “This town has three libraries.” When I say “this class is the smartest logic I’ve ever taught,” I use “class” collectively, because I don’t mean that every single member of the class is smart, only that the class as a whole is. But when I say “all men are mortal,” I use “men” divisively because I mean that every single man is mortal, not just that the species *homo sapiens*, or humanity, is mortal as a species.

Exercise: Tell whether each underlined term is used collectively or divisively.

1. That is a tall pile of bricks.
2. The trees on Holly Hill make a fine sight.
3. None of my philosophy courses is easy.
4. The marbles in this bag weigh five pounds.
5. Men have a soul.
6. The United Nations decided to censure Israel yesterday.
7. Mankind survives by the skin of its teeth.
8. Native Americans are disappearing, and you are a Native American, therefore you are disappearing.
9. The Cubs have lost for over 80 years in a row, and Sosa is a Cub, therefore Sosa has lost for over 80 years in a row.

Answers on the next page

Answers: C (collective) D (divisively)

1. That (C) is a tall pile of bricks.
2. The trees (C) on Holly Hill make a fine sight.
3. None of my philosophy courses (D) is easy.
4. The marbles (C) in this bag weigh five pounds.
5. Men (C) have a soul.
6. The United Nations (C) decided to censure Israel yesterday.
7. Mankind (C) survives by the skin of its teeth.
8. Native Americans (C) are disappearing, and you are a Native American (D), therefore you are disappearing. (Because of ambiguous use of terms, the logic is invalid—its obvious).
9. The Cubs (C) have lost for over 80 years in a row, and Sosa is a Cub, therefore Sosa (D) has lost for over 80 years in a row. (Ambiguous of terms makes the logic invalid).

In the Logos,

Pastor Don