

Pastor-teacher Don Hargrove
Faith Bible Church
<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

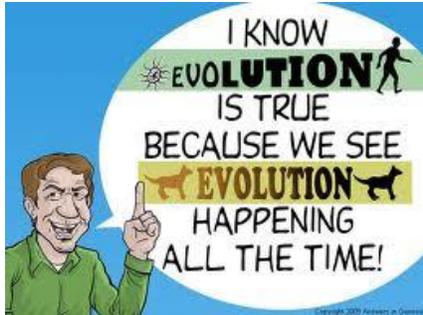
LOGIC – Lesson 15 Material Fallacies: Equivocation

The most common logical fallacy is equivocation. Equivocation is when the same term is used in two or more different senses in the course of an argument. One term that is perhaps the most frequently misused in debates about evolution is “evolution.” Evolutionists often use this term like some magic wand that can mean any kind of change. When engaging an evolutionist, it is imperative to nail him down on this term. Strict Darwinian evolution is random, unguided, natural processes. There is no mechanism, no teleology to guide any being toward greater development. Strict Darwinianism adamantly rejects any formal and final causation; all is random. There is no intrinsic mechanism for development. Most people on the street that say they believe in evolution do not believe this.

There are three steps in correcting the problem of equivocation: 1) identify the word/phrase that is equivocal, 2) point out the different meanings, and 3) make the necessary distinctions. One of the most difficult things to do when arguing with someone is to really understand what he is saying. You should understand his position so well that you could repeat his argument back to him in a way that he would accept. Only then can you really engage and challenge his position. It is very easy to recast an opponent’s position in terms that are weak or stupid (straw man), and then proceed to destroy it. In reality you have succeeded in only destroying your own stupid argument. Incidentally, I have yet to see one argument from any atheist that did not violate one of Aristotle’s six rules of logic or one of his informal fallacies. An argument for atheism cannot be sustained without the use of one or more fallacies. Spotting the fallacy of equivocation requires being sensitive to the multiple meanings, and even subtle nuances and shadings, that words and phrases can have.

Examples of the fallacy of equivocation.

1.



As you can see, the word "evolution" is used twice. The first reference to "evolution" is for the theory that we all came from a common ancestor—evolution of one species to another, from molecules to man. The second reference to "evolution" is the change within species that we see.

2. To see how "anti-evolution" is used to mean "anti-science," listen to this 16 minute clip: http://intelligentdesign.podomatic.com/entry/2013-04-01T16_44_10-07_00.
3. Politicians (especially our current president, a master at changing the meanings of words) use equivocation constantly to obfuscate and deliberately lie to the people. Equivocation is mother's milk of dirty, deceitful politics.

Exercises: Identify the term(s) that is used with two different meanings

1. Evolution states that one species can change into another. We see that cars have evolved into different styles. Therefore, since evolution is a fact in cars, it is true in species.
2. The sign said "fine for parking here," and since it was fine, I parked there.
3. A plane is a carpenter's tool, and the Boeing 737 is a plane, hence. The Boeing 737 is a carpenter's tool.
4. Criminal actions are illegal, and all murder trials are criminal actions, thus all murder trials are illegal.
5. Noisy children are a real headache. Two aspirin will make a headache go away. Therefore, two aspiring will make noisy children go away.
6. All banks are beside rivers. Therefore, the financial institution where I deposit my money is beside a river.

7. There are no convincing arguments in books. In order to be convincing, an argument has to be sound, but arguments written in books clearly do not make any noise."
8. "Everyone should fight for what they believe in. You disagree with my beliefs, so I'm going to punch you in the nose."
9. Burt eats meat, which involves killing animals, and even Marjorie, who is a vegan, routinely kills lettuce and carrots and other living things for her food. Therefore, Burt and Marjorie are hypocrites violating a principle they claim to believe.
10. A feather is light. What is light cannot be dark. Therefore, a feather cannot be dark.

Answers

1. Evolution.
2. Fine.
3. Plane.
4. Criminal actions.
5. Headache.
6. Banks.
7. Sound.
8. Fight.
9. Killing.
10. Light.

Advancing in the Logos,

Pastor Don