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Faith Bible Church

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

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## **Building Mental Muscle & Growing the Mind through Logic Exercises:**

### **Lesson 5a – Material Fallacies**

<http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/logic5a>

#### **Logic lesson for week 9/12/11 -9/18/11**

A. Review: Outline of all logic: the three acts of the mind: simple apprehension, judging, and reasoning.

1. #1: “Simple apprehension” is a technical term. It means basically “conceiving,” “understanding,” or “comprehending” one object of thought, one concept, such a ‘mortal’ or ‘man’ or ‘triangle’ or ‘triangle with unequal angels.’
2. #2: “Judging” is more complex than simple apprehension. Instead of just thinking one concept, like ‘man,’ it relates two concepts, like “man” and “mortal,” to each other by predicating one term (the predicate) of the other (the subject) in judgment that, e.g., “Man is mortal” or “Man is not a triangle.”
3. #3: “Reasoning” is when one moves from judging to conclusions. As judging is more complex than simple apprehension, reasoning is more complex than judging. As judging moves from one act of simple apprehension (the subject) to another (the predicate), reasoning moves from two or more judgments (the premises, or assumptions) to another (the conclusion) in arguing that if the premises are true, then the conclusion must be true. For example, “All men are mortal, and I am a man, therefore, I am mortal,” or “A man is not a triangle, and that is a triangle, therefore that is not a man.”

- B. We must distinguish informal material fallacies (1<sup>st</sup> act of the mind) from formal fallacies (3<sup>rd</sup> act of the mind).
1. Informal **material fallacies** are in the category of 1<sup>st</sup> act of the mind because they are mistakes in understanding the meaning or use of terms. They are called material fallacies because they are not mistakes in the logical *form*; rather, they are mistakes in content or *matter* or meaning.
  2. Formal fallacies (to be covered much later). Formal fallacies are mistakes in reasoning, errors in the operation of the third act of the mind.
    - a. For instance, “Some men are mortal, and some mortals are fish, therefore some men are fish” commits a formal fallacy. “Some men are fish” does not logically follow from the two premises that “some men are mortal” and “some mortals are fish,” even though both premises are true (2<sup>nd</sup> act of the mind).
    - b. There is no ambiguity or wrong use of terms in this argument, only bad reasoning.
    - c. Formal fallacies would include such things as pseudo modus ponens and modus tollens, or other *formal* fallacies committed in syllogisms.
- C. There are approximately 49 **material fallacies**, grouped under seven different kinds. These are used constantly in movies, commercials, political speeches, and yes even by Christians. The first three major categories that we have studied at FBC (for examples see notes <http://www.fbcweb.org/Notes/091111.pdf> on pages 16-18):
1. Fallacies of **language**
    - a. Equivocation: ambiguous word.
    - b. Amphiboly: ambiguous syntax.
    - c. Accent: ambiguous voice inflexion.
    - d. Slanting: equivocation in the use and attitude of presenting material.
    - e. Slogans: thoughtless knee-jerk reaction of agreement or disagreement based on familiarity of words rather than the basis of reason.
    - f. Hyperbole: exaggeration that has no basis in reality.
    - g. “Straw Man”: refutation of an unfairly weak, stupid, and ridiculous version of your opponent’s idea.

2. Fallacies of **Diversion** (We have noted these at FBC).
  - a. Ad hominem: direct attack on the trustworthiness of a person instead of the issue.
  - b. Ad verecundiam: illegitimate appeal to authority, or the appeal to illegitimate authority.
  - c. Ad baculum: appeal to force.
  - d. Ad misericordiam: appeal to pity.
  - e. Ad ignominiam: appeal to shame.
  - f. Ad populum: appeal to the masses.
  - g. Ad ignorantiam: appeal to ignorance.
  
3. Fallacies of **Oversimplification** (We have noted these at FBC).
  - a. Dicto simpliciter: saying something too absolutely.
  - b. "Special Case": saying something is true because of special cases.
  - c. Composition: arguing from the part to the whole.
  - d. Division: arguing from the whole to the part.
  - e. "The Black-and-White Fallacy": only allowing for extremes.
  - f. Quoting out of Context: either the author out of context or the phrase out of context.
  - g. Stereotyping: generalizations.

# Quiz – Identify the material fallacy

1. Women are weak and inferior.
2. Shakespeare was a nihilist. He wrote, “Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”
3. “Do you hate me?” “No.” “How wonderful! You love me!”
4. Irishmen are scattered all over the world. Pat is an Irishman. Therefore Pat is scattered all over the world.
5. Texas has more millionaires than any other state, therefore Texas is the richest state.
6. The Vatican allowed a convent of nuns in Italy who knew they were about to be raped by Nazi soldiers to take birth control pills to protect them from getting pregnant. Therefore, the church does not really think that contraception is wrong.
7. According to the Greek saying, water is best (*ariston to hudor*). So I’ll swap you some water for those diamonds and you’ll come out ahead.
8. “He can’t prove he earned that money, so he must have stolen it.”
9. Anti-intellectual Christianity can’t be wrong; 90% of Christians believe in the philosophy of anti-intellectualism.
10. “What! You believe God created the universe? You’re the only person I know who would admit that. Don’t you feel like an idiot?”

11. "If you don't have sex with me, I will despair and kill myself."
12. "Before you answer, remember who pays your salary."
13. "Ho Chi Minh was not a tyrant." "How do you know that?" "Jane Fonda said so."
14. "Your teaching of Bible doctrine is worthless." "Why?" "Because you don't practice what you preach."
15. "You need to clean up your room." "Oh, so you want me to be your slave."
16. "Because I believe in Progress, I'm progressive."
17. "I am firm, you are stubborn."
18. "I just LOVE IT when you do that."
19. "Most men love cigars more than their wives."
20. "What is the highest form of animal life?" "The giraffe."

In the Logos,

*Pastor Don*