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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 5b – Material Fallacies – Answer sheet

<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 (1st act of the mind) from formal fallacies (3rd act of the mind).
1. Informal **material fallacies** are in the category of 1st 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 (2nd 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 - Answers

1. Women are weak and inferior. **Stereotype.**
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.” **Quoting out of context.**
3. “Do you hate me?” “No.” “How wonderful! You love me!” **Black and White Fallacy (some things do have gradations).**
4. Irishmen are scattered all over the world. Pat is an Irishman. Therefore Pat is scattered all over the world. **Division (from whole to part).**
5. Texas has more millionaires than any other state, therefore Texas is the richest state. **Composition (argues from part to whole).**
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. **Special Case (just because there may be special cases does not mean it should be a general principle; e.g., there are gay couples who are better parents than heterosexual couples, but this does not mean that this should be a norm).**
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. **Dicto Simpliciter (“say simply,” saying something without any qualifications)**
8. “He can’t prove he earned that money, so he must have stolen it.” **Ad Ignorantiam (appeal to ignorance).**
9. Anti-intellectual Christianity can’t be wrong; 90% of Christians believe in the philosophy of anti-intellectualism. **Ad populum (appeal to the masses).**
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?” **Ad ignominiam (appeal to shame).**

11. "If you don't have sex with me, I will despair and kill myself." *Ad misericordiam* (appeal to pity).
12. "Before you answer, remember who pays your salary." *Ad baculum* (appeal to force or fear of force).
13. "Ho Chi Minh was not a tyrant." "How do you know that?" "Jane Fonda said so." *Ad verecundiam* (appeal to "authority").
14. "Your teaching of Bible doctrine is worthless." "Why?" "Because you don't practice what you preach." *Straw man* (person rejects Bible doctrine as worthless by attacking the person preaching).
15. "You need to clean up your room." "Oh, so you want me to be your slave." (*Hyperbole*).
16. "Because I believe in Progress, I'm progressive." *Slogans* (with slogans familiarity with words instead of reason is the issue).
17. "I am firm, you are stubborn." *Slanting* (choice of words; common in propaganda).
18. "I just LOVE IT when you do that." *Accent* (emphasis for sarcasm).
19. "Most men love cigars more than their wives." *Amphiboly* (unclear syntax: do men love cigars more than they love their wives or do they love cigars more than their wives love cigars).
20. "What is the highest form of animal life?" "The giraffe." *Equivocation* ("highest" is used in two ways).

NB: Note how in every one of the examples the appeal is made to everything but reason. Instead of understanding and reason, the concept is hijacked by an appeal to someone, something, some emotion, some ambiguity, some misrepresentation, or some ignorant stereotype. When you think of how many people reject logic and are subsequently controlled by phrases like these which are used constantly by the media, TV commercials, politicians, friends, "lovers," and even fundamentalist and liberal preachers, it is a bit unsettling when someone says he does not need logic. God help us!

In the Logos,

Pastor Don