Chapter 4: INFORMAL FALLACIES I

All effective propaganda must be confined to a few bare necessities and then must be expressed in a few stereotyped formulas. Adolf Hitler

Until the habit of thinking is well formed, facing the situation to discover the facts requires an effort. For the mind tends to dislike what is unpleasant and so to sheer off from an adequate notice of that which is especially annoying. John Dewey, How We Think

Introduction

In everyday speech you may have heard someone refer to a commonly accepted belief as a fallacy. What is usually meant is that the belief is false, although widely accepted. In logic, a fallacy refers to logically weak argument appeal (not a belief or statement) that is widely used and successful. Here is our definition: A logical fallacy is an argument that is usually psychologically persuasive but logically weak. By this definition we mean that fallacious arguments work in getting many people to accept conclusions, that they make bad arguments appear good even though a little commonsense reflection will reveal that people ought not to accept the conclusions of these arguments as strongly supported. Although logicians distinguish between formal and informal fallacies, our focus in this chapter and the next one will be on traditional informal fallacies.¹ For our purposes, we can think of these fallacies as "informal" because they are most often found in the everyday exchanges of ideas, such as newspaper editorials, letters to the editor, political speeches, advertisements, conversational disagreements between people in social networking sites and Internet discussion boards, and so on.

In analyzing informal fallacies we will have another opportunity to see the importance of logical abstraction and formalization. Recall from Chapter 1 that some forms of argumentation are always invalid and that recognizing these forms behind the scenes of the content is an easy way of judging the argument. In this chapter we will be identifying the simple recipes of very persuasive bad arguments. As Hitler noted in the opening quote above, using a few simple psychological formulas easily persuades people.

¹ Most logic books distinguish between formal and informal fallacies. Formal fallacies are deductive arguments whose invalidity can be detected immediately by mere inspection of the argument form. Informal fallacies are said to depend more on the content. We will be blurring the distinction between formal and informal somewhat, because we will show that the best way to learn informal fallacies is to identify the essence, form, or recipe for each one.
Situations may change, and the people may be different, and so the content may change, but the basic tricks are the same. To help defend us against these tricks, logicians identify these formulas, break them down into parts, analyze the logical mistakes, and give them names. Like knowing what a chair is, once you recognize one you know all chairs. Although recognizing fallacies will not always be a simple black-and-white process of identification, categorization saves time and intellectual effort, and provides us with a guide for criticizing arguments and knowing how to make arguments in general better.

So, we will be doing more than just giving names of fallacies and providing a few examples. We will now practice in earnest the slow, deliberate discipline of logical analysis by looking at each fallacy in terms of the following recipe format.

**Argument Structure:**

**Conclusion** (identify)

**Premise(s)** (identify)

**Label & description:** A brief description of why the fallacy name fits. A brief description of what is taking place in the premises or conclusion consistent with the label.

**Argument Analysis:** An analysis that provides an argument for why the conclusion is not well supported in terms of identifying one of the following:

1. **Reasoning:** Even if the premises are accepted as true, the inference to the conclusion is poor or weak.

2. **Questionable premise(s):** The premise(s) are presumptive or unfair in some sense; the truth of the premise(s) can be easily questioned. (Covered in Chapter 5)

3. **Suppressed Evidence:** The premises are true and the reasoning valid or apparently strong, but a specific fact or set of facts is omitted, such that if it were provided, it would make a major difference in accepting the conclusion. (Covered in Chapter 5)

Logicians have identified hundreds of informal fallacies. We will map out the logical forms of twenty of the most common ones in terms of the above format. Notice that labeling the fallacy is a very small part of the above process of analysis. Most important is identifying arguments and applying what you have learned by providing an argument for why another argument is weak: applying the concepts of validity, invalidity, and soundness for deductive appraisal, and criteria for reliable beliefs for inductive appraisal. Notice, for instance, in the argument analysis section above the distinction between (1) and (2) requires that you know the very important difference between criticizing an argument's form or reasoning, and criticizing the argument's premises. Some of the
informal fallacies we will be analyzing will be weak in the reasoning, and we need not waste time and intellectual effort worrying whether the premises are true or fair. On the other hand, some fallacies will have valid reasoning, but questionable or unfair premises, so we should focus only on criticizing the premises. This distinction is not only crucial for a complete understanding of logic, but as a purely practical matter it is a powerful tool for staying on track in criticizing an argument. The most prevalent mistake students make in criticizing arguments is to confuse the two—to criticize the truth or fairness of the premise or premises when they should be criticizing the reasoning, or to criticize the reasoning when they should be criticizing the premise or premises. With the exception of suppressed evidence (we will discuss this fallacy in Chapter 5), because each fallacy will be weak in either the reasoning or premises, once you know the form of a label, you only have to think about it once, so to speak. You just apply the fallacy analysis consistently as a recipe.

So far, this presentation is probably rather abstract, so let's tie it down with an example. Consider the following argument:

EXAMPLE 4-1

According to the national Uniform Crime Report, the number of women arrested rose by 66.1 percent between 1970 and 1980, compared to only 6 percent in the number of men's arrests. Before the rise of feminism in the 1970s the percentage of women arrested had consistently been lower than that of men. After the rise of feminism the crime rate for women clearly went up. Hence, there can be little doubt that the rise of feminism in the 1970s caused an increase in female crime.

In following the format outlined above, the first thing we should do is identify the conclusion. With this argument the conclusion indicator "hence" makes this easy, and the sentences preceding the conclusion are the premises. Structured this way, the argument is a classic example of a Questionable Cause fallacy. Note its essential features. The conclusion states a causal connection between two events, that the rise of feminism caused an increase in female crime. The premises merely describe an association in time of the same two events, that feminism started in the 1970s and at about this same time female crime apparently increased. All Questionable Cause fallacies will have these features: a causal connection in the conclusion and a time sequence in the premises.

Now think about what is wrong with this inference. Suppose you sneezed right now and shortly afterward a door in the room you are in suddenly slammed shut. Just because these events are associated in time (one after the other)—you sneezed and then the door slammed shut—it would not be wise to jump to the conclusion that your sneeze caused the door to slam shut. Lots of things happen around the same time other things happen. You might have been tapping your fingers against your desk, scratching your nose, blinking, coughing, typing, or sipping coffee. Or, the wind outside your home increased suddenly sending a gust through an open window in the room where the door slammed shut. So, the bare fact that something happens before something else is poor evidence that
the first caused the second. This type of evidence by itself would make for a very weak inductive inference.

Although we will cover Questionable Cause fallacies in more detail in Chapter 5, here is what a complete analysis will look like in the above format:

**EXAMPLE 4-1a**

**Conclusion:** The rise of feminism in the 1970s caused an increase in female crime.

**Premises:**

According to the national Uniform Crime Report, the number of women arrested rose by 66.1 percent between 1970 and 1980, compared to only 6 percent in the number of men's arrests.

Before the rise of feminism in the 1970s the percentage increase of women arrested had consistently been lower than that of men.

After the rise of feminism the crime rate clearly went up.

**Label & Description: Questionable Cause.** There is a causal connection in the conclusion and a time sequence in the premises.

**Argument Analysis:** The reasoning of this argument is weak. Although the premises are relevant and may be true, they provide insufficient evidence for accepting the conclusion. The argument is a weak induction. Just because two events happen together in time does not mean that they are necessarily connected causally. The events happening together could be a coincidence and other factors could have been involved, such as changes in the economy disadvantageous to women or changes in police methodology in recording statistics. Until more evidence is cited to show that this one change (feminism) is more likely to be the cause than other changes happening at the same time, this argument is a very weak inductive argument.²

All of the fallacies covered in the next two chapters will have an ideal essence or recipe that we can use as a guide for consistent analysis. The essence of Questionable Cause is: Causal statement in the conclusion; time sequence (before and after) in the premises; weak inductive reasoning, but premises at least relevant to the conclusion. To be called a Questionable Cause, a fallacy must have these features, and once these features have

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² Although not relevant to analyzing this argument as a Questionable Cause, we could also question the presumption that a 66.1% increase in female crime represents a dramatic increase in female crime compared to that of men. A large percentage increase (for women) does not necessarily translate into a large number of female arrests, if the total number arrested in the previous decade was very low, and a small percentage increase (for men) can still translate into a large number of men arrested if the total number arrested in the previous decade was already high.
been identified the weakness is attacked always as a weak inductive inference.\(^3\) Here is way to summarize and picture the essence/recipe of Questionable Cause:

**EXAMPLE 4-1b**

**Conclusion:** A caused B.

**Premise:** A happened, and then B happened.

**Label & Description:** Questionable Cause. There is a causal connection asserted in the conclusion and only a time sequence (before and after) in the premise.

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. Although the premise is relevant to the conclusion, it is insufficient to support the conclusion. Develop by arguing that the argument is a weak inductive inference. Point out that other factors (list some) were happening at the same time and that evidence needs to be presented to support a probable cause rather than just a possible cause.

Although both the interpretation of argument structure and the charge of fallacy require argument, notice that in this formal analysis the goal of the first three steps is descriptive. The conclusion and premise or premises are identified, and then a description is given of the formal characteristics of the premises and the conclusion. In the fourth step (Argument Analysis) an explicit argument must be presented for why the formal characteristics identified are always logically weak, and the particular content must be connected with the formal characteristics. Soon you will be doing this yourself. You will not just passively label and describe, but must learn to argue, to stay on track, and to logically persuade. You will not learn fallacies the way a child learns not to do something, just because his or her parents say so. You must argue for a particular interpretation and make a case that a particular argument should not be accepted. Finding a fallacy is much more than just name-calling; it is the beginning of a dialogue. So, you can't accuse someone of committing a fallacy unless you provide an argument.

However, if you learn the essence or recipe of each fallacy, you will have a lot of help. You will always have a ready-made focus or theme for your argument. For instance, in the case of a Questionable Cause, the theme is always the same: You argue (no matter what the content) that even though the premises are relevant and may be true, the inference from the premises to the conclusion is insufficient because the reasoning is a weak induction. You still have to do some work with the content. You must combine what is being discussed with the formal weakness. In the case above, we had to think of other things that might have happened at the same time the rise of feminism occurred, to show that it is a weak induction to jump to the conclusion that feminism was the cause. However, at least you will always have the focus of the formal weakness to guide you like a recipe in what content to think about.

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\(^3\) Although we could attack the premise and question or quibble whether feminism really began in the 1970s, we don't need to, and it would be off track to do so for a Questionable Cause analysis.
The Value of Abstraction

Below we will look at the specific fallacies that belong in this chapter called fallacies of relevance. First note that in following the process of analysis outlined above I will be forcing you to abstract. Although I often hear students complain that philosophy is "too abstract," abstracting is one of the most valuable intellectual processes that you will learn in your academic career, no matter what your field. Learning a bunch of facts is useless unless the facts can be connected with a pattern. Without patterns, forms, structures, or concepts you will always be lost in a jungle of individual trees and never be able to see the forest and where you are. Abstract concepts connect the dots of life. In the United States alone there are 70,000 newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and journals, and this does not include millions of web blogs and news sites. We have 20,000 TV and radio stations. With instant information available 24/7 via the Internet on desktops, tablets, and smartphones, and political perspectives from Al-Jazeera to Fox news, the potential facts and viewpoints are overwhelming.

People that are successful in their careers, whether in management and business, science and technology, or even art, music, and literature, are able to “process” large amounts of information. They are able to see beyond the details and confusing particulars of daily experience to the essence of things behind the confusing scenes of life. They are able to capture and organize lots of details with abstract concepts. Although it is true that philosophers often seek such essences for the pure, intrinsic joy of just knowing, the practical value of such essence or conceptual knowing should not be forgotten.

Western culture has always recognized a close relationship between the seeking of abstractions by philosophers and the timesaving discoveries of mathematicians. Like philosophy, mathematics is highly abstract, and for this reason people often conclude that mathematics “just isn't their thing," that it is too hard, too alien a discipline. Many students seem to have the opinion that algebra was invented to torture them in math classes. One purpose of this book is to show you that struggling in mathematics and formal logic reflects an attitude problem rather than an intelligence or aptitude problem. It necessitates "therapy" rather than some sort of neurological fix. Most students who have this attitude simply do not realize how easy the analytic game is that lies behind logic and mathematics. Mathematicians have a corny little saying that underscores this: "By an inch it (mathematics) is a cinch, by a yard it is hard." Later in this book, when we bring to a climax the process of logical abstraction with symbolic logic, I will show you that it is much easier to follow or create a reasoning trail using rules than it is to discover which trail to follow. "Remember Eratosthenes" will be our motto. If you remember this example from Chapter 3, you will understand that the mathematics was the easiest part; the process of connecting the facts and seeing where to start were much harder.

For now, to help your motivation a little, let's look at a few examples of the time-saving aspects of mathematical abstraction. Multiplication can be seen as simple shorthand addition. Rather than adding up eight sets of eight things one by one, we learn that all we

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4 Also think how much time Eratosthenes saved. Compare how much time it would take to walk around and measure the circumference of the Earth compared to multiplying 50 x 500!
have to do is remember the rule $8 \times 8 = 64$. Likewise, algebra is actually shorthand arithmetic. We learn that shorthand notations such as $2^x$ mean multiply the number 2 by itself $x$ times, so that $2^8$ means multiply eight twos together for the result 256. The little $x$ is called an exponent, and this shorthand algebraic expression is called exponential notation. This notation is a lot faster than writing out and calculating $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 256$. We also learn that if we multiply any number with an exponent by the same number with a different exponent that $B^x \times B^y = B^{(x+y)}$. This little bit of formal mathematical knowledge comes in handy when you want to calculate the number of atoms in the entire universe. Yes, that's right, the entire universe! Because we know the approximate number of atoms in a gram of hydrogen ($10^{24}$), and the number of grams of hydrogen in an average star ($10^{33}$), and the number of stars in an average galaxy ($10^{11}$), and the number of galaxies in the universe ($10^{11}$), we simply add it all up as follows:

Number of atoms/gram of hydrogen = $10^{24}$

Number of grams of hydrogen/star = $10^{33}$

Number of stars/galaxy = $10^{11}$

Number of galaxies in the universe = $10^{11}$

Number of atoms in the universe = $10^{79}$ ($24 + 33 + 11 + 11 = 79$)

If we were to write this number out it would be a 1 followed by 79 zeros. Even if it were physically possible, think how long it would take to count this number of atoms. Although our number is only an approximation, counting this number of atoms one by one would surely lead to an even less accurate approximation we would make from losing track trying to count this enormous number and handing the project over to different generations (it would take many generations!). A little formalization can save an enormous amount of time, and, like Eratosthenes, we can know some amazing things by simply following a few formal rules and trails of reasoning.

**Fallacies of Relevance**

Now let's focus on the fallacies for this chapter. Here we are interested in those fallacies that violate one of the most important aspects of good reasoning—what I have metaphorically called staying on track and correctly following a reasoning trail. In Chapter 1 we used the example of the little girl baseball player and her father's reasoning to make the point that a lot of bad reasoning involves shifting attention away from what is relevant for testing our beliefs; that a lot of bad reasoning is simply a psychological excuse for not testing our beliefs, to not think about what we really should think about.

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5 This result is simplified because it discounts less abundant elements and features of the universe that are not stars, such as interstellar dust, quasars, and mysterious dark matter. Neutron stars, though, don't count, because they are not made up of atoms! The gravitational forces that formed these stars were so great that the atoms were crushed. However, if our estimate of the number of features or the number of atoms within any of the other features of the universe changes, we can quickly recalculate the total.
Many informal fallacies are called fallacies of relevance because they shift attention away from the heart of an issue and distract us from the type of evidence we should be seeking in order to establish a conclusion. Technically expressed, all fallacies of relevance have premises that are logically irrelevant to the conclusion.6

Note that Questionable Cause is not a fallacy of relevance. Its premises have the virtue of being at least relevant to the conclusion. Because the cause of an event does happen prior to the event, premises that discuss a temporal order of events are relevant to a discussion that those events are causally related. Questionable Cause is an example of a fallacy of weak induction and it will be discussed in Chapter 5. Although fallacies of relevance and fallacies of weak induction both have weak reasoning, the distinction between relevant and irrelevant premises is crucial for staying on track in criticizing arguments and focusing on what kind of evidence supports what kind of conclusion. Compare the Questionable Cause fallacy with the following.

**Appeal to Popularity**

One of the strongest psychological forces in human nature is the desire to belong, to be accepted, to have friends, and to be part of a culture where behavior is somewhat the same so one is comfortable in how to act and think. For most people it is uncomfortable to feel "out of place," different, or weird. As with most human desires, there are probably very good evolutionary reasons for the naturalness of the need to belong. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is a mistake to believe that emotional concerns are intrinsically illogical; that logic and emotion are always opposed. Logic and emotion are meant to work together. We know from evolutionary anthropology that our pre-human ancestors lived a very harsh existence. Compared to the competition, our ancestors were frail creatures. Many animals had more powerful physical characteristics; they could run faster, see better, and had better offensive and defensive bodily weapons (claws, fangs, horns, and such). To survive, our ancestors needed to belong to each other and to think; they needed to cooperate and care about each other, and to devise, reason, and calculate. And they needed to apply these tools of survival at the right time and place most of the time, or we would not be here contemplating the relative merits of reason and emotion.

Problems emerge when we use the wrong tool for the job at hand. There are clearly times when it is less sensible to reason analytically than to just feel. It would be most inappropriate to tell a grieving mother and father that they are not being logical about their son's death in a war. Recall the discussion of bureaucratic euphemisms in Chapter 2. There are times when it is more reasonable to be emotional. This would be especially true if the parents were told that their son was killed by "collateral damage from friendly fire in a kinetic military action that is time-limited and frontloaded." (See Chapter 2) On the other hand, we can be seriously distracted from the proper evaluation of something important to us if we react too quickly because of a powerful feeling. Consider the following argument.

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6 The premises are psychologically relevant though, and this is why they are so often successful in persuading people to accept conclusions they ought not to accept.
EXAMPLE 4-2

We should support President Bush's Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas. The American people are obviously very happy with the way the president is running things. Since his demonstrated leadership during the Persian Gulf War, his policies are obviously the policy of the vast majority of Americans. The president's approval rating is now one of the highest in history, even higher than former President Reagan. Most Americans are tired of hearing the far-left nitpicking from pro-abortionists, the hyper-liberal analysis from the editors of major newspapers, and the self-appointed righteousness of so-called civil rights leaders. Like President Bush, Middle America, the real America, wants this nomination.

In the spring of 1991, then-U.S. President Bush nominated Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Thomas, who is African-American, would be replacing Thurgood Marshall, who was also African-American. The nomination was controversial. Unlike Marshall, Thomas held conservative views on such civil rights issues as affirmative action and equal employment opportunity. Furthermore, abortion rights advocates were suspicious of his views on abortion, and, perhaps most important, many legal experts questioned the depth of his experience and scholarly production on constitutional issues. Clearly, the focus of the above argument was that we should support Thomas. So, in structuring this argument the conclusion would be: We should support President Bush's Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas. The remaining sentences were offered as supporting premises.

What's wrong with this argument? Was it on track? Was it discussing the real issues? Note that the main focus of the premises is that “the vast majority” of U.S. citizens were happy with the way President Bush was handling things. He was popular after the Persian Gulf War (the first war with Iraq) and most of his decisions at that time were popular. The thrust of this argument was that because the Thomas appointment was a popular decision, anyone thinking about it should also have accepted it. It is not intrinsically wrong for people to be happy with the actions of their president, but the real issue here was, why should we have been happy with this decision? Because this argument did not discuss why a majority were supporting the Thomas appointment, this argument was not on track, it was not discussing the main set of issues: the qualifications of Clarence Thomas and whether or not a candidate for the Supreme Court should or should not have certain views on civil rights and abortion. Although the argument discussed why Bush was popular in general, it did not discuss the logically relevant reasons why a majority was supporting Bush on this decision. What were the reasons related to Thomas's qualifications that a majority was supporting him? Did Thomas have the special legal and analytic skills, the depth of thinking, and a distinguished background in the law normally required for the highest court in the land? The American Bar Association had assessed Thomas as only "qualified," a lower grade than usual for a Supreme Court nominee. Five previous nominees, including one rejected by the Senate, were all ranked as "well-qualified." Did Thomas have the necessary objectivity to be on the Supreme Court? Was Thomas too biased in favor of conservative views, or was he an innovative, independent thinker who believed that the old methods of busing and affirmative action had not
improved the lot of minorities? (A reasoned judgment on this appointment clearly mattered. Thomas was appointed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court decided the 2000 presidential election by a 5 to 4 vote in favor of George W. Bush, even though Al Gore won the majority vote.)

When majority support is appealed to in the premise or premises of an argument, but no reference is given to the logically relevant reasons for the majority support, an **Appeal to Popularity** fallacy is committed. This argument is best classified as an Appeal to Popularity (rather than to Authority, as in the next fallacy covered), because the basic tone is: Support Thomas because most people do. Here is how criticism of this argument would be formalized.

**EXAMPLE 4-2a**

**Conclusion:** We should support President Bush's Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas.

**Premise:** Because a vast majority supports Bush's decision to nominate Clarence Thomas.7

**Label & Description:** Appeal to Popularity. The premise cites popularity ("vast majority") as a reason for the conclusion.

**Argument Analysis:** This argument is weak in the reasoning. Even if it is true that a vast majority supports the Thomas decision, the inference to the conclusion is weak. We are not given the logically relevant reasons why a majority is supporting this decision. What are Thomas's qualifications (judicial and legal experience, judicial philosophy, views on important constitutional issues), and how do these qualifications fit the job of a Supreme Court justice? The majority may have very good reasons for supporting Thomas, as did President Bush, but these reasons need to be discussed. But they are not discussed, so it is premature to accept this conclusion.

And here is the formal essence or recipe for all Appeals to Popularity.

**EXAMPLE 4-2b**

**Conclusion:** Do X, believe X, or (in the case of an advertisement) buy X.

**Premise:** Because a majority does X, or believes X, or buys X.

**Label & Description:** Appeal to Popularity. The premise cites popularity (list the key phrase) as a reason for the conclusion.

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7 In analyzing a fallacy we need list only the key premise or premises that contain the fallacy appeal. Most often, arguments will mix relevant and irrelevant appeals, and these arguments are clearly better than a bare Appeal to Popularity. However, even when this happens, isolating the irrelevant appeals is a reminder that we should not be persuaded by these appeals alone.
Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if it is true that a majority supports something, the logically relevant reasons for that support need to be discussed. Develop by specifying the relevant reasons that should be discussed.

One of the most important mistakes students make in criticizing Appeals to Popularity is to attack the premise rather than the reasoning; that is, to question the truth of the premise rather than the inference given the truth of the premise. We could indeed question the truth of the above premise. At the time we could have asked for evidence, such as a political poll, showing that a majority of U.S. citizens supported the Thomas decision. But this focus would not be on track in terms of criticizing an Appeal to Popularity. All Appeals to Popularity should be criticized by focusing on the inference (reasoning): even if the premise is true, the inference is weak and the conclusion not supported because the premise is irrelevant to the conclusion; the main issue or issues are not being discussed. In other words, we need not criticize the truth of the premise, because the focus should be on the relevance of the premise.

Some logicians will categorize Appeals to Popularity (and Appeals to Authority, the next fallacy) as fallacies of weak induction. As such, the conclusion is treated as a kind of generalization where the reasoning is something like this: "Well, if a majority of people are in favor of X, there must be (inductive generalization) something about X that is good." But treated this way, the premise is then relevant to the conclusion, because all fallacies of weak induction have premises that are relevant to the conclusion. A major goal of this book is to help you learn the discipline of staying on track, and in everyday acts of persuasion there are so many ways that attention is shifted away from the relevant issues for genuinely testing beliefs. So, I have chosen to view these fallacies as fallacies of relevance. If we are going to conclude that a policy, product, or course of action is good, then we want to know what that something is that makes it good.

With a little reflection on what you have seen in the popular media (TV, magazines, newspapers, Internet), it should be apparent that many advertisements use Appeals to Popularity. "Nissan is number one in the state of California," "Kool cigarettes are number one in Hawaii," "Everyone is voting for Mayor Fasi," "Visa is welcome everywhere," "It's Miller time" (showing what is supposed to be a popular activity—having a Miller beer after work). “Everyone is on Facebook.” Note how these are fallacies of relevance. If you want to buy a car, what is most relevant to know, that many people are buying the car or that a lot of people are buying the car because it is a good car? Kool cigarettes may be the most-often purchased cigarette brand in the state of Hawaii, but should you smoke? And if you do, why Kool? The polls may show that a majority of people are voting for Mayor Fasi, but what are his qualifications, what is his political record, and are his policies consistent with what you want? Visa may be welcome everywhere, and being accepted by merchants is relevant in this case, but is it the best credit card to have? Does it have the lowest interest rate and yearly service charge? The whole world may drink Miller beer when people get off work, but should you? Millions of people may be on Facebook, but is all your personal information safe from hackers and identity thieves?
The version of Appeal to Popularity discussed thus far is nicknamed the bandwagon appeal, a historical reference to a wagon that held the band of musicians for a parade that everyone followed. The psychological appeal is to our natural desire to be a comfortable part of a large group. But many people pride themselves on being smart enough to see through such blatant crowd-pleasing and herd-mentality appeals. They pride themselves on having risen above such mob appeals, of being their own person. However, just like those who need to feel like part of a large group, these people need to have their identity reinforced, so propagandists and advertisers are ready for this pride with an elitist or snob appeal. Rather than appeal to a majority in the premise, the snob appeal version of Appeal to Popularity solicits a sense of being popular in a distinctive way, of being different, of being more handsome, more beautiful, more "cool," more intelligent, or more appreciative of the finer things in life. It is no accident that most advertisements show handsome men, beautiful women, or attractive couples. They hint that you, too, can be better than the average person, just like the models, if you use the advertised product.

In the 1960s, a magazine advertisement for Camel cigarettes showed a scene at the beach with a number of people in line to buy a snack. The caption asked simply, "Can you tell which person in this picture is the Camel smoker?" The first person in line was an overweight woman wearing a bikini bathing suit, her rolls of fat overflowing over the edges of the suit. Next was an overweight man with no tan, wearing a ridiculous-looking Mickey Mouse™ hat. Then a skinny woman with ugly glasses askew, trying to hold onto a tube-shaped flotation device with a duck head with her irritable kids hanging all over it trying to pull it away from her. Finally, at the end of the line was "Mr. Beautiful," impeccable tan, rippling muscles, smart-looking dark glasses, hair stylishly combed, and very patient and cool. Right, the Camel smoker. Here is a similar example.

The caption reads, "With every pair of Mr. Stanley's Hot Pants goes a free pack of short-short filter cigarettes. Now everybody will be wearing hot pants and smoking short-short filter cigarettes....almost everybody."

By the 1990s, makers of sneakers and jeans paid "cool hunters" and specialists in trend watching a lot of money to predict the future. Specialists in trend-analysis often used the representative sample technique discussed in Chapter 3 to set up an online network with
thousands of teenagers (ethnically and geographically balanced) to keep them informed of what is new. The makers of Sprite learned this lesson well. Once it adopted its “Obey your Thirst” ads, it went from a mediocre selling product to the fastest growing soda in terms of market share in the world. Even though millions of dollars are spent each year trying to figure out what “cool” will be before everyone believes it is “cool,” a big problem in marketing “cool” is that if the advertisement is successful, the product will no longer be “cool” because everyone will be buying it and then it will just be average. So there will have to be a constant search by "cool hunters" for the next “cool” product.

Often advertisers will switch back and forth between bandwagon and snob appeal versions of Appeal to Popularity with no change whatsoever in the product. Miller beer has done this throughout the years. In the 1960s and '70s, Miller beer was advertised as "The champagne of bottled beer," a beer obviously not for the masses. But by the 1980s, as noted above, Miller was supposed to be the beer of choice for the average person getting off work: "It's Miller time." As media techniques and special effects have progressed, verbal appeals have been replaced with multimillion-dollar dramatic, MTV-like video montages (with Britney Spears, Janet Jackson, Eminem) of beautiful people being rebellious, friendly and happy together at the beach, a party, or going out on the town ("Pepsi ... It's just right," "The night belongs to Michelob," "Obey your thirst" (with Sprite)). Political campaigns have adopted the same techniques, with discussion of the issues and a candidate's qualifications replaced with sound bites and carefully selected short media clips, showing the candidate doing something popular. There is nothing wrong with being entertained, but there is a time and a place for entertainment and times when it is more appropriate to do a little work and think critically and discuss matters relevant to important decisions.

**Appeal to Authority**

As the pace of life quickens, as opinions on right and wrong, true and false seem to multiply exponentially, as the amount of information available to us begins to feel like an enormous wave that will produce chaos and insecurity rather than organization and clarity, it is natural to seek shortcuts and secure foundations. There just doesn't seem to be enough time to sort through it all. One shortcut that we often use is to turn to people whom we admire for advice, people whom we think of as being more experienced on a topic, or in general more intelligent, or happier and more organized in their lives. Or, like a child that imitates his parents, we look to famous people for ideas on how to think and behave.

Like the natural psychology of wanting to belong, which fuels Appeals to Popularity, our desire to seek out shortcuts through expert opinion and advice from others surely has a practical foundation. There isn't enough time for every person to assimilate all the relevant information for every decision, to research every topic related to every alternative course of action. However, there are times when this need for fast advice can be misplaced, the acceptance of advice being too fast and the shortcut in the reasoning too short. An Appeal to Authority fallacy is committed when an improper appeal is made to alleged expert advice in a premise. Here is a famous Viagra example.
EXAMPLE 4-3

Rafael Palmeiro, first baseman with the Texas Rangers and the 19th player to reach 500 home runs, is seen in a television advertisement fielding ground balls and hitting batting practice. In the background we hear his voice: "I take ground balls, I take batting practice, I take Viagra."

The implied conclusion of any advertisement is that we should purchase the product. This advertisement is of course aimed at men, but the only reason men are given to use Viagra is that Rafael Palmeiro allegedly uses Viagra. But Rafael Palmeiro is an expert on baseball; he is not a proper authority on Viagra and erectile dysfunction.\(^8\)

Note that the advertisement is not discussing the most relevant aspects for the decision. It does not even mention erectile dysfunction at all and the various methods to treat it. Should any man suffering from erectile dysfunction take Viagra? What about the quality of the product? Is this product better than other products and procedures for the treatment of erectile dysfunction? There is also no discussion of possible dangerous side effects and the quality of the product compared to the competition at the time, Levitra and Cialis. Which of these products works in the timeliest way? Which of these products uses the lowest dosage and possibly has the lowest damaging side effects? Which of these products stays in the body longer and hence could be riskier to take?

All the advertisement accomplishes is to take the positive psychological feelings someone might have toward Rafael Palmeiro and transfer them to the use of Viagra. Rafael always seems like such a nice guy and always seems to be in control, he must know what he is talking about. But the appeal is not on track in terms of discussing the relevant items for buying something. No comparative reasons are given as to why Viagra is the best choice. And because Palmeiro is not a proper authority on Viagra or erectile dysfunction, his reasons why he is promoting it need more scrutiny.

Here is a complete analysis:

EXAMPLE 4-3a

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\(^8\) In August 2006 Palmeiro’s baseball career came to an ignoble end. It was discovered that he used steroids in spite of telling a congressional committee that he never used any performance enhancing drugs to help him have a 3,000 plus hit and 500 plus homerun career.
Conclusion: Use Viagra.

Premise: Because Rafael Palmeiro uses it.

Label & Description: Appeal to Authority. There is an appeal to authority (Rafael Palmeiro) in the premise.

Argument Analysis: This argument is weak in its reasoning. Even if the premise is true—that Rafael Palmeiro is not just acting and is really endorsing Viagra—Palmeiro is not a proper or relevant authority on Viagra and erectile dysfunction. What should be discussed are the relevant issues: use, quality, side effects, price, and a comparison of these features with the competition.

Note how often these simple appeals are found in the popular media. Many advertisements feature famous people—popular singers, sports and TV personalities, and movie stars—because appeals to authority work. By the time he was twenty-eight, basketball player Michael Jordan was endorsing fifteen products, including Wheaties, McDonald's food, Nike, MCI, and Gatorade.\(^9\) For each endorsement he was paid millions of dollars, allowing Jordan to add an extra $35 million a year to his $60,000 per game minute salary. In 2000, Nike signed the golf star Tiger Woods to a $105 million dollar agreement to advertise Nike’s products. Woods agreed to wear or feature Nike products even while he was advertising American Express, Accenture, General Motors' Buick, Electronic Arts and Tag Heuer watches. The imposing basketball star Shaquille O'Neal had contracts with Burger King, Digex, Nestlé and Swatch. And Ford marketed a Shaq-branded SUV. Britney Spears received $135 million to sing and dance provocatively for Pepsi for two years. In 2003, the young basketball sensation LeBron James replaced Kobe Bryant in Sprite commercials after Bryant was accused of raping a woman in Colorado.\(^{10}\) James already had more than $100 million in advertising deals, including a $90 million contract with Nike and a $6 million contract with Upper Deck trading cards. Big money is spent on this type of advertising, because it works. People are routinely distracted from what they should think about, and accept instead the simple shortcut of identifying with a famous personality.

Political advertisements also use Appeals to Authority. In the United States, both the Democratic and Republican parties use entertainment personalities to endorse their respective presidential candidates. During the 1970s and early '80s, the Republicans would use Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, and Charlton Heston, and the Democrats would use Gregory Peck and Henry Fonda. By the 1992 presidential campaign, the Republicans were still using Bob Hope and Charlton Heston, but the youthful appearing Democrats

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\(^9\) The Gatorade spot was the most elaborate and psychologically malicious. It showed video clips of many of Jordan's most famous basketball moves interspersed with him drinking Gatorade and young kids trying to play like him. This was accompanied by a jingle ("I want to be like Mike"), and ended with the caption, "Be like Mike. Drink Gatorade." Nutritional critics referred to Gatorade as "overpriced, colored sugar-water."

\(^{10}\) By late 2009 it was clear that the married Tiger Woods would lose over $100 million dollars in endorsements due to the revelation that he had had many sexual encounters (at least 15 known) outside his marriage.
used Glenn Close, Richard Gere, Barbra Streisand, and Wynton Marsalis to endorse Bill Clinton. For the 2004 presidential election, democratic candidate John Kerry gained the support of some of the biggest names in rock 'n' roll: Bruce Springsteen, REM, Pearl Jam, Dixie Chicks, John Mellencamp, the Dave Matthews band, and Jackson Browne. But for the incumbent President Bush, the Republicans countered with some of the biggest names in country music: Brooks and Dunn, Wynonna Judd, Hank Williams Jr., Travis Tritt, Lorrie Morgan, and the Oak Ridge Boys. Then in the 2008 presidential campaign, president Obama was endorsed by Oprah.

The fact that competing products and political candidates are endorsed by different famous personalities shows that the most relevant and decisive issues are at a deeper level than mere endorsement. When something is important, and surely voting for a political leader is, it is time to turn on our critical information-gathering and reasoning ability, to discipline ourselves and focus on what is really important. Why is the candidate being endorsed by a famous personality? What are the candidate's qualifications, his or her stand on the issues, and why are these qualifications and positions better than his or her opponent's?

But what if the authority used is a relevant or proper authority? What if the authority figure is an acknowledged expert on that which is being endorsed? Consider these arguments.

**EXAMPLE 4-3b**

Carl Sagan has stated that biological evolution is a fact, not a theory. As an eminent scientist, he must know what he is talking about.

**EXAMPLE 4-3c**

Vitamin C has considerable potential usefulness in cancer therapy. The Nobel Prize-winning chemist and molecular biologist, Linus Pauling, has endorsed the benefits of vitamin C for general health and cancer therapy for years.

Scientist Carl Sagan became a somewhat famous TV personality in the 1980s. He appeared on the Tonight show several times, wrote several well-received books and a series of articles on science for *Parade* magazine, a Sunday newspaper supplement in most U.S. cities, and starred in and led the production of the popular science series *Cosmos*. He has contributed significantly to educating the general public on the worldview of modern science through his belief that the average person can understand technical scientific subjects if the details of these subjects are explained in non-technical language. Darwin's theory of evolution played an important role in this education, especially its implications for understanding human nature, our chances of survival, and the value of species diversity, preservation, and respect for non-human life. If the Darwinian theory is true, then the human species is the result of billions of chance or contingent events that would not be repeated again anywhere in this vast universe, if we
were to destroy ourselves with the weapons we build with our "intelligence." Nowhere is this point better summarized than by Loren Eiseley in his classic book *The Immense Journey*.

Lights come and go in the night sky. Men, troubled at last by the things they build, may toss in their sleep and dream bad dreams, or lie awake while the meteors whisper greenly overhead. But nowhere in all space or on a thousand worlds will there be men to share our loneliness. There may be wisdom; there may be power; somewhere across space great instruments, handled by strange, manipulative organs, may stare vainly at our floating cloud wrack, their owners yearning as we yearn. Nevertheless, in the nature of life and in the principles of evolution we have had our answer. Of men elsewhere, and beyond, there will be none forever.

Scientists such as Sagan and Eiseley are adamant in their support for Darwin's theory not only because they believe it places the human species in a context that acts as an enlightening antidote to the anthropocentric and us-vs.-them attitudes that produce so much destruction and violence on our fragile Earth, but because as we saw in Chapter 3 the inductive scientific evidence for the theory is overwhelming. Not only do numerous examples exist of genuine confirming instances for the theory recorded in the fossilized rock pictures of animals that lived millions of years ago, but independent areas of investigation, such as developmental embryology and DNA research, point to the same conclusion: the few million species of plants and animals alive today are the lucky descendants of hundreds of millions of extinct species.

Consider, though, the rational gap that exists between merely citing Carl Sagan as an authority who believes that Darwin's theory is true and accepting the theory as true by being aware of all the evidence, or at least a substantial part, that Sagan is aware of. Although appealing to a relevant or proper authority is clearly better than appealing to a famous person who is not an expert on what is being endorsed, given an important issue or decision, the same inference problem exists as with that of appeals to an irrelevant or improper authority—the reasons the authority has for endorsing something are most relevant and should be discussed. To stay on track we should discuss and test beliefs by learning about the evidence authorities use as a basis for their endorsements. Carl Sagan, famous scientific TV personality, should not persuade us. Rather Carl Sagan and the scientific evidence should persuade us. Note also that people who merely accept Sagan's authority as decisive deprive themselves of an important education; they are deprived of learning the amazing story of our historical contingency, the scientific

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11 In my opinion the awareness of the full ramifications of our historical contingency is one of the most important items one should learn as part of a college education. Although only one rather dramatic event, consider that if the dinosaurs were not destroyed by a comet striking the Earth 60 million years ago, the human species would never have evolved. For more on our historical contingency (cosmological, biological, and cultural), see *Science and the Human Prospect* (Wadsworth, 1989; online edition, 2001, 2011; Pearson, 2005), by Ronald C. Pine.


13 Another reason that we should be sensitive to even expert appeals to authority is that experts should be forced to explain what they know in terms the average person can understand. Claims that something is too complicated for the average person to understand are most often excuses not to try to communicate, and such claims should never be used as a convincing premise.
detective story conducted daily all over the world in deciphering fossil pictures, and the intricacies of DNA, the blueprint for each of us and all life on Earth.

Most scientists accept Darwin's theory of evolution, but this mere fact alone should not persuade us.\(^{14}\) Although few scientists doubt the theory of evolution, just as in the case of famous personalities endorsing different products or presidential candidates, in many other areas relevant experts disagree. Although it is true (4-3c) that Linus Pauling was a Nobel Prize-winning chemist and molecular biologist, his views represented a distinct minority of expert opinion on the overall medical value of vitamin C. Most medical doctors believe that the evidence shows that although vitamin C is an essential vitamin, taking massive doses of it will only produce rather expensive urine, and not the general health benefits that Pauling claimed, such as fewer episodes of cold and influenza and a potential treatment for cancer. But the fact that Pauling's views represented a minority opinion or that a majority of experts disagree with those views is not most relevant. Again, discussion should focus on the relevant reason—in this case scientific studies—which Pauling and the medical community are using to base their respective claims, including whether scientifically fair randomized controlled studies were conducted and what they showed.

There are undoubtedly times when it is wise to accept appeals to relevant authorities. If a small child is close to death after a car accident and doctors say they need to operate immediately to save the child's life, this is probably not a good time to be too critical and wait for second opinions and more research. Also there are times when the issues are not that important to us and we just do not have the time to do our own research. However, we should at least know what we are doing when we accept appeals from relevant authorities, that the quality of our reasoning could be better, and that given more time it would be better to find out the expert's reasons for endorsement.\(^{15}\) If you had cancer you would probably take the time to find out if vitamin C really worked; you would want to know if there were any scientific studies that showed that people with cancer got better when they took massive doses of vitamin C.

Whether relevant and proper or irrelevant and improper, here is the formal essence or recipe of all Appeals to Authority:

\(^{14}\) Note that a blend of popularity and authority is used when a majority of authorities believe the same thing, and this fact is used as a premise for a conclusion. This shows that often we need not quibble over fallacy labels. Often there will be appeals where the classification seems to overlap different fallacy labels. A snob-appeal version of Popularity may seem very close to Provincialism (see below), appeals to a majority of authorities could be classified as an Appeal to Popularity, or an Appeal to Loyalty (see below) may seem to be an Appeal to Popularity. However, if the classification seems arbitrary, the important focus will be that the critique of the weakness will be the same. Whether popularity or a majority of authorities, the focus should be on the omitted relevant reasons.

\(^{15}\) Note that inductive reasoning would play a role in judging the reliability of expert opinion. The past record of the authority's endorsements would be relevant and important in appraising the authority as a genuine expert.
EXAMPLE 4-3D

Conclusion: Do X, believe X, or (in the case of an advertisement) buy X.

Premise: Because Y says so (Y = a relevant or irrelevant authority, and Y endorses X.)

Label & Description: Appeal to Authority. There is an appeal to authority in the premise (note Y).

Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if it is true that an authority supports something, the logically relevant reasons (the reasons and arguments of the authority) for that support need to be discussed. Develop by specifying the reasons and arguments that should be discussed.

Note the similar features to that of Appeals to Popularity. The important feature (reference to an authority) for categorization is always in the premise, and the truth of the premise is not questioned in criticizing the argument. We could question whether Rafael Palmeiro really uses Viagra, and we might discover that he is only being paid to act in an advertisement, that he does not use the product at all. However, this would be off track for a critique of Appeal to Authority. For this label, the reasoning should be attacked, not the premise. The major focus for all Appeals to Authority is that even if the premise is true, the reasoning is weak—a poor inferential link exists between the premise and the conclusion because relevant matters for accepting the conclusion are not discussed.\\n
Traditional Wisdom

Unlike most animals that have instinctual, hard-wired behavior patterns for survival, the human species is capable of learning, of gathering information about the world and passing on that information from one generation to the next. Isaac Newton claimed he was able to discover the principle of gravitational attraction and work out its mathematical treatment because he stood "on the shoulders of giants." Newton was referring to the scientists and philosophers who had come before him and whose work was crucial for allowing him to make the final connections. A large part of our success on this planet has relied on the discoveries of our ancestors.

However, we are also capable of learning that some of the ideas accepted as true or reliable by our ancestors were mistakes or do not always work when applied to new and larger areas of experience. As successful as Newton’s view on gravity was for several

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16 Sometimes the actor being paid has acted previously as an authoritative personality relevant to the product being endorsed. Actor Robert Young was best known for his roles in the TV shows Father Knows Best and Marcus Welby, M.D. In both shows, he played the role of a very stable and wise person that people could turn to in times of confusion and agitation. Later, in a Sanka coffee commercial, he seemed to play the same role endorsing the caffeine-free benefits of this product in the commercial. Although there was no direct reference to him being a doctor, he wore the same clothes and acted the same as he did in Marcus Welby, M.D., endorsing Sanka as a cure for upset people who were about ready to strangle their dogs or kids.
hundred years, Einstein was able to show at the beginning of the 20th century that Newton’s science was only partly true and that a better conception of gravity was needed. As our Little League baseball example in Chapter 1 showed, a policy against girls playing may have worked in the past, but policies need to be tested because modern circumstances can be very different from those of the past.

By 2010 there were several states debating the issue of gay marriage. One argument against gay marriage was that traditional marriage should be supported just as it had been for thousands of years. Often the Bible was cited for further support. But the Bible also seems to endorse polygamy (Solomon had 700 wives) and the books of Deuteronomy, Ezra, and Nehemiah imply that traditional marriage would mean that interracial marriage is a sin. Interracial marriage in the United State was not fully legal until a 1967 Supreme Court decision that declared as unconstitutional a Virginia law that made it a felony for people of different races to be married. In some cultures traditional marriage means that a woman is not allowed to have a job or have an education. Most people today do not believe that there are good reasons to continue these traditions.

Thus, an uncritical acceptance of past "wisdom" is similar in its inferential weakness to that of appeals to Popularity and Authority. A Traditional Wisdom fallacy is committed when an action or belief is inferred to be good or reliable simply because the premise says it was considered good or reliable in the past. No support is given as to why the action or belief was considered good or reliable in the past and whether the action still reliably applies in the present or the belief matches current evidence. Here is an example given to me by a former student who at the time was studying to become a police officer.

EXAMPLE 4-4

Policeman: "Captain, why do we have to issue twenty traffic citations per month?"

Captain: "Because when I was where you are I had to issue twenty citations per month, and my superior before that had to, and his superior before that also had to, that's why!"

According to my student, as a new recruit in training he had to drive around in a very conspicuously marked police car. Veterans, however, were able to buy their own cars, which were unmarked most of the time, and they could quickly place a portable police light on top of their cars when needed. Hence, my student found it very hard to make the established monthly quota, because most people slow down and drive more carefully when they see a marked police car behind them. He also wondered why there was a quota system in the first place. And why twenty? Should he give a ticket to someone who was driving only a few miles over the speed limit just to be able to make his quota? It seemed to him that in one month he might give a ticket to someone who was only driving five miles over the speed limit, because he needed to make his quota, but that in another month he might let someone go who was driving ten miles over the speed limit because he had already made his quota.
Note that the captain's argument did not answer my student's question. The original reason for the policy was not given (it was probably not even known or remembered), and its applicability to the present circumstances was not discussed. Just as in the case of the Little League baseball example in Chapter 1, the policy's relevance for the present is not tested. A very good reason might have existed for the original policy, and once we discovered what it was we could be in a better position to see whether it still applies. Thus, like the other fallacies of relevance discussed so far, this argument is not on track -- the reasons for the original policy are not discussed nor the present applicability of the policy.

Here is a structured analysis of the captain's argument, followed by the formal essence or recipe of all Traditional Wisdom appeals.

**EXAMPLE 4-4A**

Conclusion: Policemen should issue twenty citations per month.

Premise: Because policemen have always been responsible for issuing twenty citations per month.

Label & Description: Traditional Wisdom. There is an appeal to traditional wisdom in the premise ("policemen have always").

Argument Analysis: The reasoning is weak. Even if it is true that twenty citations have been a standard for all policemen to follow for some time, the original reasons for this policy are not revealed and the issue of whether present circumstances warrant a continuation of this policy is not discussed. What were the initial reasons for a quota system? Why the number twenty? Should there still be a quota system?

**EXAMPLE 4-4B**

Conclusion: Do X, believe X, or (in the case of an advertisement) buy X.

Premise: Because X has always been done, believed, or bought.

Label & Description: Traditional Wisdom. There is a traditional wisdom appeal (X "has always") in the premise.

Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if the premise is true, the inferential link is weak. Develop by pointing out that the original reason for X and its current applicability should be discussed.

Again, note that the premise is not attacked on the basis of its truth, but on its relevance. In analyzing Traditional Wisdom appeals we are not interested in whether it is true that something has been traditionally accepted, but rather in learning why something has been traditionally accepted and whether it still applies. Nor is our intention to reject all appeals.
to the alleged wisdom of the past, but rather to critically appraise traditional beliefs and policies and preserve those that continue to be reliable. Supporting education for all people is a tradition in democratic countries. But it would not take much time for any of us to think of initial good reasons for this tradition and further reasons why the traditional practice still applies today. In the late 1990s self-proclaimed gurus of the Internet revolution announced that the rise of the Internet and online courses would soon produce the death of traditional classroom teaching. Traditional teaching was ridiculed as old-fashioned. Today, the jury is still very much out on the relative worth of online classes vs. the traditional classroom experience.17 “New and modern” does not automatically equate to good anymore than does “old and traditional.” What matters is the wisdom of an action given present circumstances and the reliability of a belief based on evidence.

**Provincialism**

In addition to our natural desire to belong to a general group, we usually have specific group allegiances and identify with people we think are most like ourselves. We not only identify with a general culture and then various subcultures, but also with our own time and place. Children at a certain age will naturally fear strangers and a general us-vs.-them attitude probably played a major positive role in the struggle for survival of our hominid ancestors. However, traditionally a person is said to have a "provincial attitude" if he or she over-identifies to the point of cultural nearsightedness, thinking that a particular way of living is the only possible way to live.

From a modern perspective that takes into account the many groups, subgroups, allegiances, associations, and cliques that exist in a diverse social environment, a **Provincialism** fallacy can be thought of as a more specific version of an Appeal to Popularity. A provincial appeal is misused when it takes us off track by accepting what an "in-group" believes or does without discussing the reasons for the beliefs or actions.

In the early 1970s, a pivotal election for governor of Hawaii occurred, the result of which was destined to change the state's political structure for decades. Because Hawaii was a state run primarily by Democrats, the primary election race was decisive for who would become governor. At that time, the primary race was very close between George Ariyoshi and Thomas Gill for the Democratic nomination. Just days before the voting an advertisement surfaced on a local Japanese-language radio station. Part of the advertisement reminded the Japanese-speaking listeners that if George Ariyoshi was elected, he would be the first governor of Japanese ancestry in the entire history of the United States. Ethnic Japanese make up a large voting block in the state of Hawaii, so one can easily imagine that this powerful appeal had a significant affect on the outcome of the election, which George Ariyoshi won. Although in many ways ethnic Japanese now constitute a majority in terms of political power and influence, like other immigrants who came to work in the sugar plantations for the rich Republican Caucasians, for generations their families had faced a long, hard struggle to achieve respect and economic

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17 Many of my online students tell me that they wish they had the time flexibility to take a regular classroom course for introduction to logic.
security. For many it is likely that having “one of their own” become governor was a fitting consummation of their struggle and accomplishment.

Surely there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such sentiments, and it is admirable for a people to be proud of their ancestry. But note how such sentiments in this case were misdirected, not just for those who were not Japanese, but for those who were Japanese as well. It would not have been a fitting consummation of the struggle of ethnic Japanese if George Ariyoshi turned out to be a poor governor and leader or if his policies led to disastrous results for the state. It would not have been a fitting consummation to their struggle if George Ariyoshi ended up embarrassing other ethnic Japanese. What was really relevant for ethnic Japanese was George Ariyoshi's qualifications, not merely his ethnicity. Here is a structured analysis of this advertisement as a Provincialism fallacy, followed by its formal essence or recipe.

**EXAMPLE 4-5**

**Conclusion:** Vote for George Ariyoshi.

**Premise:** Ariyoshi will be the first governor of Japanese ancestry in the entire history of the United States. (Implied: you should vote for Ariyoshi if you are Japanese; support one of your own.)

**Label & Description:** Provincialism. There is an in-group appeal (ethnic Japanese) in the premise.

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. Even if the premise is true that George Ariyoshi will be the first governor of Japanese ancestry in the entire history of the United States, the reasoning is weak because there is an appeal to the identity of Japanese ancestry at the expense of an overall evaluation of Ariyoshi's qualifications for governor. His position on the issues, his past accomplishments and experience, his plans for the future, and evidence of leadership ability should be discussed.

**EXAMPLE 4-5a**

**Conclusion:** Do X, believe X, or (in the case of an advertisement) buy X.

**Premise:** Because this is an alleged appropriate thing for Y (an in-group) to do, believe, or buy.

**Label & Description:** Provincialism. There is an in-group appeal (describe Y) in the premise.

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. Even if it is true that a particular group of people support a belief or course of action, the reasons for that support need to be discussed. Develop a case that the inference is weak because the relevant issues are
not discussed, that the relevant reasons why an in-group should support something should be discussed.

As Lincoln's famous adage that you can't fool all the people all the time reminds us, sometimes provincial appeals can backfire politically. Daniel Akaka, later a United States senator from the state of Hawaii, once ran for lieutenant governor with an advertisement that not so subtly reminded the voters that he would be the first Hawaiian to achieve such a high office. Non-Hawaiians, and perhaps even many Hawaiians as this was a general advertisement on TV, were insulted, and Akaka lost badly. In the 2008 gubernatorial election, Mufi Hannemann also tried this ploy: “Compare and decide. He looks like you. He was born in Hawaii. His wife was born in Hawaii. His opponent, Neil Abercrombie, was born on the mainland. His wife was born on the mainland. You deserve a governor that can relate to local people.” It also seemed to backfire.

During the early 1990s, the rap megastar Ice Cube could be seen in advertisements endorsing St. Ides malt liquor, a high-alcohol beer. In magazines targeted for inner city black residents, he would be holding a can of St. Ides while flashing a gang sign. Message: If you want to be "in," if you want to be one of the "home boys" drink St. Ides; other domestic beers are for wimpy white boys. He also appeared in television commercials that contained rap lyrics implying that the beer increased male sexual success.

After 9/11, appeals to ethnic identity could be seen escalating to almost a clash of civilizations. Qibla Cola Company began to market a Coke look-a-like soda in Muslim countries. The new soft drink was aimed at “liberating” Muslim tastes from “global consumer brands that support anti-Islamic policies.” It was the “conscious choice” of
those who “reject injustice and exploitation” against Muslims.

Liberate your taste. Time to make a choice. (A similar cola, Mecca Cola, purportedly offered Muslims and alternative cola to combat "America's imperialism and Zionism by providing a substitute for American goods and increasing the blockade of countries boycotting American goods.")

However, you should not generalize from these examples that all provincial appeals are racial. Many advertisers target specific groups of people in marketing their products. For years Marlboro cigarette ads have been aimed at men who think of themselves as rugged and independent, showing scenes of adventurous, muscular men riding horseback in spectacular wilderness settings. More recent ads show men riding Black Stallion 4x4 Jeeps and ask you to join the Marlboro Adventure team.

One of the most famous examples of in-group targeting was the Virginia Slims cigarette advertisements found in magazines during the 1970s and '80s. During a time of the feminist movement and a general acknowledgment that women have had to overcome gender discrimination to develop their potential and to accomplish their goals, these advertisements typically showed two scenes: an old-fashioned black-and-white photograph of a woman working hard for a mean and oppressive husband and a color photograph of a slim, attractive modern woman, holding a Virginia Slims cigarette, looking independent and self-assured. The main caption of the advertisement read, "You've come along way baby," and a smaller caption read, "Slimmer than the fat cigarettes men smoke." If you identified with this new woman, then you were supposed to smoke Virginia Slims.
Politicians will also target particular groups. Whereas winning the vote of “soccer moms” was important in the 2000 presidential election, after 9/11 “security moms” became more important in 2004. Republicans and Democratic candidates also fought hard to win the vote of “NASCAR Dads.” A few months before the 2004 election, George W. Bush attended the Nextel Cup stock car race at the New Hampshire International Speedway in Loudon, N.H. More than 100,000 people attended. The Democrats attempted to have John Edwards, Vice Presidential candidate, use his small-town, rural Southern background to appeal to this group. During the 2008 presidential election, president Obama’s campaign made the first heavy use of the Internet, YouTube, social networking, and texting to appeal to millions of younger voters. In this case, by merely using the medium of communication of a particular group, the appeal of the message was strengthened.

Many advertisements imply that our time is the best and that if you are "in" with modern ways you will buy their product. Other examples of provincialism would be when we are urged to be "pro-choice" on abortion because this is the position of enlightened, intelligent, modern people, and urging support for President Clinton's policies in the first few years of his presidency as a vote for the future accepted by a new generation. Or, when Miller beer, noted already for its switching back and forth over the years between snob and bandwagon appeals, advertised its new Ice Beer at the same time as the Clinton appeals -- "New Rules, New Beer, New Light Ice Miller Beer." Note that such wisdom-of-our-time appeals are the psychological opposite of the wisdom-of-the-past appeals in Traditional Wisdom. Like different authorities endorsing different positions or products, such psychological opposition shows that what really ought to be decisive and persuasive is something deeper than a mere claim of the wisdom of the past or intelligence of the present.
Notice that when the appeal is to an in-group of supposedly intelligent people—people who are supposedly above the herd mentality of average people—it matters little whether we classify the fallacy as a snob-appeal version of Popularity or Provincialism. Technically, the fallacies can be distinguished because Provincialism applies to a wider range of identifications than "smart people." In a concrete case, it may not matter which label is used. The important point, regardless of the label, is that relevant issues are not being discussed and the argument analysis should make clear what should be discussed.

**Appeal to Loyalty**

The movers and shakers of history are powerless without a sense of solidarity, purpose, and cause engendered in those they lead. Nationalism and loyalty to one's country are the result of focusing the psychology of group identity on a flag and its history. Every country has stories of great sacrifice by loyal heroes in its history books. Yet, because heroes are killed by other heroes, and war and armed combat carry such great consequences, should we not be sure of our reasons for loyalty? Like the fallacies previously discussed, an appeal to a blind commitment of loyalty misplaces a natural psychological reaction when it shifts attention from what we should focus on in making a decision or discussing an important issue. An **Appeal to Loyalty** fallacy is committed when an argument is given that distracts us from the issues by appealing to loyalty in the premises without any reasons offered for the loyalty.

Here is an example from former U.S. President Richard Nixon, commenting on the significance of American prisoners of war in Vietnam returning to the United States after years in captivity:

**EXAMPLE 4-6**

"When a POW (prisoner of war) can return after six and one-half years with the phrase ‘God bless America’ on his lips, it (the war in Vietnam) has all been worthwhile."

The Vietnam War was highly controversial, and many people opposed the involvement as not in the best interests of the United States. The issue was not whether to be loyal, but determining the loyal thing to do—support the war effort or try to stop it? Given that the war cost $676 billion, that 15 million tons of munitions and 100 million tons of chemical herbicides were used, that eight thousand aircraft were lost, that thousands of innocent civilians were killed by friendly fire and collateral damage, that 53,813 U.S. soldiers were killed, and more than three hundred thousand wounded, and that the war was estimated to cost $12,000 per U.S. family (in 1970 dollars) in terms of taxation and inflation—were the foreign policy reasons for this effort persuasive? Was the war a colossal mistake? Nixon may have had very good reasons for continuing to support military involvement, and we may admire the commitment of others and sympathize with their suffering for a cause, but the reasons are not given here, and our sympathy is not evidence that the cause was just. Loyalty to a cause does not justify itself.

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18 By 2010, the cost of the Iraq War, started in 2003, was over $730 billion.
As late as 2010 great damage was still being done to the Vietnamese people from the Agent Orange defoliate (dioxin) used in Vietnam by the United States. That year a joint panel of Vietnamese officials and international scientists announced a recommendation that the U.S. government and other donors provide $30 million a year for ten years to clean up the contaminated sites that were still causing severe medical problems, particularly for Vietnamese children.

Below is a formal analysis of Nixon's argument followed by the formal essence/recipe for all Appeals to Loyalty.

**EXAMPLE 4-6a**

**Conclusion:** The U.S. military involvement in Vietnam was justified.

**Premise:** POWs supported their country even though they faced extreme hardships (implied: supporting the military involvement in Vietnam was the loyal thing to do.)

**Label & Description:** Appeal to Loyalty. There is an appeal to loyalty in the premise.

**Argument Analysis:** The reasoning is weak. Even if it is true that a number of people remained loyal to a controversial cause, this is not relevant to the justification of that cause. Attention is shifted away from a discussion of the issues as to why we should also be loyal to this cause. Was the military involvement in the best interests of the United States? The reasons in terms of foreign policy objectives are not described that would justify our loyalty to this cause.

**EXAMPLE 4-6B**

**Conclusion:** Do X, believe X, or (in the case of an advertisement) buy X.

**Premise:** Because supporting X is the loyal thing to do.
Label & Description: Appeal to Loyalty. There is an appeal to loyalty in the premise.

Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if supporting $X$ is an alleged act of loyalty to a cause, such support is irrelevant in terms of shifting attention away from the reasons for supporting that cause. That $X$ is supported as a loyal action or belief does not explain why it should be. Criticize and develop by describing the issues that should be discussed.

Defense budgets are often supported by blind appeals to loyalty. Often we hear that we should support $600$ billion defense budgets because we should be loyal to the men and women who suffered or fought for us in past wars and allowed us to experience the freedom and prosperity we enjoy today. However, such appeals say nothing about the wisdom of the particular expenditures today. Do we need the particular items specified in a $600$ billion budget? Is each one a quality product that will help us achieve our security goals? Is each weapon relevant to the times and not a weapon supported only because of a special economic interest? Is it not true that wasting money today, if the expenditures are not wise, would be an insult to the brave men and women who supported our country in the past? A tragic insult? Perhaps these men and women suffered so that their children and their children's children would live in a society that spent more money on education and economic development.

Speaking of brave men who supported their country in the past, during the 2002 midterm elections, Senator Max Cleland was defeated by Republican challenger Saxby Chambliss in Georgia. A pivotal part of the campaign was a Republican commercial attacking Cleland's patriotism, loyalty, and President Bush's attempts on strengthening homeland security.

The spot begins with a screen showing video footage of al Qaeda terrorist leader Osama bin Laden and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. "As America faces terrorists and extremist dictators, Max Cleland runs television ads claiming he has the courage to lead," an announcer states.

The ad continues: "Max Cleland says he has the courage to lead. But the record proves Max Cleland is just misleading."

It is true that Cleland opposed the Homeland Security bill as it was being presented at the time. He objected to its workability given that it would create the largest bureaucracy in our history, and its fairness given democratic principles. For instance, Cleland objected to provisions that would protect major pharmaceutical companies from being sued and a provision that would allow nuclear power plants to keep accidents secret from the public.

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19 We should also keep in mind that we must distinguish between issues of public policy, how these policies should be decided in a democracy, and how they should be carried out. Once a policy is decided democratically, and the implementation of that policy involves military action, loyalty may be the most appropriate response. If every individual soldier second-guessed every democratically decided policy, we would not accomplish our policy goals.
Also included in the bill at the time was a provision that would limit the legal liability for manufacturers of thimerosal, a mercury-based additive to vaccines that some people believe is linked to autism in children. Its principal beneficiary would be the pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly, which developed thimerosal and had considerable influence in Washington. It contributed more than $1.5 million to Congressional candidates in the previous election cycle, and Mitchell E. Daniels Jr., the director of the White House Office of Management and Budget at the time, was formerly its president of North American operations. There was also a massive pork barrel project for Texas A&M University.

Although Cleland was a decorated veteran who lost two legs and an arm in Vietnam, his loyalty and patriotism were questioned in this political ad and throughout the campaign. Chamblis was able to avoid the draft during the Vietnam war, but he was a loyal supporter of President Bush at a time of anxiety and fear of terrorism a year after 9/11. The election was very close, but Cleland lost.

Although support for a military involvement is the most natural place for Appeals to Loyalty to occur, as the conclusion of the recipe above shows, Appeals to Loyalty can be used in as many ways as Appeals to Authority, Popularity, Traditional Wisdom, and Provincialism. By the 1980s, the Japanese had become a major world economic power by producing quality products and exporting them to the United States and Europe. This occurred in part because they spent only a small portion of their capital assets on military defense and hence were able to invest these assets in ultramodern production techniques that used computer technology and robotics. While the United States poured an enormous amount of its assets into a military hardware cold-war race with the former Soviet Union, the best electronic products, such as VCRs, TVs, and stereos became almost all Japanese-made. And Japanese automobile manufacturing, previously an industry dominated by the United States, began to seriously threaten the profits of U.S. manufacturers. Some U.S. manufacturers responded with advertisements that appealed to loyalty to the country. Chrysler, for instance, began running ads that reminded United States citizens that they should buy its cars because they were made "in America." For the most part, such ads did not work. People know that quality is the relevant and decisive issue in purchasing a product. Eventually, U.S. business and political leaders began to figure it out. The most loyal thing to do was to forsake fruitless attempts to shift attention away from the underlying problem, and instead invest more capital assets into retooling U.S. industry, which was seriously behind that of the Japanese in efficiency and modern equipment.

As we have noted several times in this book, most examples of bad reasoning are not reliable in the long run because they do not force us to test our beliefs. They shift attention away from relevant issues, perhaps making us feel good for awhile or relieving tension by offering alluring shortcuts to complex situations. Still reality has a way of eventually penetrating even our strongest psychological masks.

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20 Even though some of Chrysler's cars at the time were manufactured in Canada and some even had Japanese engines!
Two Wrongs Make A Right

Another way that attention is drawn away from testing the merit of a course of action is to shift attention to another action and question its merit. This method of reasoning is often persuasive because most people are morally sensitive to hypocrisy and to a basic principle of justice of equal treatment. If one person is doing something thought to be wrong, it hardly seems appropriate for that person to criticize someone else who is doing the same thing. But the inappropriateness of the criticism is a different matter and should be separated from the rightness or wrongness of the action itself. The inappropriateness of the criticism does not magically make the action being criticized right. The criticism and the action can both be wrong. For instance, if it is wrong for the average person to cheat on his or her taxes, then it is unethical for a government official to avoid just taxation. But unjust action on the part of a government official should not shift attention away from the general issue of the wrongness of cheating on taxes for everyone.

A Two Wrongs Make a Right fallacy confuses a charge of hypocrisy and injustice with the relevant discussion necessary to justify a course of action. This fallacy is committed when instead of providing the reasons why an apparently questionable course of action is actually meritorious, it shifts attention in a premise to another, allegedly similar, questionable action. If, between two allegedly similar actions, one is considered acceptable and the other is not, this may be unjust or hypocritical, but the bare fact of the apparent similarity does not justify the claim that the actions are really similar or why either is acceptable. Here is a classic example:

EXAMPLE 4-7

Alcohol, Valium, and many other harmful addictive drugs are legal in our society. Anti-depressants are marketed to children. Cirrhosis of the liver and car crashes due to alcohol kill 75,000 Americans each year. U.S. citizens consume twenty thousand tons of aspirin each year, and 16,000 people die each year from over-the-counter pain medications. Approximately 100,000 people a year die from legal prescription drugs. Carcinogenic chemicals and genetically engineered ingredients can legally be placed in the food we eat. Therefore, marijuana should be legalized.

The conclusion of this argument is that marijuana should be legalized, but instead of discussing the marijuana issue directly and testing the merits of the legalization claim, attention is shifted in the premises to other "acceptable wrongs." That the consumption of marijuana is illegal and alcohol is legal could well be a constitutionally unjust situation. If it could be demonstrated that one group of people use marijuana and another group of people use alcohol, and if it could be shown that marijuana as a recreational means of personal relaxation is no more harmful physiologically and socially than alcohol, then a case could be made that the law discriminates against marijuana users. However, to

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21 A more technical way of putting this is to note the difference between an ethical and a logical judgment. If actions X and Y are both wrong, it may be unethical for one to be acceptable and the other not, but this is a different matter than the logically relevant reasons for judging X and Y to be wrong in the first place.
demonstrate discrimination would be only the first step in a legalization argument,\(^{22}\) and to do so would involve discussing why alcohol is an acceptable wrong followed by a comprehensive comparison of alcohol and marijuana to see if they are indeed similar. Once these issues have been investigated, a discussion could follow on whether marijuana should also be an acceptable wrong. In short, a better argument would involve a discussion of why these other drugs are legal and whether the results of this discussion apply also in the case of marijuana. The pros and cons of marijuana use should be discussed somewhere in the premises, otherwise we would fail to test the merits of the legalization claim.

Here is an analysis of the above argument, followed by the formal essence or recipe for all Two Wrongs Make a Right fallacies.

**EXAMPLE 4-7a**

**Conclusion:** Marijuana should be legalized.

**Premises:** Alcohol, Valium, and many other harmful addictive drugs are legal in our society. Anti-depressants are marketed to children. Cirrhosis of the liver and car crashes due to alcohol kill 75,000 Americans each year. U.S. citizens consume twenty thousand tons of aspirin each year, and many people die from its use. Approximately 100,000 people a year die from legal prescription drugs. Carcinogenic chemicals and genetically engineered ingredients can legally be placed in the food we eat.

**Label & Description:** Two Wrongs Make a Right. Other acceptable wrongs (the use of alcohol, Valium, etc.) are cited in the premises that are not directly related to the issue stated in the conclusion.

**Argument Analysis:** The reasoning is weak. Rather than referring to the specific issues related to marijuana legalization, the argument shifts attention to the fact that other wrongs allegedly similar to marijuana legalization are acceptable. A better argument would involve a discussion of why alcohol and the other drugs mentioned are legal and whether the results of this discussion apply also in the case of marijuana in the sense that laws should be consistent. In other words, somewhere in the premises the pros and cons of marijuana use (related health concerns and such) should be debated.\(^{23}\)

**EXAMPLE 4-7b**

**Conclusion:** X is okay or acceptable.

**Premise:** Because Y is already considered to be okay or acceptable.

\(^{22}\) There might be good reasons why our society has decided to discriminate. We might admit that marijuana is no worse than alcohol, but decide that we do not want to add one more legal drug to the pressures of our current social situation.

\(^{23}\) Further arguments might involve the amount of money saved on law enforcement and redirected toward drug education, different ways of legalization, such as decriminalization, and the benefits of taxation.
Label & Description: Two Wrongs Make a Right. Cites an acceptable wrong in the premise.

Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if it is true that Y is acceptable, a discussion is needed as to why Y is acceptable and then the results of this discussion applied to X by comparing X and Y. Are there good reasons why Y is acceptable? Do those same reasons apply in the case of X?

A version of Two Wrongs Make a Right that is often confused with Appeal to Popularity is called Common Practice. Appeals to Popularity have the tone, "Most people are doing X (implying that it is good that they are), therefore you should." As with Two Wrongs Make a Right, Common Practice has the tone, "Lots of people are doing X (even though it is wrong), so it is okay for me to do X also." Appeals to Popularity urge us to accept something as good because many other people apparently do. Common Practice urges us to accept or ignore a questionable action because others are doing it (the action is common). Similar to Two Wrongs, Common Practice shifts attention away from what should be discussed: the reasons for the acceptability of the actions of others, whether these reasons are good reasons, and so on.

In 1988, at the beginning of President George Bush's term, a major issue was made of his attempt to appoint former Senator John Tower as secretary of defense. Numerous allegations were made concerning Tower's character, such as his alleged alcohol use and attitude toward women. Of the many stories that surfaced in the news, one concerned Colonel Robert L. Moser, a former top-ranking staff member and aide to Tower at the 1985 United States-Soviet arms-control talks in Geneva. According to news reports, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations uncovered an "alarming pattern of disregard for security regulations" by Moser and raised "serious questions of Moser's integrity and conduct." The Air Force issued him a formal reprimand for adultery, sexually harassing his secretary, and having her perform personal business tasks for him at government expense. The Air Force further claimed that he had a two-year affair with an Austrian woman connected with Soviet agents. When investigators confronted Moser with these allegations, he did not deny them but responded with the defense that "others" in the one hundred member Geneva delegation were conducting themselves in a similar manner. The nuclear armament situation between the United States and the then-Soviet Union was probably at an all-time low point during the mid-1980s. Thousands of nuclear missiles were targeted on each other's cities, then-President Reagan had called the Soviet Union an "evil empire" and was about to install more nuclear missiles in Europe, and there seemed no end in sight to the nuclear arms race and its negative effect on the economies of both countries. It was not a good time to get off track as to what was relevant to matters of "security regulations."

In 2002 critics of the President George W. Bush claimed he was guilty of insider trading in 1990 when he was a board of director for Harken Energy. Mr. Bush sold close to $900,000 of stock for $4 a share just before the company reported a $23 million quarterly loss. The stock soon plummeted to $1 a share and other investors lost millions of dollars. A board of director of a company is required by law to file a record of a company stock
sale to the Securities and Exchange commission, thus making the information fully public so that other investors have a chance to know something might be wrong with the company and sell their stock before the stock plummets. Or, at least other investors can consider not buying the stock at its current price. Mr. Bush was therefore able sell his stock at a higher price and to people (whoever bought the stock at $4 a share) who would then lose 3/4ths of their money. According to critics, Mr. Bush filed forms late on stock transactions four different times in his business career. In 2002, Dan Bartlett, White House communications director, answered the critics by saying that selling stock in a company and reporting it late to the SEC is "not out of the ordinary." In other words, it was a common practice.

Although the SEC started an investigation into Mr. Bush's stock transactions, no charges were filed. Mr. Bush's father was president of the United States at the time.

According to President Bush (2002), "Everything I do is fully disclosed. It is fully vetted." According to Bush, the filings were late due to "clerical problems" and "communication" problems with his lawyers, and "in the corporate world sometimes things aren't exactly black and white when it comes to accounting." The forms for the $900,000 deal were filed 34 weeks late. Also, according to President Bush, the charges are just "old politics" and just "recycled stuff."

Ad Hominem Abusive and Circumstantial

The implication of Bush’s “old politics” charge is that those attacking him had poor motives – they were simply attacking him for political points. Possibly true, of course, but was the underlying issue addressed? Was Bush innocent of any wrongdoing? Even if those attacking Bush had poor motives, could they not have been right about the charge that he broke the law and received special treatment?

It is a sad fact that most political debate involves personal attacks rather than an in depth discussion of the issues. Although a candidate's character is clearly a relevant matter in voting for someone, too often character appraisal is used as a dangerous shortcut to understanding complex issues. Too often, many voters assume that if they like a person's character that person will support the positions they want supported. So, even though there is no necessary relationship between a person's character and their position on the issues, politicians will spend a lot of energy attacking their opponents personally. Above, President Bush "wrote off" the serious charges against him as just old politics, as politically motivated attacks with no substance. There may have been no substance to the charges against him, but knowing the motives of his critics was not relevant to knowing what really happened.

An Ad Hominem (to attack the person) fallacy is committed when the conclusion of an argument is directed at a person's stance on an issue, but the premises offer no relevant critique of the person's stance on the debated issue and substitute a personal attack instead. There are two types:
1. **Ad Hominem Abusive:** a person is attacked by simply being called creative names.

   “John Kerry is wrong about what we should do now in Iraq, because he flip-flops on the issues.”

   “George Bush is wrong about what we should do now in Iraq. All he does is give speeches full of fools gold empty rhetoric.”

   "President Obama should not be reelected because he is the most successful food stamp president in American history."

2. **Ad Hominem Circumstantial:** a person is attacked based on his or her present or past circumstances ("he was arrested once") or motives ("just old politics") related to holding a particular position.

Here are some detailed examples.

In the early 1980s, the Reagan administration proposed a massive legislative package that supporters said would implement a forward-looking "New Federalism." Consistent with Reagan's political philosophy, this legislation had the goal of decentralizing most federal government services, including welfare and education, by turning them over to the states. It was unclear to most members of Congress how the states would pay for these services, so the legislation received a very cold welcome in both the Senate and House. One of Reagan's responses to the rejection of his legislation was to refer to the members of Congress as just a "bunch of mindless dinosaurs." Some members of Congress, evidently stung by this criticism, responded that Reagan's proposal lacked substance and was only a political ploy to "direct attention away from the faltering economy." Reagan had called members of Congress a name, but did not respond to their substantive reasons for opposing his legislation; the congressional response attacked the Reagan administration's motives for introducing the legislation. In neither case were the main issues debated publicly for the voting public—the details of the New Federalism and the possible effects of implementing such a package. Here is the argument structure for both appeals followed by their recipes:

**EXAMPLE 4-8**

**Conclusion:** Those who oppose Reagan's New Federalism legislation are wrong to do so.

**Premise:** They are just a bunch of mindless dinosaurs.

**Label & Description:** Ad Hominem Abusive. There is name-calling in the premise ("mindless dinosaurs").

**Argument Analysis:** The reasoning is weak. Attacking one's opponents by name-calling is not relevant for concluding that their arguments are poor or invalid. Attention has been
shifted from the relevant details of the New Federalism to a personal attack of those who oppose its implementation. To know whether the arguments of congressional critics were poor or not, their arguments need to be discussed. To know whether the legislation had merit or not, a detailed analysis of the legislation and its probable effects was needed. Reagan might have been right that this legislation would be good for the United States, but only by discussing the issues would we know.

**EXAMPLE 4-8a**

**Conclusion**: X's argument or position on Y is invalid or poor.

**Premise**: X is a Z (name-calling).

**Label & Description**: Ad Hominem Abusive. There is name-calling in the premise (identify Z).

**Argument Analysis**: The reasoning is weak. Attention has been shifted from the relevant substantive issues related to X's argument and X is attacked personally by name-calling. To know whether X's argument is invalid, the details of X's argument need to be discussed. Finding a creative name with which to brand X's position does not mean that name is accurate nor is it relevant to the substantive issues raised by X's argument. Develop by indicating what ideas, beliefs, or proposals should be discussed.

**EXAMPLE 4-9**

**Conclusion**: Reagan's New Federalism is worthless and should be rejected.

**Premise**: This legislative package has been introduced at this time simply as a political ploy to direct attention away from the faltering economy.

**Label & Description**: Ad Hominem Circumstantial. A circumstantial appeal is made in the premise (Reagan's alleged motives).

**Argument Analysis**: The reasoning is weak. Rather than analyze the details of Reagan's New Federalism proposal and describe substantive flaws in the legislation relevant to the conclusion, attention is shifted to the possible motives for the legislation. Even if the motives are suspect for the timing of the legislation, the ideas embodied in the legislation could still be worthy. To know that the legislation is worthless, it would have to be read, studied, analyzed, and debated. Poor motives are relevant grounds for suspicion that the ideas may not be well-supported, but not relevant to the conclusion that the ideas are worthless.

**EXAMPLE 4-9a**

**Conclusion**: X's argument or position on Y is invalid or poor.
Premise: Because of the circumstances or motives related to X's defense or support for Y

Label & Description: Ad Hominem Circumstantial. Cites personal circumstances or motives in the premise rather than an analysis of Y.

Argument Analysis: The reasoning is weak. Although the circumstances or poor motives may be true, this would not be directly relevant to concluding that the position supported is poor. Ideas, beliefs, proposals can be correct, acceptable, or worthy even if the motives for them are suspect. To know, the ideas, beliefs, or proposals need to be studied, analyzed, and discussed. Develop by indicating what ideas, beliefs, or proposals should be discussed.

Note that Ad Hominems always involve two people or groups of people: An arguer A who has presented an argument, and an arguer B who attacks the character, motive, or circumstances related to A's argument instead of the issues raised by A. Arguer B is guilty of the Ad Hominem.

Ad Hominem Circumstantial appeals are very persuasive psychologically because as a shortcut in separating the reasonable appeals from all the myriad conceivable appeals, there is sometimes an underlying rationality to this type of thinking that we do accept. In a court of law, for instance, the character and motive of a witness is clearly relevant to the acceptance of testimony. Suppose a man has been charged with murder and I claimed to have witnessed it. If you were on the jury and I were the only witness in a murder trial, you would be justifiably suspicious of the truth of my testimony if you discovered through the defense's cross-examination that I had a criminal record, had failed lie-detector tests on numerous occasions, and not only knew the defendant, but had reason to hate him. Suppose you found out that years ago he had an affair with my wife, that she had left me for him, and that I had vowed publicly to get even someday. Clearly, if there were no other corroborating items of evidence indicating that the defendant was guilty, my testimony alone could not be used to convict the defendant. However, even in a court of law there is an important but major technical difference between being suspicious of testimony and the truth of testimony. I could still be telling the truth about this event even if I had lied many times before and even though my motives are clearly less than civic. But because in a court of law we are innocent until proven guilty, evidence related to a conclusion of suspicion is important and appropriate for doubting the truth of testimony.

The underlying rationality of such circumstantial appeals is inductive. We reason that if a person lied previously, they are probably lying now. If there is enough doubt that a person is telling the truth, then it would be unwise to accept the truth of what they say. If a person's motives are less than ideal for a belief, proposal, or policy, then we suspect that the belief, proposal, or policy has been "conjured up" and must not be a sound solution to a problem. However, from a deductive point of view, circumstantial appeals present a problem of relevance. Evidence related to suspicion that a belief has just been conjured up is not necessarily evidence that the belief itself has no merit. Even conjured-up beliefs can be true! I might believe in God because it makes me feel comfortable, gives my life
meaning, and offers hope that when I die there will not be just a terrifying "nothingness." That this belief makes me feel secure is not evidence that my belief is true, but it is also not direct evidence that my belief is false. My motives would be relevant to doubting that I had any real evidence that God exists, but my belief could still be true even if I had suspect motives, and I may have even "stumbled" upon some real evidence because of my need for security. The notion of a loving Supreme Being may have been invented by human beings to help face the harsh realities of existence. But a Supreme Being could still exist anyway. Only by looking at and criticizing what I consider to be evidence for a Supreme Being would we know if the evidence is poor or not.

Appeals to suspect motives and circumstances are often persuasive because many times motives and circumstances are all that we have to go on. In autumn 1991 citizens of the United States witnessed a wrenching confirmation hearing for Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas. Anita Hill, then a college law professor made unprecedented sexual harassment allegations against Thomas. The harassment allegedly occurred when she worked for Thomas in the Office for Equal Employment Opportunity during the Reagan administration. Political polls showed that most people were very confused over who was telling the truth. Hill seemed credible when she made the charge. Thomas seemed credible when he forcefully denied sexually harassing her. Because, as in most sexual harassment cases, there were no witnesses, supporters of Hill and Thomas shifted attention to possible motives and circumstances.

At the Senate hearings supporters of Hill and Thomas had witnesses corroborating their honesty and general character and attacking that of the other. Thomas obviously had a motive for lying. He wanted to be confirmed to the Supreme Court. Did Hill have any motive for lying? Yes, said Thomas supporters, to promote her career by being a brave hero for sexual harassment victims. Revenge: The claim was made that Thomas had rejected Hill's amorous advances, rather than, as Hill claimed, the other way around. Political differences: Hill was more liberal than Thomas, and she did not want him confirmed to the Supreme Court. Mental instability: The claim was made by supporters of Thomas that Hill showed previous signs of mental illness.

Because the evidential focus was now purely inductive, was there any corroborating evidence supporting either side? Yes, and no. Angela Wright also worked for Thomas and also claimed to have been sexually harassed. However, supporters of Thomas pointed out that Thomas fired her, so she had a motive for lying. Supporters of Hill claimed that Thomas had a history of being a consumer of pornographic videos, but the relevance of this claim was not clear, and it could not be corroborated. Supporters of Thomas cited the testimony of a former Hill boyfriend who claimed that Hill was very insecure and often made exaggerated, unstable advances to men. But when this former alleged boyfriend testified, he appeared to be a supreme egotist with a very conceited image of himself and his own appeal to women. Supporters of Thomas also cited the fact that Hill had waited more than two years to make these charges and that the timing of the charges being made then was suspect. Supporters of Hill countered that Hill's dilemma typified the situation of many harassment victims. Thomas and Hill were in an unequal power relationship;
Hill needed Thomas to recommend her for future employment; there were no witnesses, and in a male dominated society charges against a powerful male are very dangerous.

As the Senate investigation proceeded day after day, broadcast live to a soap opera audience, the circumstantial allegations probably broke all political records. Thomas claimed that the hearings were a "high-tech lynching" and that the charges against him exploited "the most bigoted, racist stereotypes of the sexual prowess of black men." (Hill had alleged that Thomas bragged about the size of his penis and how much pleasure he was able to give to women.) Many women viewers became increasingly uncomfortable with the fact that all the senators on the select committee to investigate the charges were men, and that question after question to Hill targeted her motives and status as a woman.

The result of this matter was not uplifting and was hardly material for a civics lesson. There was neither enough time nor apparently the resources to corroborate either claim. So many undecided senators gave Thomas the benefit of doubt, apparently reasoning that we are innocent until proven guilty. But was this benefit-of-the-doubt argument appropriate? The Senate hearing was not a court of law, and a nomination to the Supreme Court was at issue. But then again, any candidate could be unfairly voted against simply with a charge that raised some unsubstantiated doubt about character.

The point of this digression is that in the Thomas-Hill case we did not have access to the relevant evidence, so circumstances and motives became the only rational focus; sometimes life is tough in an imperfect world and circumstances and motives are all we have to go on. But this acknowledgment should not distract us from the fact that direct, relevant evidence often is available and should be the primary focus. What was upsetting for many people about this whole affair was that so much attention was focused on character, especially character assassination, rather than obtaining direct evidence that the allegations were true or on the main issue. Was Thomas qualified to be on the Supreme Court?

Consider an example where direct evidence was available. In the 1980s, the issue of high cholesterol content in foods and its relationship with heart disease became very controversial. Although the medical community and the American Heart Association had reached a consensus that the scientific evidence warranted a dietary recommendation to lessen intake of high cholesterol and high-fat foods, there were conflicting theories and scientific findings related to the urgency of this recommendation. Within this context, the National Food and Nutrition Board issued a report citing evidence that an insufficient connection existed between cutting fat and cholesterol intake and heart disease to make a dietary recommendation. Many members in the medical community who were urging us to cut fat and cholesterol intake condemned this report. Furthermore, two scientists on the Board were found to be paid consultants to food companies with special interests in high-cholesterol foods. The chairman of the Nutrition Board received about 10 percent of his income from Kraft Inc. and Pillsbury, and another member was an adviser and speaker for the American Egg Board and the Dairy Council of California. Millions of dollars were at stake for these companies. The American Heart Association and other health groups claimed that the report was biased. However, note that if anyone would conclude
from this that the Board's report had no merit, they would be guilty of an Ad Hominem Circumstantial fallacy. That two scientists on the Board had a potential conflict of interest seems clear, but even if these scientists were biased, the evidence the report cited could still substantiate the report's conclusion that the connection between high cholesterol foods and heart disease is weaker than previously thought. Unlike the Hill-Thomas affair, the relevant scientific studies cited in the report were available and could have been studied and analyzed. The conflict of interest of the two scientists was relevant to the charge of their being biased, but not relevant to the report's conclusion. They could have been right even if they were biased.

In 2004, Michael F. Holick, a Boston University scientist, recommended in a report published in the March issue of *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* and a book *The UV Advantage* (I Books) that many people should increase levels of Vitamin D (1,000 units per day) and have more exposure to sun, by exposing the hands, face, arms and legs to the sun for five to 15 minutes a day a few days a week. Holick argued that many people do not get enough vitamin D, and even those who do in their food need more exposure to sunlight to naturally activate the vitamin D. But Holick’s report was criticized by dermatologists and as part of that criticism it was noted that Holick received some funding from the tanning-parlor industry. Again, if true, possible bias on Holick’s part, but his claim that many people need more exposure to sunlight could be true. Dermatologists receive lots of funding from sun-screen industry, but their recommendations against too much unprotected exposure to sunlight could be reliable. Many doctors who warn us about the dangers of obesity receive money from the diet industry, but their recommendations could also be very reliable. As we saw in Chapter 3, although independent investigation and corroboration are part of the hallmarks of good scientific reasoning, ultimately, what should matter is the scientific evidence backing the various claims, not the possible motives.

In terms of maintaining the proper focus in analyzing arguments, Ad Hominem Circumstantial appeals are particularly illustrative. If our intent is to conclude bias, then appeals to motives and circumstances are on track. However, if our intent is to conclude that a belief, policy, report, or political position lacks truth, merit, or value, then it is a direct analysis of the belief, policy, report, or political position that is important.

In the summer of 2002 president Bush was asking the people of the United States and its allies to support a war and consequent ousting of the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. Critics charged that this would be a war of choice and not necessity, that the United States was becoming a "global gangster," and that the new Bush policy of "pre-emptive self-defense" and "forward deterrence," was immoral, illegal, and globally dangerous. After 9/11, Bush had proclaimed that the United States would invade any country even if the United States had not been attacked by that country, if the United States government thought that the country in question was supporting terrorism and/or was a long term threat to the United States. Some critics claimed that Bush's move against Iraq was politically motivated, that it was being offered as a distraction from the shaky economy and charges of corporate corruption scandals rocking the United States right before
crucial Congressional elections in 2002. True or not, not the main issue. Of utmost importance and focus was the question of what kind of a threat was Saddam Hussein, how urgent was that threat, and what was the best way to deal with that threat and terrorism in general. There was a general consensus that we had to attack terrorism at its source rather than wait for an attack on United States soil. But would a war with Iraq weaken or strengthen this general strategy? Did Saddam have weapons of mass destruction? Was he working with Al Qaeda and would he give weapons of mass destruction to this group to attack the United States? Or, as president Obama later claimed, would attacking Iraq seriously weaken our efforts in Afghanistan, the real center the global terrorism threat?

Consider also many successful ideas have been the result of strange or questionable motives. During the Renaissance, both Copernicus and Kepler were committed to the then revolutionary view of a spinning, moving Earth and a heliocentric (sun-centered) astronomical picture of our place in the universe, in part because they held (by modern standards) a strange religious belief that the sun was a material manifestation of God and thus should be in the center of planetary motion and the universe. They were clearly biased and committed to this view prior to an analysis of much of the observational evidence, but today in introductory science books we celebrate these men because they were right about the Earth revolving around the sun.  

We are messy creatures, and our beliefs have many origins. Even if they have been "conjured up," what matters most is whether there is evidence that they will be reliable guides to the future. In the words of Harvard naturalist Stephen Jay Gould, "People may believe correct things for the damnedest and weirdest of wrong reasons."

As a final example for this important fallacy, consider another issue raised against Clarence Thomas during his Senate confirmation hearings to be on the Supreme Court. As a federal appeals judge, Thomas wrote an opinion overturning a large damage award against the Ralston Purina company in which Thomas's friend, mentor, former boss, and chief supporter, John Danforth (Republican senator from Missouri) and his family held millions of dollars worth of stock. Notice the different items that must be disentangled for proper focus: Was Thomas's legal opinion accurate and just? Was Thomas biased? Was it proper for Thomas to rule on such a case, and should he have disqualified himself from participating in the case? If he was biased and if disqualification was the proper thing to do, did this one instance say enough about Thomas's character to raise serious questions about him being on the highest court in the country? Seldom do we separate clearly the relevant issues in the heat of such a political battle. If the focus is on the details and legal accuracy of the legal opinion issued by Thomas, then his possible bias was not relevant. Only a detailed analysis of the opinion itself mattered. But if the focus was on the ethical propriety of Thomas's ruling on such a matter at all and not disqualifying himself from participating in the case, then his possible bias was clearly relevant.

**Irrelevant Reason**

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24 They were clearly wrong about the sun being the center of the universe. Our sun is simply a grain of sand in a single vast galaxy of at least 300 billion suns, and our galaxy only one of over 100 billion galaxies.
With the exception of Questionable Cause that fits into the categorization scheme of Chapter 5, all of the fallacies we have looked at thus far are examples of irrelevant reasons—the premises are not on track and shift our attention away from what we should be thinking about. Each of the fallacies of relevance covered in this Chapter merely has a different appeal in the premises. The important argument analysis will be very similar in all of these fallacies—the premises are not discussing what should be discussed and we are obligated to list what should be discussed. There are many more examples of relevance fallacies than those sampled here. In other logic books you might find coverage of Appeal to Pity, Appeal to Force, Appeal to Ridicule, Appeal to Flattery, Appeal to Novelty, and so on. For introductory purposes our sample should be sufficient, but we will offer the final fallacy for this chapter as a generic “grab-bag” label. When the premises are clearly off-track, but, unlike Popularity, Authority, Provincialism, and others, do not involve a specific way of being off-track, then we will use Irrelevant Reason as a label.

However, there is a psychological (and often emotional) appeal to most Irrelevant Reasons that deserves comment. As an example, consider how often we watch the battle that takes place between investigative reporters and politicians. Both have been trained by their professions to be survivors in a world of half-truths. The reporter's goal is to get the "real story" behind a politician's actions and the politician has been trained to put a positive "spin" on all his or her actions and not allow the reporter to negatively "slice up" (through editing) his or her comments for the evening news and web blogs. For instance, if asked a pointed question regarding why a senator voted against a bill that would help the homeless, the senator might begin a long speech involving a narrative of his experiences during the Korean War, of how he personally witnessed homelessness on a broad scale, of how sympathetic this made him to the plight of people in need. And perhaps for good measure he will throw in a little story of his own sad childhood during the Depression. The trick is to talk about a general problem tangentially related to the issue of relevance, but to evade committing oneself to a specific solution for the problem. Everyone is in favor of solving the problem of homelessness, of eliminating poverty, of producing jobs, of maximizing freedom and equality, of promoting democratic governments around the world, and of achieving world peace. But the specific issues revolve around specific proposals and actions to achieve these goals. Thus, many irrelevant reasons attempt to give the appearance of supporting a conclusion by discussing topics that may resemble a specific issue under discussion, but actually evade or shift our attention from a discussion of the specific issue. Consider this example, a letter to the editor toward the end of the Vietnam era:

**EXAMPLE 4-10**

Bill Nolde was the last American to die in Vietnam before the cease-fire. He left behind four children and a dedicated wife. He believed in what he was doing. I wonder if those who have opposed our involvement in Vietnam ever consider such real flesh-and-blood commitments. Or, do they simply reason from an assumed dogmatic philosophy and morality? We should have stayed in Vietnam and finished what we started.
The Vietnam War was a great tragedy for the United States. Compared to the Persian Gulf War (1990) and the initial phases of the war in Afghanistan (2001) it was not a popular war, and from the point of view of the men and women who fought, and their families, the greatest tragedy concerned the lack of apparent meaning for their commitment and sacrifice. Human beings can suffer indignity, terror, hardship, and even death as long as the actions that lead to these consequences are meaningful, as long as their actions are seen as part of a righteous cause, a virtuous big picture.

By the fall of 2004 and the presidential elections of that year, the second war in Iraq was very controversial, with critics claiming that the United States was repeating the mistake it made in Vietnam. A report in my daily newspaper recounted the death of a local man who was killed in Iraq. Given the sadness of the situation for family and friends and the backdrop of the controversy, one of the soldier's friends was quoted as saying,

“I’ll tell you the cause—he came over here for his family. He came over here for his friends, and he came over here for the people of the United States, that was his cause, and he died for those people.” (Honolulu Advertiser, 9/23/2004)

But a cousin of the soldier killed was also quoted as saying,

“It’s a tragedy. When a young person gets killed that way, you question whether the war is worth it or not when something like that hits home.”

Recall the point argued for in Chapter 2. Emotion is not necessarily inconsistent with our reasoning ability and in fact can often help us focus our attention on what really should be discussed and contemplated. Was the second Iraq war worth the cost? Was the war necessary? Was it part of a smart strategy in fighting terrorism, or was it a serious diversion from the real fight? Similarly, should we have stayed in Afghanistan as long as we need?

Many who fought in Vietnam suffered numerous physical and psychological terrors. A friend of mine served as a Swift Boat commander in Vietnam. The men on these boats were ordered to patrol the narrow waterways — inlets, canals, and coves—of the Mekong River delta, extremely dangerous areas and enemy strongholds. The goal was to disrupt the Viet Cong movements and supply lines, invite attack, and flush the Viet Cong out of hiding places. All of the men on my friend's boat had been wounded within nine months of his duty period, and several sister boats had been totally destroyed and all the men on them killed, but he and his men never once saw their mysterious enemy. They often saw South Vietnamese, the people they were supposed to be fighting for, but these people never warned them of impending attacks. The Vietcong hid deep in the jungle and detonated mines along the riverbanks. These detonations sprayed shrapnel across the river, hitting the men as they patrolled up the river. They would return the fire and call in air strikes to rip up the jungle, but they never found any Vietcong bodies, not even one. When they returned to their base camp, my friend's commander would ask for a "body count," and it became clear to him that he was supposed to "estimate" how many
Vietcong they had killed. Someone might not get promoted if it appeared we were not winning the war. My friend survived this ordeal physically, but when he returned to the United States he had a complete mental collapse. The hypocrisy and terror of his experience, mixed with others' lack of respect for his commitment that he faced upon returning were too much to bear. It was not the way it was supposed to be. It was not like an old John Wayne movie where the battle lines and issues were clear, and the good guys, the honest guys, always won, and even if they died, their deaths were meaningfully mourned and respected.

There is, of course, something particularly tragic about being the last one to die in a war. If the war had ended just one day sooner, Bill Nolde would have perhaps experienced a lifetime of Little League games, picnics, graduations, and birthdays with his four children, and many loving, tender moments with his wife. We can all relate to his tragedy and wish it were not so, but the issue of whether he should have been in Vietnam in the first place, whether the United States involvement was wise, remains. Staying in Vietnam and "finishing what we started" would produce more Bill Nolde, but would not necessarily make the war justifiable and hence meaningful.

Below is an argument analysis followed by the formal essence/recipe of all Irrelevant Reasons:

**EXAMPLE 4-10A**

**Conclusion:** Our involvement in the Vietnam War was justified. ("We should have stayed in Vietnam and finished what we started.")

**Premise:** Bill Nolde was the last American to die in Vietnam. He believed in the war and left behind a dedicated wife and four children.

**Label & Description:** Irrelevant Reason. The premise is logically irrelevant to the conclusion.

**Argument Analysis:** The reasoning is weak. The premise is logically irrelevant to the conclusion. Although it is unfortunate that a particular individual was the last United States soldier to die in Vietnam, and although his death is relevant to concluding that our involvement was tragic in some way, this is not relevant to the larger issue of whether the war was justified and whether Bill Nolde should have been there in the first place. Given this conclusion, the issue of justification should be discussed. Why were we there? Were there good reasons to be involved in Vietnam militarily?

**EXAMPLE 4-10B**

**Conclusion:** Do X, believe X, or buy X.

**Premise:** Because of Y.
Label & Description: Irrelevant Reason. Y is logically irrelevant to the conclusion.

Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if Y is true, the conclusion is not supported. Make a case that Y is only tangentially related to X, that Y is not directly relevant to X, that although Y resembles X in some way, it would support another conclusion, but not X. Describe what should be discussed relevant to supporting X.

Irrelevant reasons are often found where the politically volatile issue of jobs is discussed. That a nuclear power plant, a military base, the logging of a forest, or the drilling of a deep water oil well in the gulf of Mexico will produce jobs for people is of course relevant to the people who need those jobs. But if the nuclear power plant is to be built over a geologically Fukushima-like unstable area close to an earthquake fault zone and hence subject to a devastating Tsunami, and if the military base will use a large amount of tax dollars—money that could be used to build schools and train teachers better—and it is not needed for national defense, and if logging the forest would result in extinction of a bird species, and if the oil well cannot be easily capped if disaster strikes, then jobs are not the only relevant matter for the long-term best interests of the people who want those jobs.

Often what may appear only short-term idealism is actually long-term pragmatism. If the nuclear power plant would someday suffer a meltdown similar to those of Chernobyl and Fukushima, then building an unsafe plant would not be in the long-term best interests of the people who want the jobs, and the issue of jobs would be irrelevant to the issue of whether or not the plant is safe. If our country is falling seriously behind in educational competitiveness in a high technological world, spending priorities for tax money become the main issue, not jobs related to a military base. A particular military base might be needed for national security, but then jobs would be irrelevant to deciding this issue also. It may seem the height of idealistic folly to care about the extinction of a bird species at the expense of jobs. However, evolutionary biologists have discovered that life has evolved and flourished on our planet by a process of maximizing genetic diversity. Thus, genetic uniformity, which results from the actions of human beings destroying the habitats of animal and plant species that cannot survive anywhere else, threatens in many ways all life on Earth, including that of human beings. Biologists are also convinced that substances of great medical and educational value lie secretly locked within the recesses of every forest and ocean ecosystem. Because each form of life is unique and nonrepeatable, each one we destroy is gone forever. These are complex issues, and it is often tempting to resolve complex issues by comfortable shortcuts. But if our shortcuts are not real solutions to difficult problems, our future may be even more uncomfortably complex.

This concludes our discussion of fallacies of relevance. Although there are many more irrelevant appeals than those covered in this chapter, the general message that emerges from this sample is that what is relevant in one context for a particular conclusion may not be in another. Whether or not an argument has a label is not as important as identifying the conclusion of an argument and then asking yourself what is most relevant to that conclusion.
Key Terminology

Logical fallacy
Informal fallacy
Fallacies of relevance
Appeal to Popularity
  Bandwagon appeal
  Snob appeal
Appeal to Authority
Traditional Wisdom
Provincialism
Appeal to Loyalty
Two Wrongs Make a Right
  Common Practice
Ad Hominem Abusive
Ad Hominem Circumstantial
Irrelevant Reason

Concept Summary

Many persuasive arguments ought not to be so persuasive. A logical fallacy is an argument that is usually psychologically persuasive but is logically weak in some sense. Informal fallacies are relatively simple appeals that occur every day in the mass media, political exchanges, and common disagreements. Many mistakes in reasoning involve getting off track, of not thinking about what we should be thinking about. Fallacies of relevance are informal fallacies that shift our attention and focus away from what we should be thinking about when we are assessing whether we should accept the intended conclusion of an argument.

Examples in this chapter include appeals to aspects of human nature that are not intrinsically bad, but which play a distracting role given the conclusions and issues contained in these appeals. Appeals to Popularity shift our attention to the natural desire to want to belong with others, to have friends, to be a comfortable member of a culture, but they fail to help us decide if what others do is wise. Appeals to Authority play upon our natural tendency to look up to people we admire, to trust certain people for advice on how to deal with a complex world, but they fail to help us when experts disagree and they deprive us of a relevant foundation (the authority's reasons) for advice and endorsement. Traditional Wisdom reminds us that often the experience of past generations helps us in the present, but fails to help us separate those past ideas that still work from those that do not. Provincialism reminds us that we identify with cooperating subgroups, but fails to help us decide if the paths people like us take are good ones. Appeals to Loyalty remind us that sometimes we need to stick together and cooperate in achieving a common cause, but they do not help us decide which causes are just or wise.

There is a time and place for each of these appeals. Our species has evolved successfully by moderating our natural tendency toward selfishness, by cooperating with others as part
of a group with knowledgeable leaders, and by learning from past generations. But we have also evolved by being able to allow individuals freedom to think and offer new ideas for groups to follow. To do so, we must be free to think about relevant matters other than mere expert opinion, group loyalty, and past wisdom.

**Two Wrongs Make a Right** reminds us that we expect people to be treated equally, but it does not help us decide if two similar-seeming courses of action that appear bad are good just because they may be similar. The *Ad Hominem* appeals remind us that beliefs are beliefs of people, of flesh-and-blood individuals that we may want to know something about when they offer us reasons to accept their conclusions. But they do not help us reasonably know if ideas and character are necessarily linked, because they shift our attention away from the evidential reasons people may have for their beliefs. Finally, as the fallacies discussed in this chapter illustrate, there are many ways that people can fall for simple gambits of getting off track. Most people don't read long, complicated arguments, or if they do, they do so carelessly. Without careful consideration of the matters relevant to a conclusion, it is easy to be fooled that evidence has been presented for a conclusion, when in fact you are being offered reasons that support another conclusion that merely resembles the issue being discussed. *Irrelevant Reason* fallacies are examples of this generic problem.

**Exercises**

**EXERCISE I**

Indicate whether the following are true or false.

1. *From a logical point of view all appeals to tradition are bad.

2. In criticizing an Appeal to Popularity, you should always question the truth of the premise.

3. *Unlike appeals to improper or irrelevant authorities, appeals to proper authorities or relevant experts by themselves are considered valid and should be persuasive.

4. All irrelevant reason fallacies should be criticized by attacking the link (the reasoning) between the premise(s) and conclusion.

5. Loyalty to a cause is not evidence that the cause is just or wise.

6. Two Wrongs Make a Right is invalid because it uses an implied premise that is often false, that two courses of action are similar.

7. *Evidence that a belief has been made up to fulfill a motive is direct evidence that the belief is false.
8. All Ad Hominem Abusive fallacies have name-calling in the conclusion.

9. All Provincialism fallacies involve appealing to a particular racial or ethnic group.

10. Provincialism fallacies are aimed at people who identify with being part of a particular group.

11. In a Traditional Wisdom fallacy, the argument analysis should always make a case that the original reason for the tradition was not given and there is no discussion on whether the original reason still applies today.

12. Questionable Cause is a fallacy of relevance.

13. All acts of loyalty are illogical and usually signify that there is no good reason for the act of loyalty in question.

14. In a case where our intelligence and modernity are being appealed to as a premise in an argument, whether the argument is classified as a snob appeal version of Popularity or as Provincialism does not matter. What are the good reasons alleged modern or intelligent people support a particular course of action?

15. Irrelevant Reason is a generic label for any argument that uses premises that support another conclusion that resembles the issue being discussed.

**EXERCISE II**

Make a case that each of the following is an informal fallacy by giving a complete written analysis similar to that provided in the text. Use the same format as that in the text: Conclusion, Premise(s), Label and Description, and Argument Analysis. Be sure to provide and develop the appropriate focus in the argument analysis section.

1. *Advertisement:

   Johnnie Walker Red Label is the scotch for you. It is welcome everywhere. In California, more smart people enjoy Johnnie Walker Red Label. (Photograph -- handsome people having a cocktail sitting next to the first tee of an exclusive golf country club.)

2. Argument criticizing Republicans for opposing President Obama’s health care reform efforts.

   The Republicans are wrong to oppose President Obama’s health care reform efforts. Because it is no secret that the Republicans get millions of dollars in campaign donations from the medical insurance companies and these companies do not want any change to a structure that allows them to make billions of dollars a year insuring mostly healthy people and rejecting people with so-called “pre-
existing conditions.” All we see here is the same old arguments about less taxing and spending and a total lack of care for the 45 million Americans that do not have health insurance.

Note: Republicans claimed that they are not against reforming health care and insuring more people. They believed that Obama’s plan would be too expensive and create a government run program. They argued that government is not as efficient as private industry and by creating a subsidized government program, private insurance companies would go out of business eventually and people would have less choice. Then because there would be no competition, costs would soar. Supporters of Obama’s government option claimed that it would offer competition to the private insurance companies that make billions in profits a year and have no incentive to cut health care costs. The higher the fees, the more money they make. Plus, under the system before reform the private insurance companies could make billions in profits per year by insuring only healthy people and denying coverage to people with so-called “pre-existing conditions.”

3. A 1992 campaign pitch in favor of electing Bill Clinton president of the United States:

It is time for a change. It is time for a new generation to assume the leadership of this great country. It is our time now. It is time for the generation born after World War II to be in charge. For many decades we have had the same tired leadership like George H. Bush. It is time to stop living in the past and prepare for the twenty-first century.

4. Argument against allowing women to be priests in the Catholic Church:

Women who are clamoring for the priesthood just are not too observant. The mission for women in the Church has always been, and always will be, a different service. If they would only look at the history of the Roman Catholic Church, they would realize that they traditionally have the greatest power in the Church the formation of minds and hearts in education, a ministry to the sick, and the teaching of the Church to future generations.

5. Martha Stewart should not go to jail. This is so, because as the head of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia this company could be harmed significantly and lead to the lay-offs of some 500 jobs. At a crucial time in which the economy is just now recovering from a severe recession, every job counts. Corporate executives are crucial figures in the company and we have to look at the bigger picture. The good of the whole should be considered.

Note (some background): Martha Stewart was convicted in March 2004 for lying to investigators about a personal stock sale. She allegedly received insider information to sell a large amount of stock in the company InClone Systems Inc. just before bad news was announced about a drug the company was producing.
and the stock tanked. At one point the stock dropped from $60 to $6. Stewart sold her stock at $60.

6. Supporters of Space Station Freedom are wrong about there being any scientific justification for a permanently manned space station. What is really at stake for the fifty senators who have signed a letter endorsing the $180 billion space station is pork-barrel projects for their states. Each of the senators has a number of businesses in their states with space-station contracts.

Note: "pork-barrel" is a political term that refers to questionable federal projects or funding a member of Congress is able to secure for his or her district. The projects or funding are said to be examples of wasteful spending because they are often not based on what is good for the country, but rather what is good for the particular congressional representative and his or her future reelection prospects. For instance, because by 1991 the former Soviet Union was no longer perceived as a military threat to the United States, the Pentagon tried to curtail the operation of a $700-million Maine radar system that had been designed to detect Soviet bombers. However, the powerful senators from this state were able to continue the operation of the radar system, arguing that it could now be used to detect drug smugglers. Very few drug smuggling planes fly into Maine; the vast majority of cases of airborne drug smuggling are in southern states. These senators were able to "bring home the bacon."

7. Argument in favor of finding O. J. Simpson innocent during his 1995 trial on charges that he killed his former wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman:

It should be clear that we should support O. J. Simpson. Consider what he has done for young black Americans. First, as a heroic football player, he proved that nice guys can finish first. Second, as an actor and articulate salesman for Hertz, he showed young black children that regardless of where they start in life (fatherless and living in a ghetto), through effort they can make something of themselves. At this crucial and dangerous time in America, when most young black males growing up in inner cities think that their only option is to be in a gang, black children and all America needs someone like O. J. Simpson to be free. The majority of people in this country think that O. J. is innocent. Even 70% of the trial lawyers interviewed said they believe that Simpson will not be convicted due to a hung jury. (Assume that "support O. J." means that he should be found innocent.)

8. Conversation:

Jane: "I know your arguments are not worth listening to. Of course you're against legalizing abortion. I wouldn't expect anything else from a male chauvinist."

John: "But you haven't even listened to my arguments concerning the life and
viability of the fetus.

Jane: "I'm sorry, John. I don't need to, I know what you are like."

9. Traditional argument supporting U.S. exports of military arms to other countries:

There is nothing wrong with the United States being the leading exporter of arms to Third World countries (68% market share by 2000). Russia and China, our main international competitors, do it. Almost all industrialized nations support their balance of trade bottom line with arms exports while simultaneously using these shipments as an instrument of influence and foreign policy. If we don't do it, someone else will.

10. *The fact that Linus Pauling and other researchers have had to fight tough uphill battles to get the National Cancer Institute to sponsor trials with vitamin C for human cancer patients is reason enough to conclude that vitamin C has a considerable potential usefulness in cancer therapy. The cancer establishment is heavily committed to surgery, radiation, and conventional chemotherapy. Many careers built upon these specialties would collapse if innovative cancer therapies were shown to be more effective.

11. Conversation:

Don: "I can't see how you can believe in God."

Jim: "I have thought about it a lot. It seems to me to make the most thoughtful alternative."

Don: "Thoughtful?! How can an intelligent person like you continue to believe in such an outdated proposition as we move into the twenty-first century? Don't you know that most people with low IQs believe in God?"

12. Argument against former President Bush’s 2003 justification for the war against Iraq.

The President is just wrong about his justification to go to war with Iraq. This is so, because just look at the facts. We have billion dollar deficits again. Our economy is tanking. People's 401K retirement plans have become 201Ks. Our intelligence agencies blew it in terms of stopping 9/11. Bush's Attorney General has declared war against the Constitution and our right to privacy. Corporate crooks are everywhere and mostly former buddies of this administration. Here we see the real motive for the President's preoccupation with Iraq. The war with Iraq was nothing more than a smokescreen to keep us from examining real problems and Bush's poor leadership.

13. Mayoral campaign advertisement:
"Who are you voting for?"

"Frank Fasi. Isn't everybody?!"

14. Conversation over how to vote on City Charter proposals:

Alice: "How are you going to vote on the city charter proposals?"

Donald: "I am going to vote for all of them."

Alice: "What? But some of them deny initiative and abolish the neighborhood boards!"

Donald: "Oh, I always vote for the proposals. They are too complicated to figure out. Besides, I figure the charter people must know what they are doing. State Representative Domingo and Senator Basil were on the committee that proposed the amendments, and they have been in government for many years."

15. From a speech to a local women's organization by their president:

"Any modern woman ready to enter the twenty-first century knows that it is her right to have abortion on demand. The antiquated arguments of the antiabortionists are no longer worth considering. Arguments from natural law have been used for centuries to oppress women. It is our time now and time for a new philosophy of justice. Abortion is legal, should be legal, and will be legal in a new century of equality."

16. Argument against Republican economic proposal:

It is the same old tired argument (Newt Gingrich's Contract with America) we have heard from the Republicans before. They say that they want to produce an economic structure that will produce more jobs for average Americans by cutting taxes and government regulation. But it is no secret that the Republican party is the party of the rich, that the majority of Republican voters are wealthy and will benefit the most from tax cuts. The economic policies of the Republicans are simply a disguise to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

17. Argument supporting Judge Sonia Sotomayor as the next Supreme Court justice.

It is time. It is time for some Latino justice in this county. It is time for some Latino representation on the Supreme Court. Almost 30 million Americans list their ancestry as Latino as of 2006. If confirmed Judge Sotomayor will be the first Latino American on the Supreme Court. Support the Latino American Sotomayor for Justice Project.

Note: Conservative Republican groups criticized Sotomayor as a judicial activist who would not interpret the Constitution fairly and would bring a racial focus to
decisions. On the other hand, according to President Obama, he nominated her because she has "a rigorous intellect, a mastery of the law, an ability to hone in on key issues. . . (and) experience that can give a person a common touch and a sense of compassion, an understanding of how the world works and how ordinary people live." Her parents immigrated to the United States from Puerto Rico and her supporters note that she struggled to emerge from poverty living in the South Bronx in New York to graduate from Princeton and Yale Law School. At the time of her nomination she had been a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit since October 1998.


Vote for Bush. This is our election. The president has made it clear that he is not going to let Europeans decide what is right for America and he is not going to let the United Nations decide how to use American troops. Who cares what the rest of the world thinks. As an American your vote counts for America, not France and not Germany.

19. Argument in favor of the innocence of Lt. Col. Oliver North on charges of violating a law that restricted U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan rebels and lying to Congress (1989). Assume that the conclusion of this argument is that North is innocent.

"If you were on this jury, how would you vote? Well, I can tell you how I would vote. According to President Reagan, North is a 'national hero.' Do we want to continue to be a free country? Should we not continue to support the champions of the eternal vigilance that Jefferson and the founding fathers spoke of more than two hundred years ago? At a time when our country is being taken over by wimp liberals, homosexuals, and Gorbachev-lovers, I say support courageous men like Ollie North. He and his family have suffered enough."

20. Argument in support of continuing to give federal government subsidies to tobacco growers:

"I don't see why people get all upset when they find out that the government continues to help tobacco farmers in this country make a living. We do the same thing for sugar growers in Hawaii and milk producers in Minnesota."

21. Argument in favor of stem cell research in 2004:

We should support stem cell research. Can all these experts be wrong? More than four thousand scientists – including forty-eight Nobel Prize winners and one hundred and twenty-seven members of the National Academy of Sciences have announced their support for federal funding of stem cell research. We should not let religious zealots control President Bush and medical research in this country.
22. New item:

Yesterday, the U.S. Senate voted to block a survey of adult sexual behavior that supporters argued would provide information that could be used to prevent the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. According to Senator Jesse Helms (Republican, North Carolina), "the real motive for the survey was to support the left-wing, liberal argument that homosexuality is normal."

(Assume that Helms is offering a justification for why the bill should not have been passed.)

23. Argument by a U.S. senator against rushing into making deep cuts in U.S. defense spending after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. (The proposed cuts included cutting more than one hundred thousand troops, the B-2 stealth bomber that would cost almost $1 billion each, and the Star Wars antimissile system):

"How quickly people forget. Just a few short months ago our men and women were dying in the Persian Gulf. Just a few short blocks from where we debate this issue is a wall of granite with the names of men who sacrificed their lives for their country during Vietnam. Many of you in this chamber right now fought valiantly in Korea and World War II and left many devoted friends on bloody battlefields far from home and loved ones. I say we need a strong defense and that we should maintain our current troop levels, build the B-2 and our Star Wars nuclear shield. We owe it to dedicated American men and women, past and present."

24. Argument supporting Israel's treatment of the Palestinians:

The way the Israelis treat the occupied Palestinians is not wrong. The claim is that the Palestinians are made to live in virtual concentration camps, have no political rights, have little freedom of movement, and that their land is repeatedly confiscated for Israeli settlements. But look at what the United States did to its Japanese citizens during World War. Their land was confiscated, and they were also made to live in concentration camps. And this is not to mention the U.S. treatment of American Indians and the confiscation of their land for pioneer settlements.

25. Conservative Republican advertisement supporting Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court (paraphrased, 1991):

The arguments of those who oppose Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court don't measure up. Who do you want to make the important decisions that will affect America for years to come? People such as judge Thomas, or his opponents: Senator Ted Kennedy, who was thrown out of Harvard as a college student for cheating and left the scene of a terrible accident at Chapiquiddick; Senator Joseph Biden, who was found to have plagiarized a speech when he attempted to run for president; and Senator Alan Cranston, who has been implicated in the savings and loan scandal?
26. Argument aimed at getting African-American and minority support for electing Barack Obama president:

It is time for an historic change. Think of what black people have been through in this country and think of the opportunity we have now to elect the first African-American president. Imagine we have the chance to vote for a Hawaiian born, grandson-of-a-son from Middle America Kansas. People of color, people of Hawaii, this is our chance. Vote for Obama.

27. Argument by Rush Limbaugh attacking Tom Cruise for supporting concern for the environment:

"Some people care more about Bambi than they do about people...Some people think that trees are more important than human beings . . . Take Tom Cruise. Didn't Tom Cruise make a stockcar movie in which he destroyed thirty-five cars, burned thousands of gallons of gasoline, and wasted dozens of tires? Tom, most people don't own thirty-five cars in their life. Now you are telling other people not to pollute the planet? Shut up, sir!"

28. In January 1998 Hillary Rodham Clinton appeared on the “Today” show. As the wife of President Bill Clinton she denied allegations that her husband had an affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. She blamed the sex allegations on a “vast right-wing conspiracy” against President Clinton and a “vigorous (media) feeding frenzy.” She also said,

"Look at the very people who are involved in this. They have popped up in other settings. The great story here for anybody willing to find it, write about it and explain it is this vast right-wing conspiracy that has been conspiring against my husband since the day he announced for president."

"Bill and I have been accused of everything, including murder, by some of the very same people who are behind these allegations. So from my perspective, this is part of a continuing political campaign against my husband."

The first lady also called the sex and perjury allegations against her husband part of an effort "to undo the results of two elections."

Analyse this argument:

President Clinton is not guilty of lying about having an affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. The people behind fanning the fires of this media frenzy have a long track record of attempting to find politically damaging material against Clinton. It is just part of a vast right-wing conspiracy."
Note: Clinton publicly and in a legal deposition in court denied that he had sexual relations with Lewinsky. Lewinsky also publicly denied the relationship, but later was found describing such a relationship with him in taped conversations with a friend and also said privately that she was urged to lie about it. In December 1998 Clinton was impeached on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice by the House of Representatives. But the Senate acquitted Clinton in February 1999 of both articles of impeachment. The perjury charge was defeated with 55 "not guilty" votes and 45 "guilty" votes. On the obstruction-of-justice article, the Senate vote split, 50-50.

29. In 1994, former national security adviser Robert McFarlane published a book entitled *Special Trust*. In this book, McFarlane claimed that both President Ronald Reagan and then-Vice President George Bush knew that money received from arms sales to Iran was being given illegally to the Nicaraguan Contras. If true, this would have meant that Reagan knowingly broke the law and could have been impeached. Bush would have most likely not become president in 1988. According to McFarlane, Reagan "lacked the moral conviction and intellectual courage" to admit his involvement. McFarlane also claimed that Oliver North, the principal administrator of the illegal Iran-Contra deal, lied to him and Congress. North, who was then running for a senate seat in Virginia, responded to these allegations by stating that McFarlane's book was "a pitiful and mean-spirited attempt to glue his broken reputation back together again." Analyze North's argument.

30. In late March 2004, Richard Clarke, the White House former top counterterrorism expert for the Bush administration, who also worked for former presidents’ Reagan, Bush (senior), and Clinton, testified in to the special commission investigating on 9/11. He had also just published a book, Against All Enemies. In both his testimony and the book he charged that President Bush was essentially obsessed with Iraq, did not focus on Al Qaeda sufficiently prior to 9/11 and did not have the elimination of Al Qaeda as high a priority as the Clinton administration did. He further charged that "by invading Iraq...the United States has greatly undermined the war on terrorism."

Defenders of President Bush responded in part:

Clark "may have had a grudge to bear since he probably wanted a more prominent position." Vice President Dick Cheney

It's "more about politics and a book promotion than about policy." Scott McClellan, White House Press Secretary

**Analyze this argument:**

Richard Clarke is wrong about President Bush's ineffective approach to fighting terrorism. This is so, because he wanted a more prominent position when he worked for Bush and he may have a grudge to bear against the
president. Plus, his negative testimony will help promote his new book. The motive here is more about politics and making money than speaking the truth.

Note: One day before 9/11 counterterrorism was not even mentioned by the Bush Justice Department as one of the seven strategic goals. One day before 9/11 the Attorney General, John Aschroft, proposed a reduction in counterterrorism funding. After 9/11 the F.B.I. requested millions of dollars for counterterrorism operations, but the White House reduced the request by 2/3rds. In November 2001 a bipartisan commission proposed that Bush spend $10 billion on top-security priorities such as ports and nuclear sites in the U.S. The proposal was not implemented by the Bush administration. By 2004, the United State was spending about a billion dollars a week in Iraq. According to Clarke, for Bush attacking Iraq was "a rigid belief, received wisdom, a decision already made and one that no fact or event could derail." And that by attacking Iraq "we delivered to Al Qaeda the greatest recruitment propaganda imaginable." Also, Special Forces and CIA members tracking bin Laden and top Al Qaeda leadership were ordered to leave Afghanistan in March 2002 in preparation for the war with Iraq.

On the other hand, President Bush argued that eliminating the threat of Saddam Hussein was a crucial aspect of the war against terrorism and part of his well-supported preemptive strategy of eliminating terrorists and their supporters in foreign countries before they could attack the United States. Saddam Hussein was a sworn enemy of the United States, and the war with Iraq eliminated a dangerous regime that had intentions of developing weapons of mass destruction and could have shared such weapons with other terrorist organizations that planned to attack the United States. Plus a stable democracy in Iraq would plant an important seed of hope for the rest of the troubled Middle East.

Answers to Starred Exercises:

I. True and False

1. False. Appeals to tradition often reflect that we learn from experience and pass on what we learn to the next generation. Some traditions are very good. But because times change, we need to know which traditions remain reliable by discussing the initial reasons for a tradition and whether those reasons still apply to the present.

3. False. Experts can disagree, and accepting expert opinion without knowing the reasons the expert has for endorsing a belief or a course of action deprives us of important and relevant information.

7. False. A poor motive is relevant to a charge of bias, but bias is not direct evidence that a belief is false. Beliefs can be true, even if the people who hold them are biased.
II. Fallacy Analyses

   Premise: It is welcome everywhere. In California, more smart people enjoy
   Johnnie Walker Red Label.

Label & Description: Appeal to Popularity, if we emphasize the "welcome everywhere" appeal; Provincialism, if the in-group of "smart people" and country club elite is emphasized. (It is not necessary to quibble over which label best fits here. The argument analysis should be the same regardless of which label is selected.)

Argument Analysis: The reasoning is weak. Even if it is true that Johnnie Walker is the most popular scotch, and even if it is true that intelligent and well-to-do people drink it, there is no discussion of why these people drink it, of how the scotch is made, or whether the ingredients make a superior scotch to other scotches, given the price and competition. The premises are irrelevant to the conclusion because we are asked to buy a product without the quality of the product discussed.

10. There are actually two conclusions in this argument. The first one is part of an Ad Hominem Circumstantial fallacy and is then used as a premise for the second conclusion.

Conclusion #1: The cancer-treatment establishment is wrong about the uselessness of vitamin C for cancer therapy.

Conclusion #2: So, Vitamin C has a considerable potential usefulness in cancer therapy.

Premises: The cancer-treatment establishment is biased. It is heavily committed to surgery, radiation, and conventional chemotherapy. Many careers built upon these specialties would collapse if innovative cancer therapies were shown to be more effective. They are so biased that Linus Pauling and other researchers apparently have failed to get the National Cancer Institute to sponsor trials with vitamin C for human cancer patients.

Label & Description: Ad Hominem Circumstantial. The personal circumstances of the doctors -- their jobs as physicians using traditional methods of cancer treatment -- and their possible bias and suspect motives because of vested interests in traditional treatment are cited in the premises.

Argument Analysis: The reasoning is weak. Even if it is true that the medical establishment doctors are biased against any therapy that would destroy their careers, this is not direct and relevant evidence that the vitamin C therapy works. These doctors could still be right about vitamin C having little positive effect on cancer. The premises are irrelevant to the conclusion that the establishment is wrong about vitamin C. Appropriate evidence would be to cite any randomized controlled studies that have been done.
showing whether a group of people with cancer improved more than or as well as a group of people undergoing traditional therapy.

19.
Conclusion: North is innocent of charges violating a law restricting aid to the Nicaraguan rebels and lying to Congress.

Premises: We should continue to want to be a free country and support the champions of eternal vigilance that Jefferson and the founding fathers spoke of more than two hundred years ago. We should continue to support national heroes at a time that our country is being taken over by wimp liberals, homosexuals, and Gorbachev-lovers. North and his family have suffered enough.

Label & Description: Irrelevant Reason. The premises are irrelevant to the issue of whether or not North is guilty of breaking a law and lying to Congress.

Argument Analysis: The reasoning is weak because the premises are irrelevant to the conclusion. The premises are mostly about the general topic of freedom and support for champions of freedom. But the issue revealed in the conclusion is whether or not North broke a law. In a democracy, no one has a right, including the president of the United States, to decide which laws to obey. (If Reagan had known about the diversion of money to the Contras, he would have been impeached.) North disagreed with the law passed by Congress making it illegal for our government to give military aid to the Nicaraguan Contras and even boasted about lying to Congress. That he and his family had suffered is irrelevant to whether or not he caused that suffering by breaking a law. (In 1991, all charges against North were dismissed on the technicality that North's televised congressional testimony, in which he admitted breaking the law, made it impossible for a jury and witnesses to be impartial!)