



- Fallacies, violations of the three criteria for logical assessment, allow debaters to place arguments along a continuum ranging between very poor and very good.
- Three basic fallacies are the problematic premise, the irrelevant reason, and the hasty conclusion.
- The fallacy of problematic premise relates to an argument that fails to meet the acceptability criterion. This category of fallacies includes begging the question and the fallacy of incompatibility.
- The fallacy of irrelevant reason relates to an argument that fails to meet the relevance criterion. This category of fallacies includes argument *ad hominem*, straw person, red herring, poisoning the well, guilt by association, appeal to fear, appeal to popularity, and appeal to tradition.
- The fallacy of hasty conclusion relates to an argument that fails to meet the sufficiency criterion. This category of fallacies includes hasty generalizations, irrelevant slippery slope arguments, two wrongs, improper appeal to practice, fallacy of composition, fallacy of division, *post hoc* fallacy, and faulty analogy.
- One additional category of fallacies includes those related to language use. This category of fallacies includes the fallacy of ambiguity, the fallacy of equivocation, the fallacy of vagueness, and the fallacy of a loaded term.

NOTES

1. This approach to the quality of arguments is not our invention. In fact, we borrow the approach fully from Canadian philosophers Ralph H. Johnson and J. Anthony Blair, *Logical Self-Defense* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994). Unfortunately Johnson and Blair's book is now out of print. A similar approach is taken by Trudy Govier, *A Practical Study of Argument* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2001). Although these two books share important features, we prefer Johnson and Blair's approach to Govier's because they have better avoided the trappings of formal, deductive logic.

2. *A Practical Study of Argument*, 75–76.

3. Johnson and Blair.

4. Govier (140–155) originally suggested seven acceptability conditions; we have reduced these to the four that we believe are most useful for debaters.

5. Govier, 175.

6. The Vietnam War is known in Vietnam as the “Great American War.”

7. The Website <http://www.ramdac.org/fallacies.php> (March 30, 2005) provides clear definitions and examples of a number of different fallacies, some of which are not included in this chapter. Dr. Michael C. Labossiere, author of Macintosh tutorial *Fallacy Tutorial Pro 3.0*, has kindly agreed to allow the text of his work to appear here on ramdac.org in electronic form. Dr. Labossiere retains the copyright (© Copyright 1995 Michael C. Labossiere) with distribution restrictions.

8. The system used in this text is borrowed from Johnson and Blair, *Logical Self-Defense*.

9. Johnson and Blair, 78.

10. To provide support for this premise, a debater could refer to a study done by University of Chicago economist Samuel Peltzman, “The Effects of Automobile Safety Regulation,” *The Journal of Political Economy* 83, no. 4 (1975): 677–726. In this study Peltzman found that after the introduction of automobile safety devices such as padded dashboards and seatbelts, the rate of automobile accidents increased. Because automobiles were safer, fewer people died in each accident, but because there were more accidents, the total number of driver and passenger deaths remained about the same. Peltzman also found that the number of pedestrian deaths increased as a result of added safety devices. Peltzman theorized that as drivers felt safer, they took more risks in their driving. The result was more pedestrian deaths.