

Logical fallacy

Literature



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One of the main problems with Michael Moore's IDIOT NATION (and much of Moore's work in general) is the fact that Moore begins with a conclusion and works backwards in an attempt to prove his argument. That is, he has already made up his mind on a subject and then "cherry picks" facts and arguments to prove his point. Unfortunately, his proof collapses upon careful examination of the logic flaws in his arguments. This will be proven by selecting several examples of flawed logic in the work and defining it.

Consider the follow excerpt by Moore condemns private education and promotes public education by way of personal attacks: " Hunt these little pricks down like dogs and then cage them until we can break their will..." (138) Moore is referring to here is the elitist attitude of the clergy and he points it out in a thoroughly pandering manner. He presents a supremely sweeping generality of nuns as totalitarian dictators. This demonizes the nuns is done to disparage the educational system they represent so as to prop up the other institution. This method hopes to gain sympathy for a cause through the cheap use of personal attacks.

Similarly, Moore attacks the military and lays the blame on defense spending as the reason why there is much failure in the public schools: "[political leaders and voters] have decided it is a bigger priority to build another bomber than to educate our children." (135) In other words, because tax dollars are being funneled needlessly to the military our schools are in bad shape. Hence, cut military spending because there is no need for it and pump more money into schools and the schools will automatically improve.

This is a thoroughly false analogy as it infers there are no security threats to the United States and that military build up is arbitrary and aggressive and that schools are under-funded, both of which are complete inaccuracies.

First, the public education system in the United States is no where near as bad as alarmists like Moore contend. Public schools has produces many excellent students over the years, but let's center on the worst case scenarios...after all, that is what Moore does.

If millions of dollars were pumped into the school system, how would this alter the attitudes of areas of contention such as poor quality teachers who are not doing their jobs or students who cut class? What about the millions of dollars of already spent on public education that has produced little results? Why should it be increased? And why cut military spending? Why not cut agriculture subsidies? Because Moore personally doesn't like the military and that is the bidget cut he is after.

Moore is also opposed to measures of discipline in public schools and uses an argument rooted in pandering to gain support. Consider the following: " kids learn to submerge personal expression. They learn that it is better to go along so that you get along." (147) Moore is referring to dress codes that have been instituted in some public schools.

Moore's statement panders to those who would sympathize with an anti-authoritarian statement and may be willing to align with his anarchist sentiment. The reality of this sentiment is that no one is trying to submerge personal expression as much as the schools are attempting to reduce violence. Many dress codes were designed as a way of reducing gang

violence. Moore does not address this and opts to pander to those who see such actions by the school as an attack on rugged individualism. Pandering may draw support, but it can not make an untrue argument about conspiracies to subvert individualism.

Moore is not an unintelligent man and has been known to make clear and intelligent points. Unfortunately, his desire to be a populist has led to such flawed logical treatises such as IDIOT NATION and this is unfortunate as he could do much better.