

A fallacy of ad hominem

Sociology



3. Though the proverbial cat is already out of the bag, the codification of such a thing as “ animal rights” could potentially lead to consequences that all but the most careless rat-lover would find dire. Certainly if merely gouging a nickel-sized hole in an elephant’s shoulder is the act of a criminal, then hunters should be charged with murder, roadkill is manslaughter, and owning a dog an act of involuntary servitude. Scott McPherson

This statement commits the slippery slope fallacy, which means that the speaker interprets a simple statement in very general terms and exaggerating it in the process. The definition of animal rights here is exaggerated and its exceptions are not considered by the speaker in that even benevolent acts like owning a dog, unintentional acts like roadkill, and purposeful acts for the benefit of mankind like hunting are all considered violations of animal rights.

4. Both of my friends who went to that University ended up dropping out, so I wouldn’t recommend it.

Although this statement also commits the other fallacies of begging the question, non sequitur, and false analogy, it is clearly a hasty generalization. The claim of the speaker that the particular university is not recommended is obviously not valid for it is based on but two people. There must be a considerable number of students in a sample plus the backing of research before one can make a valid claim that one university cannot be recommended.

5. What do you mean you can’t go because you have to go to mass? Who goes to church anymore? Only old people and the mindless do.

This statement is a sweeping generalization. Such a fallacy is committed in this statement because the speaker had already labeled all churchgoers as

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mindless and old even before the actual disadvantages of going to mass or going to church (if ever there are any) were underlined.

6. Considering that Dr. Burfi weighs about three hundred pounds, should we take his medical advice?

Obviously this is a fallacy of Ad hominem. Instead of objectively evaluating the correctness of the medical advice, the speaker goes on to attack the personal weakness of Dr. Burfi.

7. President Obama should not have reversed his predecessor's ruling on stem cell research; President Bush was obviously right on that issue.

As far as I know, this statement commits the Red herring fallacy. Instead of the speaker explaining the disadvantages of President Obama's reversal of President Bush's ruling on stem cell research, the speaker befogs the issue by tossing out the red herring of his support for President Bush.

8. " Uganda's controversial ethics and integrity minister... said Saturday he believed civilization was being threatened by gays. ' Who is going to occupy Uganda 20 years from now if we all become homosexuals. We know that homosexuals dont reproduce,' James Nsaba Buturo told a press conference. 'There is now globalization of homosexuality and people in Uganda are attempting to take advantage of the globalization,' he said. " It is an attempt to end civilization. It is that serious."

Obviously this is a case of a slippery slope fallacy. First of all, it would be an exaggeration for the speaker to say " if we all become homosexuals" and he further commits the slippery slope as he ultimately concludes that the preceding exaggerated statement would lead to " an attempt to end civilization." The speaker should instead have focused on the more local effects of homosexuality based on a relatively smaller scale.

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9. I know that your tuition fees have risen by 7% since last year, but our University was ranked among the top 10 by The New York Times' poll in August.

This statement obviously commits the red herring fallacy. It means that instead of the speaker evaluating the effects of the 7%-tuition fee increase, he rather tosses out the red herring of the University is one of the top 10 according to The New York Times.

10. But you don't have to be a genius to see the true utility of manufacturing headless creatures... Charles Krauthammer

This statement commits the fallacy of the ad. This means that the speaker thinks that since all people who are not even geniuses (normal people like the reader) can see " the true utility of manufacturing headless creatures," then it also follows that the reader is supposed to have the same view. However, the speaker does not consider the fact that one's opinion on the utility of manufacturing headless creatures does not at all depend on whether one is a genius or not.