

Master List of Logical Fallacies

Fallacies are fake or deceptive arguments, “junk cognition,” that is, arguments that seem irrefutable but prove nothing. Fallacies often seem superficially sound and they far too often retain immense persuasive power even after being clearly exposed as false. Like epidemics, fallacies sometimes “burn through” entire populations, often with the most tragic results, before their power is diminished or lost. Fallacies are not always deliberate, but a good scholar’s purpose is always to identify and unmask fallacies in arguments. Note that many of these definitions overlap, but the goal here is to identify contemporary and classic fallacies as they are used in today’s discourse. Effort has been made to avoid mere word-games (e.g., “The Fallacist’s Fallacy,” or the famous “Crocodile’s Paradox” of classic times, or the so-called “fallacies” of purely formal and symbolic, business and financial, religious or theological logic. No claim is made to “academic rigor” in this listing. [Source \(CC\) LICENSE](#)

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1 Fallacies

1.1 The A Priori Argument

(also, Rationalization; Dogmatism, Proof Texting.) A corrupt argument from logos, starting with a given, pre-set belief, dogma, doctrine, scripture verse, “fact” or conclusion and then searching for any reasonable or reasonable-sounding argument to rationalize, defend or justify it. Certain ideologues and religious fundamentalists are proud to use this fallacy as their primary method of “reasoning” and some are even honest enough to say so. E.g., since we know there is no such thing as “evolution,” a prime duty of believers is to look for ways to explain away growing evidence, such as is found in DNA, that might suggest otherwise. See also the Argument from Ignorance. The opposite of this fallacy is the Taboo.

1.2 Ableism

(also, The Con Artist’s Fallacy; The Dacoit’s Fallacy; Shearing the Sheeple; Profiteering; “Vulture Capitalism,” “Wealth is disease, and I am the cure.”) A corrupt argument from ethos, arguing that because someone is intellectually slower, physically or emotionally less capable, less ambitious, less aggressive, older or less healthy (or simply more trusting or less lucky) than others, s/he “naturally” deserves less in life and may be freely victimized by those who are luckier, quicker, younger, stronger, healthier, greedier, more powerful, less moral or more gifted (or who simply have more immediate felt need for money, often involving some form of addiction). This fallacy is a “softer” argumentum ad baculum. When challenged, those who practice this fallacy seem to most often shrug their shoulders and mumble “Life is ruff and you gotta be tuff [sic],” “You gotta do what you gotta do to get ahead in this world,” “It’s no skin off my nose,” “That’s free enterprise,” “That’s the way life is!” or similar.

1.3 Actions have Consequences

The contemporary fallacy of a person in power falsely describing an imposed punishment or penalty as a “consequence” of another’s negative act. E.g., “The consequences of your misbehavior could include suspension or expulsion.” A corrupt argument from ethos, arrogating to oneself or to one’s rules or laws an ethos of cosmic inevitability, i.e., the ethos of God, Fate, Karma, Destiny or Reality Itself. Illness or food poisoning are likely “consequences” of eating spoiled food, while being “grounded” is a punishment for, not a “consequence,” of childhood misbehavior. Freezing to death

is a natural “consequence” of going out naked in sub-zero weather but going to prison is a punishment for bank robbery, not a natural, inevitable or unavoidable “consequence,” of robbing a bank. Not to be confused with the Argument from Consequences, which is quite different. See also Blaming the Victim. An opposite fallacy is that of Moral Licensing.

1.4 The Ad Hominem Argument

(also, “Personal attack,” “Poisoning the well”) The fallacy of attempting to refute an argument by attacking the opposition’s intelligence, morals, education, professional qualifications, personal character or reputation, using a corrupted negative argument from ethos. E.g., “That so-called judge;” or “He’s so evil that you can’t believe anything he says.” See also “Guilt by Association.” The opposite of this is the “Star Power” fallacy. Another obverse of Ad Hominem is the Token Endorsement Fallacy, where, in the words of scholar Lara Bhasin, “Individual A has been accused of anti-Semitism, but Individual B is Jewish and says Individual A is not anti-Semitic, and the implication of course is that we can believe Individual B because, being Jewish, he has special knowledge of anti-Semitism. Or, a presidential candidate is accused of anti-Muslim bigotry, but someone finds a testimony from a Muslim who voted for said candidate, and this is trotted out as evidence against the candidate’s bigotry.” The same fallacy would apply to a sports team offensively named after a marginalized ethnic group, but which has obtained the endorsement (freely given or paid) of some member, traditional leader or tribal council of that marginalized group so that the otherwise-offensive team name and logo magically become “okay” and non-racist.

1.5 The Affective Fallacy

(also The Romantic Fallacy; Emotion over Reflection; “Follow Your Heart”) An extremely common modern fallacy of Pathos, that one’s emotions, urges or “feelings” are innate and in every case self-validating, autonomous, and above any human intent or act of will (one’s own or others’), and are thus immune to challenge or criticism. (In fact, researchers now [2017] have robust scientific evidence that emotions are actually cognitive and not innate.) In this fallacy one argues, “I feel it, so it must be true. My feelings are valid, so you have no right to criticize what I say or do, or how I say or do it.” This latter is also a fallacy of stasis, confusing a respectful and reasoned response or refutation with personal invalidation, disrespect, prejudice, bigotry, sexism, homophobia or hostility. A grossly sexist form of the Affective Fallacy is the well-known crude

fallacy that the phallus “Has no conscience” (also, “A man’s gotta do what a man’s gotta do;” “Thinking with your other head.”), i.e., since (male) sexuality is self-validating and beyond voluntary control what one does with it cannot be controlled either and such actions are not open to criticism, an assertion eagerly embraced and extended beyond the male gender in certain reifications of “Desire” in contemporary academic theory. See also, Playing on Emotion. Opposite to this fallacy is the Chosen Emotion Fallacy (thanks to scholar Marc Lawson for identifying this fallacy), in which one falsely claims complete, or at least reliable prior voluntary control over one’s own autonomic, “gut level” affective reactions. Closely related if not identical to this last is the ancient fallacy of Angelism, falsely claiming that one is capable of “objective” reasoning and judgment without emotion, claiming for oneself a viewpoint of Olympian “disinterested objectivity” or pretending to place oneself far above all personal feelings, temptations or bias. See also, Mortification.

1.6 Alphabet Soup

A corrupt modern implicit fallacy from ethos in which a person inappropriately overuses acronyms, abbreviations, form numbers and arcane insider “shop talk” primarily to prove to an audience that s/he “speaks their language” and is “one of them” and to shut out, confuse or impress outsiders. E.g., “It’s not uncommon for a K-12 with ASD to be both GT and LD;” “I had a twenty-minute DX Q-so on 15 with a Zed-S1 and a couple of LU2’s even though the QR-Nancy was 10 over S9;” or “I hope I’ll keep on seeing my BAQ on my LES until the day I get my DD214.” See also, Name Calling. This fallacy has recently become common in media pharmaceutical advertising in the United States, where “Alphabet Soup” is used to create false identification with and to exploit patient groups suffering from specific illnesses or conditions, e.g., “If you have DPC with associated ZL you can keep your B2D under control with Luglugmena®. Ask your doctor today about Luglugmena® Helium Tetracarbide lozenges to control symptoms of ZL and to keep your B2D under that crucial 7.62 threshold. Side effects of Luglugmena® may include K4 Syndrome which may lead to lycanthropic bicephaly, BMJ and occasionally, death. Do not take Luglugmena® if you are allergic to dogbite or have type D Flinder’s Garbosis..”

1.7 Alternative Truth

(also, Alt Facts; Counterknowledge; Disinformation; Information Pollution) A newly-famous contemporary fallacy of logos rooted in postmodernism, denying the resilience of facts or truth as such. Writer Hannah

Arendt, in her [The Origins of Totalitarianism \(1951\)](#) warned that “The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the dedicated communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, true and false, no longer exists.” Journalist Leslie Grass (2017) writes in her Blog [Reachoutrecovery.com](#), “Is there someone in your life who insists things happened that didn’t happen, or has a completely different version of events in which you have the facts? It’s a form of mind control and is very common among families dealing with substance and behavior problems.” She suggests that such “Alternate Facts” work to “put you off balance,” “control the story,” and “make you think you’re crazy,” and she notes that “presenting alternate facts is the hallmark of untrustworthy people.” The Alternative Truth fallacy is related to the Big Lie Technique. See also Gaslighting, Blind Loyalty, The Big Brain/Little Brain Fallacy, and Two Truths

1.8 The Appeal to Closure

The contemporary fallacy that an argument, standpoint, action or conclusion no matter how questionable must be accepted as final or else the point will remain unsettled, which is unthinkable because those affected will be denied “closure.” This fallacy falsely reifies a specialized term (closure) from Gestalt Psychology while refusing to recognize the undeniable truth that some points will indeed remain open and unsettled, perhaps forever. E.g., “Society would be protected, real punishment would be inflicted, crime would be deterred and justice served if we sentenced you to life without parole, but we need to execute you in order to provide some closure.” See also, Argument from Ignorance, and Argument from Consequences. The opposite of this fallacy is the Paralysis of Analysis.

1.9 The Appeal to Heaven

(also, Argumentum ad Coelum, Deus Vult, Gott mit Uns, Manifest Destiny, American Exceptionalism, or the Special Covenant) An ancient, extremely dangerous fallacy (a deluded argument from ethos) that of claiming to know the mind of God (or History, or a higher power), who has allegedly ordered or anointed, supports or approves of one’s own country, standpoint or actions so no further justification is required and no serious challenge is possible. (E.g., “God ordered me to kill my children,” or “We need to take away your land, since God [or Scripture, or Manifest Destiny, or Fate, or Heaven] has given it to us as our own.”) A private individual who seriously asserts this fallacy risks ending up in a psychiatric ward, but groups or nations who do it are far too often taken seriously. Practiced by those who will not or cannot tell God’s will from

their own, this vicious (and blasphemous) fallacy has been the cause of endless bloodshed over history. See also, Moral Superiority, and Magical Thinking. Also applies to deluded negative Appeals to Heaven, e.g., “You say that famine and ecological collapse due to climate change are real dangers during the coming century, but I know God wouldn’t ever let that happen to us!” The opposite of the Appeal to Heaven is the Job’s Comforter fallacy.

1.10 The Appeal to Nature

(also, Biologizing; The Green Fallacy) The contemporary romantic fallacy of ethos (that of “Mother Nature”) that if something is “natural” it has to be good, healthy and beneficial. E.g., “Our premium herb tea is lovingly brewed from the finest freshly-picked and delicately dried natural *T. Radicans* leaves. Those who dismiss it as mere Poison Ivy” don’t understand that it’s 100% organic, with no additives, GMO’s or artificial ingredients. It’s time to Go Green and lay back in Mother’s arms.” One who employs or falls for this fallacy forgets the old truism that left to itself, nature is indeed “red in tooth and claw.” This fallacy also applies to arguments alleging that something is “unnatural,” or “against nature” and thus evil (The Argument from Natural Law) e.g., “Homosexuality should be outlawed because it’s against nature,” arrogating to oneself the authority to define what is “natural” and what is unnatural or perverted. E.g., during the American Revolution British sources widely condemned rebellion against King George III as “unnatural,” and American revolutionaries as “perverts,” because the Divine Right of Kings represented Natural Law, and according to 1 Samuel 1523 in the Bible, rebellion is like unto witchcraft.

1.11 The Appeal to Pity

(also, “Argumentum ad Miserecordiam”) The fallacy of urging an audience to “root for the underdog” regardless of the issues at hand. A classic example is, “Those poor, cute little squeaky mice are being gobbled up by mean, nasty cats ten times their size!” A contemporary example might be America’s uncritical popular support for the Arab Spring movement of 2010-2012 in which The People (“The underdogs”) were seen to be heroically overthrowing cruel dictatorships, a movement that has resulted in retrospect in chaos, impoverishment, anarchy, mass suffering, civil war, the regional collapse of civilization and rise of extremism, and the largest refugee crisis since World War II. A corrupt argument from pathos. See also, Playing to Emotions. The opposite of the Appeal to Pity is the Appeal to Rigor, an argument (often based on machismo or on

manipulating an audience’s fear) based on mercilessness. E.g., “I’m a real man, not like those bleeding hearts, and I’ll be tough on [fill in the name of the enemy or bogeyman of the hour].” In academia this latter fallacy applies to politically-motivated or elitist calls for “Academic Rigor,” and rage against university developmental / remedial classes, open admissions, “dumbing down” and “grade inflation”.

1.12 The Appeal to Tradition

(also, Conservative Bias; Back in Those Good Times, “The Good Old Days”) The ancient fallacy that a standpoint, situation or action is right, proper and correct simply because it has “always” been that way, because people have “always” thought that way, or because it was that way long ago (most often meaning in the audience members youth or childhood, not before) and still continues to serve one particular group very well. A corrupted argument from ethos (that of past generations). E.g., “In America, women have always been paid less, so let’s not mess with long-standing tradition.” See also Argument from Inertia, and Default Bias. The opposite of this fallacy is The Appeal to Novelty (also, “Pro-Innovation bias,” “Recency Bias,” and “The Bad Old Days;” The Early Adopter’s Fallacy), e.g., “It’s NEW, and [therefore it must be] improved!” or “This is the very latest discovery—it has to be better”.

1.13 Appeasement

(also, “Assertiveness,” “The squeaky wheel gets the grease;” “I know my rights!”) This fallacy, most often popularly connected to the shameful pre-World War II appeasement of Hitler, is in fact still commonly practiced in public agencies, education and retail business today, e.g. “Customers are always right, even when they’re wrong. Don’t argue with them, just give ’em what they want so they’ll shut up and go away, and not make a stink—it’s cheaper and easier than a lawsuit.” Widespread unchallenged acceptance of this fallacy encourages offensive, uncivil public behavior and sometimes the development of a coarse subculture of obnoxious, “assertive” manipulators who, like “spoiled” children, leverage their knowledge of how to figuratively (or sometimes even literally!) “make a stink” into a primary coping skill in order to get what they want when they want it. The works of the late Community Organizing guru [Saul Alinsky](#) suggest practical, non-violent ways for groups to harness the power of this fallacy to promote social change, for good or for evil.. See also Bribery.

1.14 The Argument from Consequences

(also, Outcome Bias) The major fallacy of logos, arguing that something cannot be true because if it were the consequences or outcome would be unacceptable. (E.g., “Global climate change cannot be caused by human burning of fossil fuels, because if it were, switching to non-polluting energy sources would bankrupt American industry,” or “Doctor, that’s wrong! I can’t have terminal cancer, because if I did that’d mean that I won’t live to see my kids get married!”) Not to be confused with Actions have Consequences.

1.15 The Argument from Ignorance

(also, Argumentum ad Ignorantiam) The fallacy that since we don’t know (or can never know, or cannot prove) whether a claim is true or false, it must be false, or it must be true. E.g., “Scientists are never going to be able to positively prove their crazy theory that humans evolved from other creatures, because we weren’t there to see it! So, that proves the Genesis six-day creation account is literally true as written!” This fallacy includes Attacking the Evidence (also, “Whataboutism”; The Missing Link fallacy), e.g. “Some or all of your key evidence is missing, incomplete, or even faked! What about that? That proves you’re wrong and I’m right!” This fallacy usually includes fallacious “Either-Or Reasoning” as well E.g., “The vet can’t find any reasonable explanation for why my dog died. See! See! That proves that you poisoned him! There’s no other logical explanation!” A corrupted argument from logos, and a fallacy commonly found in American political, judicial and forensic reasoning. The recently famous “Flying Spaghetti Monster” meme is a contemporary refutation of this fallacy—simply because we cannot conclusively disprove the existence of such an absurd entity does not argue for its existence. See also A Priori Argument, Appeal to Closure, The Simpleton’s Fallacy, and Argumentum ex Silentio.

1.16 The Argument from Incredulity

The popular fallacy of doubting or rejecting a novel claim or argument out of hand simply because it appears superficially “incredible,” “insane” or “crazy,” or because it goes against one’s own personal beliefs, prior experience or ideology. This cynical fallacy falsely elevates the saying popularized by Carl Sagan, that “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof,” to an absolute law of logic. See also Hoyle’s Fallacy. The common, popular-level form of this fallacy is dismissing surprising, extraordinary or unfamiliar arguments

and evidence with a wave of the hand, a shake of the head, and a mutter of “that’s crazy”!

1.17 The Argument from Inertia

(also “Stay the Course”) The fallacy that it is necessary to continue on a mistaken course of action regardless of pain and sacrifice involved and even after discovering it is mistaken, because changing course would mean admitting that one’s decision (or one’s leader, or one’s country, or one’s faith) was wrong, and all one’s effort, expense, sacrifice and even bloodshed was for nothing, and that’s unthinkable. A variety of the Argument from Consequences, E for Effort, or the Appeal to Tradition. See also “Throwing Good Money After Bad”.

1.18 The Argument from Motives

(also Questioning Motives) The fallacy of declaring a standpoint or argument invalid solely because of the evil, corrupt or questionable motives of the one making the claim. E.g., “Bin Laden wanted us to withdraw from Afghanistan, so we have to keep up the fight!” Even evil people with the most corrupt motives sometimes say the truth (and even good people with the highest and purest motives are often wrong or mistaken). A variety of the Ad Hominem argument. The opposite side of this fallacy is falsely justifying or excusing evil or vicious actions because of the perpetrator’s apparent purity of motives or lack of malice. (E.g., “Sure, she may have beaten her children bloody now and again but she was a highly educated, ambitious professional woman at the end of her rope, deprived of adult conversation and stuck between four walls for years on end with a bunch of screaming, fighting brats, doing the best she could with what little she had. How can you stand there and accuse her of child abuse?”) See also Moral Licensing.

1.19 Argumentum ad Baculum

(“Argument from the Club.” Also, “Argumentum ad Baculum,” “Argument from Strength,” “Muscular Leadership,” “Non-negotiable Demands,” “Hard Power,” Bullying, The Power-Play, Fascism, Resolution by Force of Arms, Shock and Awe.) The fallacy of “persuasion” or “proving one is right” by force, violence, brutality, terrorism, superior strength, raw military might, or threats of violence. E.g., “Gimme your wallet or I’ll knock your head off!” or “We have the perfect right to take your land, since we have the big guns and you don’t.” Also applies to indirect forms of threat. E.g., “Give up your foolish pride, kneel down and accept our religion today if you don’t want to burn

in hell forever and ever!” A mainly discursive Argumentum ad Baculum is that of forcibly silencing opponents, ruling them “out of order,” blocking, censoring or jamming their message, or simply speaking over them or speaking more loudly than they do, this last a tactic particularly attributed to men in mixed-gender discussions.

1.20 Argumentum ad Mysterium

(“Argument from Mystery;” also Mystagogy.) A darkened chamber, incense, chanting or drumming, bowing and kneeling, special robes or headgear, holy rituals and massed voices reciting sacred mysteries in an unknown tongue have a quasi-hypnotic effect and can often persuade more strongly than any logical argument. The Puritan Reformation was in large part a rejection of this fallacy. When used knowingly and deliberately this fallacy is particularly vicious and accounts for some of the fearsome persuasive power of cults. An example of an Argumentum ad Mysterium is the “Long Ago and Far Away” fallacy, the fact that facts, evidence, practices or arguments from ancient times, distant lands and/or “exotic” cultures seem to acquire a special gravitas or ethos simply because of their antiquity, language or origin, e.g., publicly chanting Holy Scriptures in their original (most often incomprehensible) ancient languages, preferring the Greek, Latin, Assyrian or Old Slavonic Christian Liturgies over their vernacular versions, or using classic or newly invented Greek and Latin names for fallacies in order to support their validity. See also, Esoteric Knowledge. An obverse of the Argumentum ad Mysterium is the Standard Version Fallacy.

1.21 Argumentum ex Silentio

(Argument from Silence) The fallacy that if available sources remain silent or current knowledge and evidence can prove nothing about a given subject or question this fact in itself proves the truth of one’s claim. E.g., “Science can tell us nothing about God. That proves God doesn’t exist.” Or “Science admits it can tell us nothing about God, so you can’t deny that God exists!” Often misused in the American justice system, where, contrary to the 5th Amendment and the legal presumption of innocence until proven guilty, remaining silent or “taking the Fifth” is often falsely portrayed as proof of guilt. E.g., “Mr. Hixon can offer no alibi for his whereabouts the evening of January 15th. This proves that he was in fact in room 331 at the Smuggler’s Inn, murdering his wife with a hatchet!” In today’s America, choosing to remain silent in the face of a police officer’s questions can make one guilty enough to be arrested or even shot. See also, Argument from Ignorance.

1.22 Availability Bias

(also, Attention Bias, Anchoring Bias) A fallacy of logos stemming from the natural tendency to give undue attention and importance to information that is immediately available at hand, particularly the first or last information received, and to minimize or ignore broader data or wider evidence that clearly exists but is not as easily remembered or accessed. E.g., “We know from experience that this doesn’t work,” when “experience” means the most recent local attempt, ignoring overwhelming experience from other places and times where it has worked and does work. Also related is the fallacy of Hyperbole [also, Magnification, or sometimes Catastrophizing] where an immediate instance is immediately proclaimed “the most significant in all of human history,” or the “worst in the whole world!” This latter fallacy works extremely well with less-educated audiences and those whose “whole world” is very small indeed, audiences who “hate history” and whose historical memory spans several weeks at best.

1.23 The Bandwagon Fallacy

(also, Argument from Common Sense, Argumentum ad Populum) The fallacy of arguing that because “everyone,” “the people,” or “the majority” (or someone in power who has widespread backing) supposedly thinks or does something, it must therefore be true and right. E.g., “Whether there actually is large scale voter fraud in America or not, many people now think there is and that makes it so.” Sometimes also includes Lying with Statistics, e.g. “Over 75% of Americans believe that crooked Bob Hodiak is a thief, a liar and a pervert. There may not be any evidence, but for anyone with half a brain that conclusively proves that Crooked Bob should go to jail! Lock him up! Lock him up!” This is sometimes combined with the “Argumentum ad Baculum,” e.g., “Like it or not, it’s time to choose sides Are you going to get on board the bandwagon with everyone else, or get crushed under the wheels as it goes by?” Or in the 2017 words of former White House spokesperson Sean Spicer, “They should either get with the program or they can go,” A contemporary digital form of the Bandwagon Fallacy is the Information Cascade, “in which people echo the opinions of others, usually online, even when their own opinions or exposure to information contradicts that opinion. When information cascades form a pattern, this pattern can begin to overpower later opinions by making it seem as if a consensus already exists.” (Thanks to [Teaching Tolerance for this definition!](#)) See also Wisdom of the Crowd, and The Big Lie Technique. For the opposite of this fallacy see the Romantic Rebel fallacy.

1.24 The Big Brain/Little Brain Fallacy

(also, the Führerprinzip; Mad Leader Disease) A not-uncommon but extreme example of the Blind Loyalty Fallacy below, in which a tyrannical boss, military commander, or religious or cult-leader tells followers “Don’t think with your little brains (the brain in your head), but with your BIG brain (mine).” This last is sometimes expressed in positive terms, i.e., “You don’t have to worry and stress out about the rightness or wrongness of what you are doing since I, the Leader, am assuming all moral and legal responsibility for all your actions. So long as you are faithfully following orders without question I will defend you and gladly accept all the consequences up to and including eternal damnation if I’m wrong.” The opposite of this is the fallacy of “Plausible Deniability.” See also, “Just Do It!”, and “Gaslighting”.

1.25 The Big “But” Fallacy

(also, Special Pleading) The fallacy of enunciating a generally-accepted principle and then directly negating it with a “but.” Often this takes the form of the “Special Case,” which is supposedly exempt from the usual rules of law, logic, morality, ethics or even credibility. E.g., “As Americans we have always believed on principle that every human being has God-given, inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, including in the case of criminal accusations a fair and speedy trial before a jury of one’s peers. BUT, your crime was so unspeakable and a trial would be so problematic for national security that it justifies locking you up for life in Guantanamo without trial, conviction or possibility of appeal.” Or, “Yes, Honey, I still love you more than life itself, and I know that in my wedding vows I promised before God that I’d forsake all others and be faithful to you ‘until death do us part,’ but you have to understand, this was a special case...” See also, “Shopping Hungry,” and “We Have to do Something”!

1.26 The Big Lie Technique

(also the Bold Faced Lie; “Staying on Message.”) The contemporary fallacy of repeating a lie, fallacy, slogan, talking-point, nonsense-statement or deceptive half-truth over and over in different forms (particularly in the media) until it becomes part of daily discourse and people accept it without further proof or evidence. Sometimes the bolder and more outlandish the Big Lie becomes the more credible it seems to a willing, most often angry audience. E.g., “What about

the Jewish Problem?” Note that when this particular phony debate was going on there was no “Jewish Problem,” only a Nazi Problem, but hardly anybody in power recognized or wanted to talk about that, while far too many ordinary Germans were only too ready to find a convenient scapegoat to blame for their suffering during the Great Depression. Writer Miles J. Brewer expertly demolishes The Big Lie Technique in his classic (1930) short story, “[The Gostak and the Doshes](#).” However, more contemporary examples of the Big Lie fallacy might be the completely fictitious August 4, 1964 “Tonkin Gulf Incident” concocted under Lyndon Johnson as a false justification for escalating the Vietnam War, or the non-existent “Weapons of Mass Destruction” in Iraq (conveniently abbreviated “WMD’s” in order to lend this Big Lie a legitimizing, military-sounding “Alphabet Soup” ethos), used in 2003 as a false justification for the Second Gulf War. The November, 2016 U.S. President-elect’s statement that “millions” of ineligible votes were cast in that year’s American presidential election appears to be a classic Big Lie. See also, Alternative Truth; The Bandwagon Fallacy, the Straw Man, Alphabet Soup, and Propaganda.

1.27 Blind Loyalty

(also Blind Obedience, Unthinking Obedience, the “Team Player” appeal, the Nuremberg Defense) The dangerous fallacy that an argument or action is right simply and solely because a respected leader or source (a President, expert, one’s parents, one’s own “side,” team or country, one’s boss or commanding officers) says it is right. This is over-reliance on authority, a gravely corrupted argument from ethos that puts loyalty above truth, above one’s own reason and above conscience. In this case a person attempts to justify incorrect, stupid or criminal behavior by whining “That’s what I was told to do,” or “I was just following orders.” See also, The Big Brain/Little Brain Fallacy, and The “Soldier’s Honor” Fallacy.

1.28 Blood is Thicker than Water

(also Favoritism; Compadrisimo; “For my friends, anything.”) The reverse of the “Ad Hominem” fallacy, a corrupt argument from ethos where a statement, argument or action is automatically regarded as true, correct and above challenge because one is related to, knows and likes, or is on the same team or side, or belongs to the same religion, party, club or fraternity as the individual involved. (E.g., “My brother-in-law says he saw you goofing off on the job. You’re a hard worker but who am I going to believe, you or him? You’re fired!”) See also the Identity Fallacy.

1.29 Brainwashing

(also, Propaganda, “Radicalization.”) The Cold War-era fantasy that an enemy can instantly win over or “radicalize” an unsuspecting audience with their vile but somehow unspeakably persuasive “propaganda,” e.g., “Don’t look at that website! They’re trying to brainwash you with their propaganda!” Historically, “brainwashing” refers more properly to the inhuman *Argumentum ad Baculum* of “beating an argument into” a prisoner via a combination of pain, fear, sensory or sleep deprivation, prolonged abuse and sophisticated psychological manipulation (also, the “Stockholm Syndrome.”). Such “brainwashing” can also be accomplished by pleasure (“Love Bombing.”); e.g., “Did you like that? I know you did. Well, there’s lots more where that came from when you sign on with us!” (See also, “Bribery.”) An unspeakably sinister form of persuasion by brainwashing involves deliberately addicting a person to drugs and then providing or withholding the substance depending on the addict’s compliance. Note Only the other side brainwashes. “We” never brainwash.

1.30 Bribery

(also, Material Persuasion, Material Incentive, Financial Incentive). The fallacy of “persuasion” by bribery, gifts or favors is the reverse of the *Argumentum ad Baculum*. As is well known, someone who is persuaded by bribery rarely “stays persuaded” in the long term unless the bribes keep on coming in and increasing with time. See also Appeasement.

1.31 Calling “Cards”

A contemporary fallacy of logos, arbitrarily and falsely dismissing familiar or easily-anticipated but valid, reasoned objections to one’s standpoint with a wave of the hand, as mere “cards” in some sort of “game” of rhetoric, e.g. “Don’t try to play the ‘Race Card’ against me,” or “She’s playing the ‘Woman Card’ again,” or “That ‘Hitler Card’ won’t score with me in this argument.” See also, The Taboo, and Political Correctness.

1.32 Circular Reasoning

(also, The Vicious Circle; Catch 22, Begging the Question, *Circulus in Probando*) A fallacy of logos where A is because of B, and B is because of A, e.g., “You can’t get a job without experience, and you can’t get experience without a job.” Also refers to falsely arguing that something is true by repeating the same statement in

different words. E.g., “The witchcraft problem is the most urgent spiritual crisis in the world today. Why? Because witches threaten our very eternal salvation.” A corrupt argument from logos. See also the “Big Lie technique.”

1.33 The Complex Question

The contemporary fallacy of demanding a direct answer to a question that cannot be answered without first analyzing or challenging the basis of the question itself. E.g., “Just answer me ‘yes’ or ‘no’ Did you think you could get away with plagiarism and not suffer the consequences?” Or, “Why did you rob that bank?” Also applies to situations where one is forced to either accept or reject complex standpoints or propositions containing both acceptable and unacceptable parts. A corruption of the argument from logos. A counterpart of Either/Or Reasoning.

1.34 Confirmation Bias

A fallacy of logos, the common tendency to notice, search out, select and share evidence that confirms one’s own standpoint and beliefs, as opposed to contrary evidence. This fallacy is how “fortune tellers” work—If I am told I will meet a “tall, dark stranger” I will be on the lookout for a tall, dark stranger, and when I meet someone even marginally meeting that description I will marvel at the correctness of the “psychic’s” prediction. In contemporary times Confirmation Bias is most often seen in the tendency of various audiences to “curate their political environments, subsisting on one-sided information diets and [even] selecting into politically homogeneous neighborhoods” ([Michael A. Neblo et al., 2017, Science magazine](#)). Confirmation Bias (also, Homophily) means that people tend to seek out and follow solely those media outlets that confirm their common ideological and cultural biases, sometimes to an degree that leads a the false (implicit or even explicit) conclusion that “everyone” agrees with that bias and that anyone who doesn’t is “crazy”, “looney,” evil or even “radicalized.” See also, “Half Truth,” and “Defensiveness.”

1.35 Cost Bias

A fallacy of ethos (that of a product), the fact that something expensive (either in terms of money, or something that is “hard fought” or “hard won” or for which one “paid dearly”) is generally valued more highly than something obtained free or cheaply, regardless of the item’s real quality, utility or true value to the purchaser. E. g., “Hey, I worked hard to get this

car! It may be nothing but a clunker that can't make it up a steep hill, but it's mine, and to me it's better than some millionaire's limo." Also applies to judging the quality of a consumer item (or even of its owner!) primarily by the item's brand, price, label or source, e.g., "Hey, you there in the Jay-Mart suit! Har-har!" or, "Ooh, she's driving a Mercedes"!

1.36 Default Bias

(also, Normalization of Evil, "Deal with it;" "If it ain't broke, don't fix it;" Acquiescence; "Making one's peace with the situation;" "Get used to it;" "Whatever is, is right;" "It is what it is;" "Let it be, let it be;" "This is the best of all possible worlds [or, the only possible world];" "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't.") The logical fallacy of automatically favoring or accepting a situation simply because it exists right now, and arguing that any other alternative is mad, unthinkable, impossible, or at least would take too much effort, expense, stress or risk to change. The opposite of this fallacy is that of Nihilism ("Tear it all down!"), blindly rejecting what exists in favor of what could be, the adolescent fantasy of romanticizing anarchy, chaos (an ideology sometimes called political "Chaos Theory"), disorder, "permanent revolution," or change for change's sake.

1.37 Defensiveness

(also, Choice-support Bias Myside Bias) A fallacy of ethos (one's own), in which after one has taken a given decision, commitment or course of action, one automatically tends to defend that decision and to irrationally dismiss opposing options even when one's decision later on proves to be shaky or wrong. E.g., "Yeah, I voted for Snith. Sure, he turned out to be a crook and a liar and he got us into war, but I still say that at that time he was better than the available alternatives!" See also "Argument from Inertia" and "Confirmation Bias".

1.38 Deliberate Ignorance

(also, Closed-mindedness; "I don't want to hear it!"; Motivated Ignorance; Tuning Out; Hear No Evil, See No Evil, Speak No Evil [The Three Monkeys' Fallacy]) As described by author and commentator [Brian Resnik on Vox.com](#) (2017), this is the fallacy of simply choosing not to listen, "tuning out" or turning off any information, evidence or arguments that challenge one's beliefs, ideology, standpoint, or peace of mind, following the popular humorous dictum "Don't try to confuse me with the facts; my mind is made up!" This seemingly innocuous fallacy has enabled the most vicious

tyrannies and abuses over history, and continues to do so today. See also Trust your Gut, Confirmation Bias, The Third Person Effect, "They're All Crooks," the Simpleton's Fallacy, and The Positive Thinking Fallacy.

1.39 Diminished Responsibility

The common contemporary fallacy of applying a specialized judicial concept (that criminal punishment should be less if one's judgment was impaired) to reality in general. E.g., "You can't count me absent on Monday--I was hung over and couldn't come to class so it's not my fault." Or, "Yeah, I was speeding on the freeway and killed a guy, but I was buzzed out of my mind and didn't know what I was doing so it didn't matter that much." In reality the death does matter very much to the victim, to his family and friends and to society in general. Whether the perpetrator was high or not does not matter at all since the material results are the same. This also includes the fallacy of Panic, a very common contemporary fallacy that one's words or actions, no matter how damaging or evil, somehow don't "count" because "I panicked!" This fallacy is rooted in the confusion of "consequences" with "punishment." See also "Venting".

1.40 Disciplinary Blinders

A very common contemporary scholarly or professional fallacy of ethos (that of one's discipline, profession or academic field), automatically disregarding, discounting or ignoring a priori otherwise-relevant research, arguments and evidence that come from outside one's own professional discipline, discourse community or academic area of study. E.g., "That might be relevant or not, but it's so not what we're doing in our field right now." See also, "Star Power" and "Two Truths." An analogous fallacy is that of Denominational Blinders, arbitrarily ignoring or waving aside without serious consideration any arguments or discussion about faith, morality, ethics, spirituality, the Divine or the afterlife that come from outside one's own specific religious denomination or faith tradition.

1.41 Dog-Whistle Politics

An extreme version of reductionism and sloganeering in the public sphere, a contemporary fallacy of logos and pathos in which a brief phrase or slogan of the hour, e.g., "Abortion," "The 1%," "9/11," "Zionism," "Chain Migration," "Islamic Terrorism," "Fascism," "Communism," "Big government," "Taco trucks!", "Tax and

tax and spend and spend,” “Gun violence,” “Gun control,” “Freedom of choice,” “Lock ‘em up,” “Amnesty,” etc. is flung out as “red meat” or “chum in the water” that reflexively sends one’s audience into a snapping, foaming-at-the-mouth feeding-frenzy. Any reasoned attempt to more clearly identify, deconstruct or challenge an opponent’s “dog whistle” appeal results in puzzled confusion at best and wild, irrational fury at worst. “Dog whistles” differ widely in different places, moments and cultural milieux, and they change and lose or gain power so quickly that even recent historic texts sometimes become extraordinarily difficult to interpret. A common but sad instance of the fallacy of Dog Whistle Politics is that of candidate “debaters” of differing political shades simply blowing a succession of discursive “dog whistles” at their audience instead of addressing, refuting or even bothering to listen to each other’s arguments, a situation resulting in contemporary (2017) allegations that the political Right and Left in America are speaking “different languages” when they are simply blowing different “dog whistles.” See also, Reductionism..

1.42 The “Draw Your Own Conclusion” Fallacy

(also the Non-argument Argument; Let the Facts Speak for Themselves). In this fallacy of logos an otherwise uninformed audience is presented with carefully selected and groomed, “shocking facts” and then prompted to immediately “draw their own conclusions.” E.g., “Crime rates are more than twice as high among middle-class Patzinaks than among any other similar population group—draw your own conclusions.” It is well known that those who are allowed to “come to their own conclusions” are generally much more strongly convinced than those who are given both evidence and conclusion up front. However, Dr. William Lorimer points out that “The only rational response to the non-argument is ‘So what?’ i.e. ‘What do you think you’ve proved’, and why/how do you think you’ve proved it?’” Closely related (if not identical) to this is the well-known “Leading the Witness” Fallacy, where a sham, sarcastic or biased question is asked solely in order to evoke a desired answer.

1.43 The Dunning-Kruger Effect

A cognitive bias that leads people of limited skills or knowledge to mistakenly believe their abilities are greater than they actually are. (Thanks to [Teaching Tolerance](#) for this definition!) E.g., “I know Washington was the Father of His Country and never told a lie, Pocahontas was the first Native American, Lincoln freed the slaves, Hitler murdered six million Jews, Su-

san B. Anthony won equal rights for women, and Martin Luther King said ‘I have a dream!’ Moses parted the Red Sea, Caesar said ‘Et tu, Brute?’ and the only reason America didn’t win the Vietnam War hands-down like we always do was because they tied our general’s hands and the politicians cut and run. See? Why do I need to take a history course? I know everything about history”!

1.44 E for Effort

. (also Noble Effort; I’m Trying My Best; The Lost Cause) The common contemporary fallacy of ethos that something must be right, true, valuable, or worthy of respect and honor solely because one (or someone else) has put so much sincere good-faith effort or even sacrifice and bloodshed into it. (See also Appeal to Pity; Argument from Inertia; Heroes All; or Sob Story). An extreme example of this fallacy is Waving the Bloody Shirt (also, the “Blood of the Martyrs” Fallacy), the fallacy that a cause or argument, no matter how questionable or reprehensible, cannot be questioned without dishonoring the blood and sacrifice of those who died so nobly for that cause. E.g., [“Defend the patriotic gore / That flecked the streets of Baltimore. . .”](#) (from the official Maryland State Song). See also Cost Bias, The Soldier’s Honor Fallacy, and the Argument from Inertia.

1.45 Either/Or Reasoning

(also False Dilemma, All or Nothing Thinking; False Dichotomy, Black/White Fallacy, False Binary) A fallacy of logos that falsely offers only two possible options even though a broad range of possible alternatives, variations and combinations are always readily available. E.g., “Either you are 100% Simon Straightarrow or you are as queer as a three dollar bill—it’s as simple as that and there’s no middle ground!” Or, “Either you’re in with us all the way or you’re a hostile and must be destroyed! What’s it gonna be?” Or, if your performance is anything short of perfect, you consider yourself an abject failure. Also applies to falsely contrasting one option or case to another that is not really opposed, e.g., falsely opposing “Black Lives Matter” to “Blue Lives Matter” when in fact not a few police officers are themselves African American, and African Americans and police are not (or ought not to be!) natural enemies. Or, falsely posing a choice of either helping needy American veterans or helping needy foreign refugees, when in fact in today’s United States there are ample resources available to easily do both should we care to do so. See also, Overgeneralization.

1.46 Equivocation

The fallacy of deliberately failing to define one's terms, or knowingly and deliberately using words in a different sense than the one the audience will understand. (E.g., President Bill Clinton stating that he did not have sexual relations with "that woman," meaning no sexual penetration, knowing full well that the audience will understand his statement as "I had no sexual contact of any kind with that woman.") This is a corruption of the argument from logos, and a tactic often used in American jurisprudence. Historically, this referred to a tactic used during the Reformation-era religious wars in Europe, when people were forced to swear loyalty to one or another side and did as demanded via "equivocation," i.e., "When I solemnly swore true faith and allegiance to the King I really meant to King Jesus, King of Kings, and not to the evil usurper squatting on the throne today." This latter form of fallacy is excessively rare today when the swearing of oaths has become effectively meaningless except as obscenity or as speech formally subject to perjury penalties in legal or judicial settings.

1.47 The Eschatological Fallacy

The ancient fallacy of arguing, "This world is coming to an end, so . . ." Popularly refuted by the observation that "Since the world is coming to an end you won't need your life savings anyhow, so why not give it all to me"?

1.48 Esoteric Knowledge

(also Esoteric Wisdom; Gnosticism; Inner Truth; the Inner Sanctum; Need to Know) A fallacy from logos and ethos, that there is some knowledge reserved only for the Wise, the Holy or the Enlightened, (or those with proper Security Clearance), things that the masses cannot understand and do not deserve to know, at least not until they become wiser, more trusted or more "spiritually advanced." The counterpart of this fallacy is that of Obscurantism (also Obscuratationism, or Willful Ignorance), that (almost always said in a basso profundo voice) "There are some things that we mere mortals must never seek to know!" E.g., "Scientific experiments that violate the privacy of the marital bed and expose the deep and private mysteries of human sexual behavior to the harsh light of science are obscene, sinful and morally evil. There are some things that we as humans are simply not meant to know!" For the opposite of this latter, see the "Plain Truth Fallacy." See also, Argumentum ad Mysteriam.

1.49 Essentializing

A fallacy of logos that proposes a person or thing "is what it is and that's all that it is," and at its core will always be the way it is right now (E.g., "All terrorists are monsters, and will still be terrorist monsters even if they live to be 100," or "The poor you will always have with you, so any effort to eliminate poverty is pointless."). Also refers to the fallacy of arguing that something is a certain way "by nature," an empty claim that no amount of proof can refute. (E.g., "Americans are cold and greedy by nature," or "Women are naturally better cooks than men.") See also "Default Bias." The opposite of this is Relativizing, the typically postmodern fallacy of blithely dismissing any and all arguments against one's standpoint by shrugging one's shoulders and responding "Whatever. . . , I don't feel like arguing about it;" "It all depends. . . ," "That's your opinion; everything's relative;" or falsely invoking Einstein's Theory of Relativity, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, Quantum Weirdness or the Theory of Multiple Universes in order to confuse, mystify or "refute" an opponent. See also, "Red Herring" and "Appeal to Nature".

1.50 The Etymological Fallacy

(also, "The Underlying Meaning") A fallacy of logos, drawing false conclusions from the (most often long-forgotten) linguistic origins of a current word, or the alleged meanings or associations of that word in another language. E.g., "As used in physics, electronics and electrical engineering the term "hysteresis" is grossly sexist since it originally came from the Greek word for "uterus" or "womb." Or, "I refuse to eat fish! Don't you know that the French word for 'fish' is 'poisson,' which looks just like the English word 'poison'? And doesn't that suggest something to you?" Famously, postmodern philosopher Jacques Derrida played on this fallacy at great length in his (1968) ["Plato's Pharmacy"](#).

1.51 The Excluded Middle

A corrupted argument from logos that proposes that since a little of something is good, more must be better (or that if less of something is good, none at all is even better). E.g., "If eating an apple a day is good for you, eating an all-apple diet is even better!" or "If a low fat diet prolongs your life, a no-fat diet should make you live forever!" An opposite of this fallacy is that of Excluded Outliers, where one arbitrarily discards evidence, examples or results that disprove one's standpoint by simply describing them as "Weird,"

“Outliers,” or “Atypical.” See also, “The Big ‘But’ Fallacy.” Also opposite is the Middle of the Road Fallacy (also, *Falacia ad Temperantiam*; “The Politics of the Center;” Marginalization of the Adversary), where one demonstrates the “reasonableness” of one’s own standpoint (no matter how extreme) not on its own merits, but solely or mainly by presenting it as the only “moderate” path among two or more obviously unacceptable extreme alternatives. E.g., anti-Communist scholar [Charles Roig \(1979\)](#) notes that Vladimir Lenin successfully argued for Bolshevism in Russia as the only available “moderate” middle path between bomb-throwing Nihilist terrorists on the ultra-left and a corrupt and hated Czarist autocracy on the right. As Texas politician and humorist Jim Hightower famously [declares](#) in an undated quote, “The middle of the road is for yellow lines and dead armadillos”.

1.52 The “F-Bomb”

(also Cursing; Obscenity; Profanity). An adolescent fallacy of pathos, attempting to defend or strengthen one’s argument with gratuitous, unrelated sexual, obscene, vulgar, crude or profane language when such language does nothing to make an argument stronger, other than perhaps to create a sense of identity with certain young male “urban” audiences. This fallacy also includes adding gratuitous sex scenes or “adult” language to an otherwise unrelated novel or movie, sometimes simply to avoid the dreaded “G” rating. Related to this fallacy is the Salacious Fallacy, falsely attracting attention to and thus potential agreement with one’s argument by inappropriately sexualizing it, particularly connecting it to some form of sex that is perceived as deviant, perverted or prohibited (E.g., Arguing against Bill Clinton’s presidential legacy by continuing to wave Monica’s Blue Dress, or against Donald Trump’s presidency by obsessively highlighting his past boasting about genital groping). Historically, this dangerous fallacy was deeply implicated with the crime of lynching, in which false, racist accusations against a Black or minority victim were almost always salacious in nature and the sensation involved was successfully used to whip up public emotion to a murderous pitch. See also, Red Herring.

1.53 The False Analogy

The fallacy of incorrectly comparing one thing to another in order to draw a false conclusion. E.g., “Just like an alley cat needs to prowl, a normal adult can’t be tied down to one single lover.” The opposite of this fallacy is the Sui Generis Fallacy (also, *Differance*), a postmodern stance that rejects the validity of analogy and of inductive reasoning altogether because any given

person, place, thing or idea under consideration is “sui generis” i.e., different and unique, in a class unto itself.

1.54 Finish the Job

The dangerous contemporary fallacy, often aimed at a lesser-educated or working class audience, that an action or standpoint (or the continuation of that action or standpoint) may not be questioned or discussed because there is “a job to be done” or finished, falsely assuming “jobs” are meaningless but never to be questioned. Sometimes those involved internalize (“buy into”) the “job” and make the task a part of their own ethos. (E.g., “Ours is not to reason why / Ours is but to do or die.”) Related to this is the “Just a Job” fallacy. (E.g., “How can torturers stand to look at themselves in the mirror? But I guess it’s OK because for them it’s just a job like any other, the job that they get paid to do.”) See also “Blind Loyalty,” “The Soldiers’ Honor Fallacy” and the “Argument from Inertia”.

1.55 The Free Speech Fallacy

The infantile fallacy of responding to challenges to one’s statements and standpoints by whining, “It’s a free country, isn’t it? I can say anything I want to!” A contemporary case of this fallacy is the “Safe Space,” or “Safe Place,” where it is not allowed to refute, challenge or even discuss another’s beliefs because that might be too uncomfortable or “triggery” for emotionally fragile individuals. E.g., “All I told him was, ‘Jesus loves the little children,’ but then he turned around and asked me ‘But what about birth defects?’ That’s mean. I think I’m going to cry!” [Prof. Bill Hart Davidson \(2017\)](#) notes that “Ironically, the most strident calls for ‘safety’ come from those who want us to issue protections for discredited ideas. Things that science doesn’t support AND that have destroyed lives - things like the inherent superiority of one race over another. Those ideas wither under demands for evidence. They **are** unwelcome. But let’s be clear they are unwelcome because they have not survived the challenge of scrutiny.” Ironically, in contemporary America “free speech” has often become shorthand for freedom of racist, offensive or even neo-Nazi expression, ideological trends that once in power typically quash free speech. Additionally, a recent (2017) scientific study has found that, in fact, [“people think harder and produce better political arguments when their views are challenged”](#) and not artificially protected without challenge.

1.56 The Fundamental Attribution Error

(also, Self Justification) A corrupt argument from ethos, this fallacy occurs as a result of observing and comparing behavior. “You assume that the bad behavior of others is caused by character flaws and foul dispositions while your behavior is explained by the environment. So, for example, I get up in the morning at 10 a.m. I say it is because my neighbors party until 2 in the morning (situation) but I say that the reason why you do it is that you are lazy. Interestingly, it is more common in individualistic societies where we value self volition. Collectivist societies tend to look at the environment more. (It happens there, too, but it is much less common.)” [Thanks to scholar Joel Sax for this!] The obverse of this fallacy is Self Deprecation (also Self Debasement), where, out of either a false humility or a genuine lack of self-esteem, one deliberately puts oneself down, most often in hopes of attracting denials, gratifying compliments and praise.

1.57 Gaslighting

A recently-prominent, vicious fallacy of logic, denying or invalidating a person’s own knowledge and experiences by deliberately twisting or distorting known facts, memories, scenes, events and evidence in order to disorient a vulnerable opponent and to make him or her doubt his/her sanity. E.g., “Who are you going to believe? Me, or your own eyes?” Or, “You claim you found me in bed with her? Think again! You’re crazy! You seriously need to see a shrink.” A very common, though cruel instance of Gaslighting that seems to have been particularly familiar among mid-20th century generations is the fallacy of Emotional Invalidation, questioning, after the fact, the reality or “validity” of affective states, either another’s or one’s own. E.g., “Sure, I made it happen from beginning to end, but but it wasn’t me doing it, it was just my stupid hormones betraying me.” Or, “You didn’t really mean it when you said you ‘hate’ Mommy. Now take a time-out and you’ll feel better.” Or, “No, you’re not really in love; it’s just infatuation or ‘puppy love.’ ” The fallacy of “Gaslighting” is named after British playwright Patrick Hamilton’s 1938 stage play “Gas Light,” also known as “Angel Street.” See also, Blind Loyalty, “The Big Brain/Little Brain Fallacy,” The Affective Fallacy, and “Alternative Truth”.

1.58 Guilt by Association

The fallacy of trying to refute or condemn someone’s standpoint, arguments or actions by evoking the negative ethos of those with whom the speaker is identified

or of a group, party, religion or race to which he or she belongs or was once associated with. A form of Ad Hominem Argument, e.g., “Don’t listen to her. She’s a Republican so you can’t trust anything she says,” or “Are you or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?” An extreme instance of this is the Machiavellian “For my enemies, nothing” Fallacy, where real or perceived “enemies” are by definition always wrong and must be conceded nothing, not even the time of day, e.g., “He’s a Republican, so even if he said the sky is blue I wouldn’t believe him”.

1.59 The Half Truth

(also Card Stacking, Stacking the Deck, Incomplete Information) A corrupt argument from logos, the fallacy of consciously selecting, collecting and sharing only that evidence that supports one’s own standpoint, telling the strict truth but deliberately minimizing or omitting important key details in order to falsify the larger picture and support a false conclusion.(E.g. “The truth is that Bangladesh is one of the world’s fastest-growing countries and can boast of a young, ambitious and hard-working population, a family-positive culture, a delightful, warm climate of tropical beaches and swaying palms where it never snows, low cost medical and dental care, a vibrant faith tradition and a multitude of places of worship, an exquisite, world-class spicy local curry cuisine and a swinging entertainment scene. Taken together, all these solid facts clearly prove that Bangladesh is one of the world’s most desirable places for young families to live, work and raise a family.”) See also, Confirmation Bias.

1.60 Hero-Busting

(also, “The Perfect is the Enemy of the Good”) A post-modern fallacy of ethos under which, since nothing and nobody in this world is perfect there are not and have never been any heroes Washington and Jefferson held slaves, Lincoln was (by our contemporary standards) a racist, Karl Marx sexually exploited his family’s own young live-in domestic worker and got her pregnant, Martin Luther King Jr. had an eye for women too, Lenin condemned feminism, the Mahatma drank his own urine (ugh!), Pope Francis is wrong on abortion, capitalism, same-sex marriage and women’s ordination, Mother Teresa loved suffering and was wrong on just about everything else too, etc., etc Also applies to the now near-universal political tactic of ransacking everything an opponent has said, written or done since infancy in order to find something to misinterpret or condemn (and we all have something!). An early example of this latter tactic is deftly described in Robert Penn Warren’s classic (1946) novel, [All the King’s Men](#). This

is the opposite of the “Heroes All” fallacy, below. The “Hero Busting” fallacy has also been selectively employed at the service of the Identity Fallacy (see below) to falsely “prove” that “you cannot trust anyone” but a member of “our” identity-group since everyone else, even the so-called “heroes” or “allies” of other groups, are all racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, or hate “us.” E.g., In 1862 Abraham Lincoln said he was willing to settle the U.S. Civil War either with or without freeing the slaves if it would preserve the Union, thus “conclusively proving” that all whites are viciously racist at heart and that African Americans must do for self and never trust any of “them,” not even those who claim to be allies.

1.61 Heroes All

(also, “Everybody’s a Winner”) The contemporary fallacy that everyone is above average or extraordinary. A corrupted argument from pathos (not wanting anyone to lose or to feel bad). Thus, every member of the Armed Services, past or present, who serves honorably is a national hero, every student who competes in the Science Fair wins a ribbon or trophy, and every racer is awarded a winner’s yellow jersey. This corruption of the argument from pathos, much ridiculed by disgraced American humorist Garrison Keeler, ignores the fact that if everybody wins nobody wins, and if everyone’s a hero no one’s a hero. The logical result of this fallacy is that, as children’s author Alice Childress writes (1973), “[A hero ain’t nothing but a sandwich.](#)” See also the “Soldiers’ Honor Fallacy.”

1.62 Hoyle’s Fallacy

A fallacy of logos, falsely assuming that a possible event of low (even vanishingly low) probability can never have happened and/or would never happen in real life. E.g., “The probability of something as complex as human DNA emerging by purely random evolution in the time the earth has existed is so negligible that it is for all practical purposes impossible and must have required divine intervention.” Or, “The chance of a casual, Saturday-night poker player being dealt four aces off an honest, shuffled deck is so infinitesimal that it would never occur even once in a normal lifetime! That proves you cheated!” See also, Argument from Incredulity. An obverse of Hoyle’s Fallacy is “You Can’t Win if You Don’t Play,” (also, “Someone’s gonna win and it might as well be YOU!”) a common and cruel contemporary fallacy used to persuade vulnerable audiences, particularly the poor, the mathematically illiterate and gambling addicts to throw their money away on lotteries, horse races, casinos and other long-shot gambling schemes.

1.63 I Wish I Had a Magic Wand

The fallacy of regretfully (and falsely) proclaiming oneself powerless to change a bad or objectionable situation over which one has power. E.g., “What can we do about gas prices? As Secretary of Energy I wish I had a magic wand, but I don’t” [shrug]. Or, “No, you can’t quit piano lessons. I wish I had a magic wand and could teach you piano overnight, but I don’t, so like it or not, you have to keep on practicing.” The parent, of course, ignores the possibility that the child may not want or need to learn piano. See also, TINA.

1.64 The Identity Fallacy

(also Identity Politics; “Die away, ye old forms and logic!”) A corrupt postmodern argument from ethos, a variant on the Argumentum ad Hominem in which the validity of one’s logic, evidence, experience or arguments depends not on their own strength but rather on whether the one arguing is a member of a given social class, generation, nationality, religious or ethnic group, color, gender or sexual orientation, profession, occupation or subgroup. In this fallacy, valid opposing evidence and arguments are brushed aside or “othered” without comment or consideration, as simply not worth arguing about solely because of the lack of proper background or ethos of the person making the argument, or because the one arguing does not self-identify as a member of the “in-group.” E.g., “You’d understand me right away if you were Burmese but since you’re not there’s no way I can explain it to you,” or “Nobody but another nurse can know what a nurse has to go through.” Identity fallacies are reinforced by [common ritual](#), language, and discourse. However, these fallacies are occasionally self-interested, driven by the egoistical ambitions of academics, politicians and would-be group leaders anxious to build their own careers by carving out a special identity group constituency to the exclusion of existing broader-based identities and leadership. An Identity Fallacy may lead to scorn or rejection of potentially useful allies, real or prospective, because they are not of one’s own identity. The Identity Fallacy promotes an exclusivist, sometimes cultish “do for self” philosophy which in today’s world virtually guarantees self-marginalization and ultimate defeat. A recent application of the Identity Fallacy is the fallacious accusation of “Cultural Appropriation,” in which those who are not of the right Identity are condemned for “appropriating” the cuisine, clothing, language or music of a marginalized group, forgetting the old axiom that “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.” Accusations of Cultural Appropriation very often stem from competing selfish economic interests (E.g., “What right do those p*tnche Gringos have to set up a taco place right here on Guadalupe Drive to take away business from Doña Teresa’s Taquería? They even dare to play

Mexican music in their dining room! That's cultural appropriation!"). See also, Othering.

1.65 Infotainment

(also Infortainment; Fake News; InfoWars); A very corrupt and dangerous modern media-driven fallacy that deliberately and knowingly stirs in facts, news, falsities and outright lies with entertainment, a mixture usually concocted for specific, base ideological and profit-making motives. Origins of this fallacy predate the current era in the form of "Yellow" or "Tabloid" Journalism. This deadly fallacy has caused endless social unrest, discontent and even shooting wars (e.g., the Spanish American War) over the course of modern history. Practitioners of this fallacy sometimes hypocritically justify its use on the basis that their readers/listeners/viewers "know beforehand" (or should know) that the content offered is not intended as real news and is offered for entertainment purposes only, but in fact this caveat is rarely observed by uncritical audiences who eagerly swallow what the purveyors put forth. See also Dog-Whistle Politics.

1.66 The Job's Comforter Fallacy

(also, "Karma is a bi**h;" "What goes around comes around.") The fallacy that since there is no such thing as random chance and we (I, my group, or my country) are under special protection of heaven, any misfortune or natural disaster that we suffer must be a punishment for our own or someone else's secret sin or open wickedness. The opposite of the Appeal to Heaven, this is the fallacy employed by the Westboro Baptist Church members who protest fallen service members' funerals all around the United States. See also, Magical Thinking.

1.67 Just Do it.

(also, "Find a way;" "I don't care how you do it;" "Accomplish the mission;" "By Any Means Necessary.") A pure, abusive Argumentum ad Baculum (argument from force), in which someone in power arbitrarily waves aside or overrules the moral objections of subordinates or followers and orders them to accomplish a goal by any means required, fair or foul. The clear implication is that unethical or immoral methods should be used. E.g., "You say there's no way you can finish the dig on schedule because you found an old pioneer gravesite with a fancy tombstone on the excavation site? Well, find a way! Make it disappear! Just do it! I don't want to know how you do it, just do it!

This is a million dollar contract and we need it done by Tuesday." See also, Plausible Deniability.

1.68 Just Plain Folks

(also, "Values") This corrupt modern argument from ethos argues to a less-educated or rural audience that the one arguing is "just plain folks" who is a "plain talker," "says what s/he is thinking," "scorns political correctness," someone who "you don't need a dictionary to understand" and who thinks like the audience and is thus worthy of belief, unlike some member of the fancy-talking, latte-sipping Left Coast Political Elite, some "double-domed professor," "inside-the-beltway Washington bureaucrat," "tree-hugger" or other despised outsider who "doesn't think like we do" or "doesn't share our values." This is a counterpart to the Ad Hominem Fallacy and most often carries a distinct reek of xenophobia or racism as well. See also the Plain Truth Fallacy and the Simpleton's Fallacy.

1.69 The Law of Unintended Consequences

(also, "Every Revolution Ends up Eating its own Young" Grit; Resilience Doctrine) In this very dangerous, archly pessimistic postmodern fallacy the bogus "Law of Unintended Consequences," once a semi-humorous satirical corollary of "Murphy's Law," is elevated to the status of an iron law of history. This fallacy arbitrarily proclaims a priori that since we can never know everything or securely foresee anything, sooner or later in today's "complex world" unforeseeable adverse consequences and negative side effects (so-called "unknown unknowns") will always end up blindsiding and overwhelming, defeating and vitiating any and all naive "do-gooder" efforts to improve our world. Instead, one must always expect defeat and be ready to roll with the punches by developing "grit" or "resilience" as a primary survival skill. This nihilist fallacy is a practical negation of the the possibility of any valid argument from logos. See also, TINA.

1.70 Lying with Statistics

The contemporary fallacy of misusing true figures and numbers to "prove" unrelated claims. (e.g. "In real terms, attending college has never been cheaper than it is now. When expressed as a percentage of the national debt, the cost of getting a college education is actually far less today than it was back in 1965!"). A corrupted argument from logos, often preying on the public's perceived or actual mathematical ignorance. This includes the Tiny Percentage Fallacy, that an amount or action

that is quite significant in and of itself somehow becomes insignificant simply because it's a tiny percentage of something much larger. E.g., the arbitrary arrest, detention or interception of "only" a few hundred legally-boarded international travelers as a tiny percentage of the tens of thousands who normally arrive. Under this same fallacy a consumer who would choke on spending an extra dollar for two cans of peas will typically ignore \$50 extra on the price of a car or \$1000 extra on the price of a house simply because these differences are "only" a tiny percentage of the much larger amount being spent. Historically, sales taxes or value-added taxes (VAT) have successfully gained public acceptance and remain "under the radar" because of this latter fallacy, even though amounting to hundreds or thousands of dollars a year in extra tax burden. See also Half-truth, the Snow Job, and the Red Herring.

1.71 Magical Thinking

(also, the Sin of Presumption; Expect a Miracle!) An ancient but deluded fallacy of logos, arguing that when it comes to "crunch time," provided one has enough faith, prays hard enough, says the right words, does the right rituals, "names it and claims it," or "claims the Promise," God will always suspend the laws of the universe and work a miracle at the request of or for the benefit of the True Believer. In practice this nihilist fallacy denies the existence of a rational or predictable universe and thus the possibility of any valid argument from logic. See also, Positive Thinking, the Appeal to Heaven, and the Job's Comforter fallacy.

1.72 Mala Fides

(Arguing in Bad Faith; also Sophism) Using an argument that the arguer himself or herself knows is not valid. E.g., An unbeliever attacking believers by throwing verses from their own Holy Scriptures at them, or a lawyer arguing for the innocence of someone whom s/he knows full well to be guilty. This latter is a common practice in American jurisprudence, and is sometimes portrayed as the worst face of "Sophism." [Special thanks to [Bradley Steffens](#) for pointing out this fallacy!] Included under this fallacy is the fallacy of Motivational Truth (also, Demagoguery, or Campaign Promises), deliberately lying to "the people" to gain their support or motivate them toward some action the rhetor perceives to be desirable (using evil discursive means toward a "good" material end). A particularly bizarre and corrupt form of this latter fallacy is Self Deception (also, Whistling by the Graveyard). in which one deliberately and knowingly deludes oneself in order to achieve a goal, or perhaps simply to suppress anxiety and maintain one's energy level, enthusiasm,

morale, peace of mind or sanity in moments of adversity.

1.73 Measurability

A corrupt argument from logos and ethos (that of science and mathematics), the modern Fallacy of Measurability proposes that if something cannot be measured, quantified and replicated it does not exist, or is "nothing but anecdotal, touchy-feely stuff" unworthy of serious consideration, i.e., mere gossip or subjective opinion. Often, achieving "Measurability" necessarily demands preselecting, "fiddling" or "massaging" the available data simply in order to make it statistically tractable, or in order to support a desired conclusion. Scholar Thomas Persing thus describes "The modernist fallacy of falsely and inappropriately applying norms, standardizations, and data point requirements to quantify productivity or success. This is similar to complex question, measurability, and oversimplification fallacies where the user attempts to categorize complicated / diverse topics into terms that when measured, suit their position. For example, the calculation of inflation in the United States doesn't include the changes in the price to gasoline, because the price of gasoline is too volatile, despite the fact gasoline is necessary for most people to live their lives in the United States." See also, "A Priori Argument," "Lying with Statistics," and the "Procrustean Fallacy".

1.74 Mind-reading

(Also, "The Fallacy of Speculation;" "I can read you like a book") An ancient fallacy, a corruption of stasis theory, speculating about someone else's thoughts, emotions, motivations and "body language" and then claiming to understand these clearly, sometimes more accurately than the person in question knows themselves. The rhetor deploys this phony "knowledge" as a fallacious warrant for or against a given standpoint. Scholar Myron Peto offers as an example the baseless claim that "Obama doesn't a da** [sic] for human rights." Assertions that "call for speculation" are rightly rejected as fallacious in U.S. judicial proceedings but far too often pass uncontested in public discourse. The opposite of this fallacy is the postmodern fallacy of Mind Blindness (also, the Autist's Fallacy), a complete denial of any normal human capacity for "Theory of Mind," postulating the utter incommensurability and privacy of minds and thus the impossibility of ever knowing or truly understanding another's thoughts, emotions, motivations or intents. This fallacy, much promoted by the late postmodernist guru Jacques Derrida, necessarily vitiates any form of Stasis Theory. However, the Fallacy of Mind Blindness

has been decisively refuted in several studies, including [recent \(2017\) research published by the Association for Psychological Science](#), and a (2017) Drexel University study indicating how [“our minds align when we communicate”](#).

1.75 Moral Licensing

The contemporary ethical fallacy that one’s consistently moral life, good behavior or recent extreme suffering or sacrifice earns him/her the right to commit an immoral act without repercussions, consequences or punishment. E.g., “I’ve been good all year, so one bad won’t matter,” or “After what I’ve been through, God knows I need this.” The fallacy of Moral Licensing is also sometimes applied to nations, e.g., “Those who criticize repression and the Gulag in the former USSR forget what extraordinary suffering the Russians went through in World War II and the millions upon millions who died.” See also Argument from Motives. The opposite of this fallacy is the (excessively rare in our times) ethical fallacy of Scruples, in which one obsesses to pathological excess about one’s accidental, forgotten, unconfessed or unforgiven sins and because of them, the seemingly inevitable prospect of eternal damnation.

1.76 Moral Superiority

(also, Self Righteousness; the Moral High Ground) An ancient, immoral and extremely dangerous fallacy, enunciated in Thomistic / Scholastic philosophy in the late Middle Ages, arguing that Evil has no rights that the Good and the Righteous are bound to respect. That way lies torture, heretic-burning, and the Spanish Inquisition. Those who practice this vicious fallacy reject any “moral equivalency” (i.e., even-handed treatment) between themselves (the Righteous) and their enemies (the Wicked), against whom anything is fair, and to whom nothing must be conceded, not even the right to life. This fallacy is a specific denial of the ancient “Golden Rule,” and has been the cause of endless intractable conflict, since if one is Righteous no negotiation with Evil and its minions is possible; The only imaginable road to a “just” peace is through total victory, i.e., the absolute defeat and liquidation of one’s Wicked enemies. American folk singer and Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan expertly demolishes this fallacy in his 1963 protest song, [“With God on Our Side.”](#) See also the Appeal to Heaven, and Moving the Goalposts.

1.77 Mortification

(also, Live as Though You’re Dying; Pleasure-hating; No Pain No Gain) An ancient fallacy of logos, trying to “beat the flesh into submission” by extreme exercise or ascetic practices, deliberate starvation or infliction of pain, denying the undeniable fact that discomfort and pain exist for the purpose of warning of lasting damage to the body. Extreme examples of this fallacy are various forms of self-flagellation such as practiced by the New Mexico “Penitentes” during Holy Week or by Shia devotees during Muharram. More familiar contemporary manifestations of this fallacy are extreme “insanity” exercise regimes not intended for normal health, fitness or competitive purposes but just to “toughen” or “punish” the body. Certain pop-nutritional theories and diets seem based on this fallacy as well. Some contemporary experts suggest that self-mortification (an English word related to the Latinate French root “mort,” or “death.”) is in fact “suicide on the installment plan.” Others suggest that it involves a narcotic-like addiction to the body’s natural endorphins. The opposite of this fallacy is the ancient fallacy of Hedonism, seeking and valuing physical pleasure as a good in itself, simply for its own sake.

1.78 Moving the Goalposts

(also, Changing the Rules; All’s Fair in Love and War; The Nuclear Option; “Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing”) A fallacy of logos, demanding certain proof or evidence, a certain degree of support or a certain number of votes to decide an issue, and then when this is offered, demanding even more, different or better support in order to deny victory to an opponent. For those who practice the fallacy of Moral Superiority (above), Moving the Goalposts is often perceived as perfectly good and permissible if necessary to prevent the victory of Wickedness and ensure the triumph of one’s own side, i.e., the Righteous.

1.79 MYOB

(Mind Your Own Business; also You’re Not the Boss of Me; “None of yer beeswax,” “So What?,” The Appeal to Privacy) The contemporary fallacy of arbitrarily prohibiting or terminating any discussion of one’s own standpoints or behavior, no matter how absurd, dangerous, evil or offensive, by drawing a phony curtain of privacy around oneself and one’s actions. A corrupt argument from ethos (one’s own). E.g., “Sure, I was doing eighty and weaving between lanes on Mesa Street—what’s it to you? You’re not a cop, you’re not my nanny. It’s my business if I want to speed, and your business to get the hell out of my way. Mind

your own damn business!” Or, “Yeah, I killed my baby. So what? Butt out! It wasn’t your brat, so it’s none of your damn business!” Rational discussion is cut off because “it is none of your business!” See also, “Taboo.” The counterpart of this is “Nobody Will Ever Know,” (also “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas;” “I Think We’re Alone Now,” or the Heart of Darkness Syndrome) the fallacy that just because nobody important is looking (or because one is on vacation, or away in college, or overseas) one may freely commit immoral, selfish, negative or evil acts at will without expecting any of the normal consequences or punishment. Author Joseph Conrad graphically describes this sort of moral degradation in the character of Kurtz in his classic novel, [Heart of Darkness](#).

1.80 Name-Calling

A variety of the “Ad Hominem” argument. The dangerous fallacy that, simply because of who one is or is alleged to be, any and all arguments, disagreements or objections against one’s standpoint or actions are automatically racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, bigoted, discriminatory or hateful. E.g., “My stand on abortion is the only correct one. To disagree with me, argue with me or question my judgment in any way would only show what a pig you really are.” Also applies to refuting an argument by simply calling it a “fallacy,” or declaring it invalid without proving why it is invalid, or summarily dismissing arguments or opponents by labeling them “racist,” “communist,” “fascist,” “moron,” any name followed by the suffix “tard” (short for the highly offensive “retard”) or some other negative name without further explanation. E.g., “He’s an a**hole, end of story” or “I’m a loser.” A subset of this is the Newspeak fallacy, creating identification with a certain kind of audience by inventing or using racist or offensive, sometimes military-sounding nicknames for opponents or enemies, e.g., “The damned DINO’s are even worse than the Repugs and the Neocons.” Or, “In the Big One it took us only five years to beat both the J*ps and the Jerries, so more than a decade and a half after niner-eleven why is it so hard for us to beat a raggedy bunch of Hajjis and Towel-heads?” Note that originally the word “Nazi” belonged in this category, but this term has long come into use as a proper English noun. See also, “Reductionism,” “Ad Hominem Argument,” and “Alphabet Soup”.

1.81 The Narrative Fallacy

(also, the Fable; the Poster Child) The ancient fallacy of persuasion by telling a “heartwarming” or horrifying story or fable, particularly to less-educated or uncritical audiences who are less likely to grasp purely

logical arguments or general principles. E.g., Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol.” Narratives and fables, particularly those that name names and personalize arguments, tend to be far more persuasive at a popular level than other forms of argument and are virtually irrefutable, even when the story in question is well known to be entirely fictional. This fallacy is found even in the field of science, as noted by [a recent \(2017\) scientific study](#).

1.82 The NIMBY Fallacy

(Not in My Back Yard; also “Build a Wall!”, “Lock’em up and throw away the key;” The Ostrich Strategy; The Gitmo Solution.). The infantile fallacy that a problem, challenge or threat that is not physically nearby or to which I am not directly exposed has for all practical purposes “gone away” and ceased to exist. Thus, a problem can be permanently and definitively solved by “making it go away,” preferably to someplace “out of sight,” a walled-off ghetto or a distant isle where there is no news coverage, and where nobody important stays. Lacking that, it can be made to go away by simply eliminating, censoring or ignoring “negative” media coverage and public discussion of the problem and focusing on “positive, encouraging” things instead.

1.83 No Discussion

(also No Negotiation; the Control Voice; Peace through Strength; a Muscular Foreign Policy; Fascism) A pure Argumentum ad Baculum that rejects reasoned dialogue, offering either instant, unconditional compliance/surrender or defeat/death as the only two options for settling even minor differences, e.g., screaming “Get down on the ground, now!” or declaring “We don’t talk to terrorists.” This deadly fallacy falsely paints real or potential “hostiles” as monsters devoid of all reason, and far too often contains a very strong element of “machismo” as well. I.e. “A real, muscular leader never resorts to pantywaist pleading, apologies, excuses, fancy talk or argument. That’s for lawyers, liars and pansies and is nothing but a delaying tactic. A real man stands tall, says what he thinks, draws fast and shoots to kill.” The late actor John Wayne frequently portrayed this fallacy in his movie roles. See also, The Pout.

1.84 Non-recognition

A deluded fallacy in which one deliberately chooses not to publicly “recognize” ground truth, usually on the theory that this would somehow reward evil-doers

if we recognize their deeds as real or consequential. Often the underlying theory is that the situation is “temporary” and will soon be reversed. E.g., In the decades from 1949 until Richard Nixon’s presidency the United States officially refused to recognize the existence of the most populous nation on earth, the People’s Republic of China, because America supported the U.S.-friendly Republic of China government on Taiwan instead and hoped they might somehow return to power on the mainland. Perversely, in 2016 the U.S. President-Elect caused a significant international flap by chatting with the President of the government on Taiwan, a de facto violation of long-standing American non-recognition of that same regime. More than half a century after the Korean War the U.S. still refuses to pronounce the name of, or recognize (much less conduct normal, peaceful negotiations with) a nuclear-armed DPRK (North Korea). An individual who practices this fallacy risks institutionalization (e.g., “I refuse to recognize Mom’s murder, ’cuz that’d give the victory to the murderer! I refuse to watch you bury her! Stop! Stop!”) but tragically, such behavior is only too common in international relations. See also the State Actor Fallacy, Political Correctness, and The Pout.

1.85 The Non Sequitur

The deluded fallacy of offering evidence, reasons or conclusions that have no logical connection to the argument at hand (e.g. “The reason I flunked your course is because the U. S. government is now putting out purple five-dollar bills! Purple!”). (See also Red Herring.) Occasionally involves the breathtaking arrogance of claiming to have special knowledge of why God, fate, karma or the Universe is doing certain things. E.g., “This week’s earthquake was obviously meant to punish those people for their great wickedness.” See also, Magical Thinking, and the Appeal to Heaven.

1.86 Nothing New Under the Sun

(also, Uniformitarianism, “Seen it all before;” “Surprise, surprise;” “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.”) Fairly rare in contemporary discourse, this deeply cynical fallacy, a corruption of the argument from logos, falsely proposes that there is not and will never be any real novelty in this world. Any argument that there are truly “new” ideas or phenomena is judged a priori to be unworthy of serious discussion and dismissed with a jaded sigh and a wave of the hand as “the same old same old.” E.g., “[Sigh!] Idiots! Don’t you see that the current influx of refugees from the Mideast is just the same old Muslim invasion of Christendom that’s been going on for 1,400 years?” Or, “Libertarianism is nothing but re-warmed anarchism,

which, in turn, is nothing but the ancient Antinomian Heresy. Like I told you before, there’s nothing new under the sun!”

1.87 Olfactory Rhetoric

(also, “The Nose Knows”) A vicious, zoological-level fallacy of pathos in which opponents are marginalized, dehumanized or hated primarily based on their supposed odor, lack of personal cleanliness, imagined diseases or filth. E. g., “Those demonstrators are demanding something or another but I’ll only talk to them if first they go home and take a bath!” Or, “I can smell a Jew a block away!” Also applies to demeaning other cultures or nationalities based on their differing cuisines, e.g., “I don’t care what they say or do, their breath always stinks of garlic. And have you ever smelled their kitchens?” Olfactory Rhetoric straddles the borderline between a fallacy and a psychopathology. A 2017 study by Ruhr University Bochum suggests that olfactory rhetoric does not arise from a simple, automatic physiological reaction to an actual odor, but in fact, strongly depends on one’s predetermined reaction or prejudices toward another, and one’s olfactory center “is activated even before we perceive an odour.” See also, Othering.

1.88 Oops!

(also, “Oh, I forgot. . .,” “The Judicial Surprise,” “The October Surprise,”) A corrupt argument from logos in which toward the decisive end of a discussion, debate, trial, electoral campaign period, or decision-making process an opponent suddenly, elaborately and usually sarcastically shams having just remembered or uncovered some salient fact, argument or evidence. E.g., “Oops, I forgot to ask you You were convicted of this same offense twice before, weren’t you?!” Banned in American judicial argument, this fallacy is only too common in public discourse. Also applies to supposedly “discovering” and sensationally reporting some potentially damning information or evidence and then, after the damage has been done or the decision has been made, quietly declaring, “Oops, I guess that really wasn’t that significant after all. Ignore what I said. Sorry ‘bout that!”

1.89 Othering

(also Otherizing, “They’re Not Like Us,” Stereotyping, Xenophobia, Racism, Prejudice) A badly corrupted, discriminatory argument from ethos where facts, arguments, experiences or objections are arbitrarily disregarded, ignored or put down without serious considera-

tion because those involved “are not like us,” or “don’t think like us.” E.g., “It’s OK for Mexicans to earn a buck an hour in the maquiladoras [Mexico-based ‘Twin Plants’ run by American or other foreign corporations]. If it happened here I’d call it brutal exploitation and daylight robbery but south of the border, down Mexico way the economy is different and they’re not like us.” Or, “You claim that life must be really terrible over there for terrorists to ever think of blowing themselves up with suicide vests just to make a point, but always remember that they’re different from us. They don’t think about life and death the same way we do.” A vicious variety of the Ad Hominem Fallacy, most often applied to non-white or non-Christian populations. A variation on this fallacy is the “Speakee” Fallacy (“You speakee da English?”; also the Shibboleth), in which an opponent’s arguments are mocked, ridiculed and dismissed solely because of the speaker’s alleged or real accent, dialect, or lack of fluency in standard English, e.g., “He told me ‘Vee vorkers need to form a younion!’ but I told him I’m not a ‘vorker,’ and to come back when he learns to speak proper English.” A very dangerous, extreme example of Othering is Dehumanization, a fallacy of faulty analogy where opponents are dismissed as mere cockroaches, lice, apes, monkeys, rats, weasels or bloodsucking parasites who have no right to speak or to live at all, and probably should be “squashed like bugs.” This fallacy is ultimately the “logic” behind ethnic cleansing, genocide and gas ovens. See also the Identity Fallacy, “Name Calling” and “Olfactory Rhetoric.” The opposite of this fallacy is the “Pollyanna Principle” below.

1.90 Overexplanation

A fallacy of logos stemming from the real paradox that beyond a certain point, more explanation, instructions, data, discussion, evidence or proof inevitably results in less, not more, understanding. Contemporary urban mythology holds that this fallacy is typically male (“Mansplaining”), while barely half a century ago the prevailing myth was that it was men who were naturally monosyllabic, grunting or non-verbal while women would typically overexplain (e.g., the 1960 hit song by Joe Jones, “You Talk Too Much”). “Mansplaining” is, according to scholar Danelle Pecht, “the infuriating tendency of many men to always have to be the smartest person in the room, regardless of the topic of discussion and how much they actually know!” See also The Snow Job, and the “Plain Truth” fallacy.

1.91 Overgeneralization

(also Hasty Generalization; Totus pro Partes Fallacy; the Merological Fallacy) A fallacy of logos where a

broad generalization that is agreed to be true is offered as overriding all particular cases, particularly special cases requiring immediate attention. E.g., “Doctor, you say that this time of year a flu vaccination is essential. but I would counter that ALL vaccinations are essential” (implying that I’m not going to give special attention to getting the flu shot). Or, attempting to refute “Black Lives Matter” by replying, “All Lives Matter,” the latter undeniably true but still a fallacious overgeneralization in that specific and urgent context. Overgeneralization can also mean one sees a single negative outcome as an eternal pattern of defeat. Overgeneralization may also include the the Pars pro Toto Fallacy, the stupid but common fallacy of incorrectly applying one or two true examples to all cases. E.g., a minority person who commits a particularly horrifying crime, and whose example is then used to smear the reputation of the entire group, or when a government publishes special lists of crimes committed by groups who are supposed to be hated, e.g., Jews, or undocumented immigrants. Famously, the case of one Willie Horton was successfully used in this manner in the 1988 American presidential election to smear African Americans, Liberals, and by extension, Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis. See also the fallacy of “Zero Tolerance” below.

1.92 The Paralysis of Analysis

(also, Procrastination; the Nirvana Fallacy) A post-modern fallacy that since all data is never in, any conclusion is always provisional, no legitimate decision can ever be made and any action should always be delayed until forced by circumstances. A corruption of the argument from logos. (See also the “Law of Unintended Consequences.”)

1.93 The Passive Voice Fallacy

(also, the Bureaucratic Passive) A fallacy from ethos, concealing active human agency behind the curtain of the grammatical passive voice, e.g., “It has been decided that you are to be let go,” arrogating an ethos of cosmic infallibility and inevitability to a very fallible conscious decision made by identifiable, fallible and potentially culpable human beings. Scholar Jackson Katz notes (2017) “We talk about how many women were raped last year, not about how many men raped women. We talk about how many girls in a school district were harassed last year, not about how many boys harassed girls. We talk about how many teenage girls in the state of Vermont got pregnant last year, rather than how many men and boys impregnated teenage girls. . . . So you can see how the use of the passive voice has a political effect. [It] shifts the focus off of men

and boys and onto girls and women. Even the term ‘Violence against women’ is problematic. It’s a passive construction; there’s no active agent in the sentence. It’s a bad thing that happens to women, but when you look at the term ‘violence against women’ nobody is doing it to them, it just happens to them. . . Men aren’t even a part of it.” See also, Political Correctness. An obverse of the Passive Voice Fallacy is the Be-verb Fallacy, a cultish linguistic theory and the bane of many a first-year composition student’s life, alleging that an extraordinary degree of “clarity,” “sanity,” or textual “liveliness” can be reached by strictly eliminating all passive verb forms and all forms of the verb “to be” from English-language writing. This odd but unproven contention, dating back to Alfred Korzybski’s “General Semantics” self-improvement movement of the 1920’s and 30’s via S. I. Hayakawa, blithely ignores the fact that although numerous major world languages lack a ubiquitous “be-verb,” e.g., Russian, Hindi and Arabic, speakers of these languages, like English-speaking General Semantics devotees themselves, have never been proven to enjoy any particular cognitive advantage over ordinary everyday users of the passive voice and the verb “to be.” Nor have writers of the curiously stilted English that results from applying this fallacy achieved any special success in academia, professional or technical writing, or in the popular domain.

1.94 Paternalism

A serious fallacy of ethos, arbitrarily tut-tutting, dismissing or ignoring another’s arguments or concerns as “childish” or “immature;” taking a condescending attitude of superiority toward opposing standpoints or toward opponents themselves. E.g., “Your argument against the war is so infantile. Try approaching the issue like an adult for a change,” “I don’t argue with children,” or “Somebody has to be the grownup in the room, and it might as well be me. Here’s why you’re wrong. . .” Also refers to the sexist fallacy of dismissing a woman’s argument because she is a woman, e.g., “Oh, it must be that time of the month, eh?” See also “Ad Hominem Argument” and “Tone Policing”.

1.95 Personalizaion

A deluded fallacy of ethos, seeing yourself or someone else as the essential cause of some external event for which you or the other person had no responsibility. E.g., “Never fails! It had to happen! It’s my usual rotten luck that the biggest blizzard of the year had to occur just on the day of our winter festival. If it wasn’t for ME being involved I’m sure the blizzard wouldn’t have happened!” This fallacy can also be taken in a positive sense, e.g. Hitler evidently believed that simply because he was Hitler every bullet would miss him

and no explosive could touch him. “Personalization” straddles the borderline between a fallacy and a psychopathology. See also, “The Job’s Comforter Fallacy,” and “Magical Thinking”.

1.96 The Plain Truth Fallacy;

(also, the Simple Truth fallacy, Salience Bias, the KISS Principle [Keep it Short and Simple / Keep it Simple, Stupid], the Monocausal Fallacy; the Executive Summary) A fallacy of logos favoring familiar, singular, summarized or easily comprehensible data, examples, explanations and evidence over those that are more complex and unfamiliar but much closer to the truth. E.g., “Ooooh, look at all those equations and formulas! Just boil it down to the Simple Truth,” or “I don’t want your damned philosophy lesson! Just tell me the Plain Truth about why this is happening.” A more sophisticated version of this fallacy arbitrarily proposes, as did 18th century Scottish rhetorician John Campbell, that the Truth is always simple by nature and only malicious enemies of Truth would ever seek to make it complicated. (See also, The Snow Job, and Overexplanation.) The opposite of this is the postmodern fallacy of Ineffability or Complexity (also, Truthiness; Post-Truth),, arbitrarily declaring that today’s world is so complex that there is no truth, or that Truth (capital-T), if indeed such a thing exists, is unknowable except perhaps by God or the Messiah and is thus forever inaccessible and irrelevant to us mere mortals, making any cogent argument from logos impossible. See also the Big Lie, and Paralysis of Analysis.

1.97 Plausible Deniability

A vicious fallacy of ethos under which someone in power forces those under his or her control to do some questionable or evil act and to then falsely assume or conceal responsibility for that act in order to protect the ethos of the one in command. E.g., “Arrange a fatal accident but make sure I know nothing about it!”

1.98 Playing on Emotion

(also, the Sob Story; the Pathetic Fallacy; the “Bleeding Heart” fallacy, the Drama Queen / Drama King Fallacy) The classic fallacy of pure argument from pathos, ignoring facts and evoking emotion alone. E.g., “If you don’t agree that witchcraft is a major problem just shut up, close your eyes for a moment and picture in your mind all those poor moms crying bitter tears for their innocent tiny children whose cozy little beds and happy tricycles lie all cold and abandoned, just because of those wicked old witches! Let’s

string'em all up!" The opposite of this is the Apathetic Fallacy (also, Cynicism; Burnout; Compassion Fatigue), where any and all legitimate arguments from pathos are brushed aside because, as noted country music artist Jo Dee Messina sang (2005), "My give-a-damn's busted." Obverse to Playing on Emotion is the ancient fallacy of Refinement ("Real Feelings"), where certain classes of living beings such as plants and non-domesticated animals, infants, babies and minor children, barbarians, slaves, deep-sea sailors, farmworkers, criminals and convicts, refugees, addicts, terrorists, Catholics, Jews, foreigners, the poor, people of color, "Hillbillies," "Hobos," homeless or undocumented people, or "the lower classes" in general are deemed incapable of experiencing real pain like we do, or of having any "real feelings" at all, only brutish appetites, vile lusts, evil drives, filthy cravings, biological instincts, psychological reflexes and automatic tropisms. Noted rhetorician Kenneth Burke falls into this last, behaviorist fallacy in his otherwise brilliant (1966) [Language as Symbolic Action](#), in his discussion of a bird trapped in a lecture room. See also, Othering.

1.99 Political Correctness ("PC")

A postmodern fallacy, a counterpart of the "Name Calling" fallacy, supposing that the nature of a thing or situation can be changed by simply changing its name. E.g., "Today we strike a blow for animal rights and against cruelty to animals by changing the name of 'pets' to 'animal companions.'" Or "Never, ever play the 'victim' card, because it's so manipulative and sounds so negative, helpless and despairing. Instead of being 'victims,' we are proud to be 'survivors.'" (Of course, when "victims" disappear then perpetrators conveniently vanish as well!) See also, The Passive Voice Fallacy, and The Scripted Message. Also applies to other forms of political "Language Control," e.g., being careful never to refer to North Korea or ISIS/ISIL by their rather pompous proper names ("the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" and "the Islamic State," respectively) or to the Syrian government as the "Syrian government," (It's always the "Regime" or the "Dictatorship."). Occasionally the fallacy of "Political Correctness" is falsely confused with simple courtesy, e.g., "I'm sick and tired of the tyranny of Political Correctness, having to watch my words all the time--I want to be free to speak my mind and to call out a N----- or a Queer in public any time I damn well feel like it!" See also, Non-recognition. An opposite of this fallacy is the fallacy of Venting, below.

1.100 The Pollyanna Principle

(also, "The Projection Bias," "They're Just Like Us," "Singing 'Kumbaya.'") A traditional, often tragic

fallacy of ethos, that of automatically (and falsely) assuming that everyone else in any given place, time and circumstance had or has basically the same (positive) wishes, desires, interests, concerns, ethics and moral code as "we" do. This fallacy practically if not theoretically denies both the reality of difference and the human capacity to chose radical evil. E.g., arguing that "The only thing most Nazi Storm Troopers wanted was the same thing we do, to live in peace and prosperity and to have a good family life," when the reality was radically otherwise. Dr. William Lorimer offers this explanation "The Projection Bias is the flip side of the 'They're Not Like Us' [Othering] fallacy. The Projection bias (fallacy) is 'They're just people like me, therefore they must be motivated by the same things that motivate me.' For example 'I would never pull a gun and shoot a police officer unless I was convinced he was trying to murder me; therefore, when Joe Smith shot a police officer, he must have been in genuine fear for his life.' I see the same fallacy with regard to Israel 'The people of Gaza just want to be left in peace; therefore, if Israel would just lift the blockade and allow Hamas to import anything they want, without restriction, they would stop firing rockets at Israel.' That may or may not be true - I personally don't believe it - but the argument clearly presumes that the people of Gaza, or at least their leaders, are motivated by a desire for peaceful co-existence." The Pollyanna Principle was gently but expertly demolished in the classic twentieth-century American animated cartoon series, "The Flintstones," in which the humor lay in the absurdity of picturing "Stone Age" characters having the same concerns, values and lifestyles as mid-twentieth century white working class Americans. This is the opposite of the Othering fallacy. (Note The Pollyanna Principle fallacy should not be confused with a psychological principle of the same name which observes that positive memories are usually retained more strongly than negative ones.)

1.101 The Positive Thinking Fallacy

An immensely popular but deluded modern fallacy of logos, that because we are "thinking positively" that in itself somehow biases external, objective reality in our favor even before we lift a finger to act. See also, Magical Thinking. Note that this particular fallacy is often part of a much wider closed-minded, somewhat cultish ideology where the practitioner is warned against paying attention to to or even acknowledging the reality of evil, or of "negative" evidence or counter-arguments against his/her standpoints. In the latter case rational discussion, argument or refutation is most often futile. See also, Deliberate Ignorance.

1.102 The Post Hoc Argument

(also, “Post Hoc Propter Hoc;” “Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc;” “Too much of a coincidence,” the “Clustering Illusion”) The classic paranoiac fallacy of attributing an imaginary causality to random coincidences, concluding that just because something happens close to, at the same time as, or just after something else, the first thing is caused by the second. E.g., “AIDS first emerged as an epidemic back in the very same era when Disco music was becoming popular—that’s too much of a coincidence It proves that Disco caused AIDS!” Correlation does not equal causation.

1.103 The Pout

(also The Silent Treatment; Nonviolent Civil Disobedience; Noncooperation) An often-infantile Argumentum ad Baculum that arbitrarily rejects or gives up on dialogue before it is concluded. The most benign nonviolent form of this fallacy is found in passive-aggressive tactics such as slowdowns, boycotts, lock-outs, sitdowns and strikes. Under President Barack Obama the United States finally ended a half-century long political Pout with Cuba. See also “No Discussion” and “Nonrecognition”.

1.104 The Procrustean Fallacy

(also, “Keeping up Standards,” Standardization, Uniformity, Fordism). The modernist fallacy of falsely and inappropriately applying the norms and requirements of standardized manufacturing quality control and rigid scheduling, or of military discipline to inherently diverse free human beings, their lives, education, behavior, clothing and appearance. This fallacy often seems to stem from the pathological need of someone in power to place in “order” their disturbingly free, messy and disordered universe by restricting others’ freedom and insisting on rigid standardization, alphabetization, discipline, uniformity and “objective” assessment of everyone under their power. This fallacy partially explains why marching in straight lines, mass calisthenics, goose-stepping, drum-and-bugle or flag corps, standing at attention, saluting, uniforms, and standardized categorization are so typical of fascism, tyrannical regimes, and of tyrants petty and grand everywhere. Thanks to author Eimar O’Duffy for identifying this fallacy!

1.105 Prosopology

(also, Prosopography, Reciting the Litany; “Tell Me, What Were Their Names?”; Reading the Roll of Mar-

tyrs) An ancient fallacy of pathos and ethos, publicly reading out loud, singing, or inscribing at length a list of names (most or all of which will be unknown to the reader or audience), sometimes in a negative sense, to underline the gravity of a past tragedy or mass-casualty event, sometimes in a positive sense, to emphasize the ancient historical continuity of a church, organization or cause. Proper names, especially if they are from the same culture or language group as the audience, can have near-mystical persuasive power. In some cases, those who use this fallacy in its contemporary form will defend it as an attempt to “personalize” an otherwise anonymous recent mass tragedy. This fallacy was virtually unknown in secular American affairs before about 100 years ago, when the custom emerged of listing of the names of local World War I casualties on community monuments around the country. That this is indeed a fallacy is evident by the fact that the names on these century-old monuments are now meaningful only to genealogists and specialized historians, just as the names on the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington or the names of those who perished on 9/11 will surely be in another several generations.

1.106 The Red Herring

(also, Distraction) An irrelevant argument, attempting to mislead and distract an audience by bringing up an unrelated but emotionally loaded issue. E.g., “In regard to my several bankruptcies and recent indictment for corruption let’s be straight up about what’s really important Terrorism! Just look at what happened last week in [name the place]. Vote for me and I’ll fight those terrorists anywhere in the world!” Also applies to raising unrelated issues as falsely opposing the issue at hand, e.g., “You say ‘Black Lives Matter,’ but I would rather say ‘Climate Change Matters!’ ” when the two contentions are in no way opposed, only competing for attention. See also Availability Bias, and Dog Whistle Politics.

1.107 Reductio ad Hitlerum

(or, ad Hitleram) A highly problematic contemporary historical-revisionist contention that the argument “That’s just what Hitler said (or would have said, or would have done)” is a fallacy, an instance of the Ad Hominem argument and/or Guilt by Association. Whether the Reductio ad Hitlerum can be considered an actual fallacy or not seems to fundamentally depend on one’s personal view of Hitler and the gravity of his crimes.

1.108 Reductionism

(also, Oversimplifying, Sloganeering) The fallacy of deceiving an audience by giving simple answers or bumper-sticker slogans in response to complex questions, especially when appealing to less educated or unsophisticated audiences. E.g., “If the glove doesn’t fit, you must vote to acquit.” Or, “Vote for Snith. He’ll bring back jobs!” In science, technology, engineering and mathematics (“STEM subjects”) reductionism is intentionally practiced to make intractable problems computable, e.g., the well-known humorous suggestion, “[First, let’s assume the cow is a sphere!](#)”. See also, the Plain Truth Fallacy, and Dog-whistle Politics.

1.109 Reifying

(also, Mistaking the Map for the Territory) The ancient fallacy of treating imaginary intellectual categories, schemata or names as actual, material “things.” (E.g., “The War against Terror is just another chapter in the eternal fight to the death between Freedom and Absolute Evil!”) Sometimes also referred to as “Essentializing” or “Hypostatization.”

1.110 The Romantic Rebel

(also, the Truthdig / Truthout Fallacy; the Brave Heretic; Conspiracy theories; the Iconoclastic Fallacy) The contemporary fallacy of claiming Truth or validity for one’s standpoint solely or primarily because one is supposedly standing up heroically to the dominant “orthodoxy,” the current Standard Model, conventional wisdom or Political Correctness, or whatever may be the Bandwagon of the moment; a corrupt argument from ethos. E.g., “Back in the day the scientific establishment thought that the world was flat, that was until Columbus proved them wrong! Now they want us to believe that ordinary water is nothing but H₂O. Are you going to believe them? The government is frantically trying to suppress the truth that our public drinking-water supply actually has nitrogen in it and causes congenital vampirism! And what about Area 51? Don’t you care? Or are you just a kiss-up for the corrupt scientific establishment?” The opposite of the Bandwagon fallacy.

1.111 The “Save the Children” Fallacy

(also, Humanitarian Crisis) A cruel and cynical contemporary media-driven fallacy of pathos, an instance of the fallacious Appeal to Pity, attracting public support for intervention in somebody else’s crisis in a distant country by repeatedly showing in gross detail the

extreme (real) suffering of the innocent, defenseless little children (occasionally extended even to their pets!) on “our” side, conveniently ignoring the reality that innocent children on all sides usually suffer the most in any war, conflict, famine or crisis. Recent (2017) examples include the so-called “Rohingya” in Myanmar/Burma (ignoring multiple other ethnicities suffering ongoing hunger and conflict in that impoverished country), children in rebel-held areas of Syria (areas held by our rebels, not by the Syrian government or by Islamic State rebels), and the children of Mediterranean boat-people (light complected children from the Mideast, Afghanistan and North Africa, but not darker, African-complected children from sub-Saharan countries, children who are evidently deemed by the media to be far less worthy of pity). Scholar Glen Greenwald points out that a cynical key part of this tactic is hiding the child and adult victims of one’s own violence while “milking” the tragic, blood-soaked images of children killed by the “other side” for every tear they can generate as a *causus belli* [a puffed-up excuse for war, conflict or American/Western intervention].

1.112 Scapegoating

(also, Blamecasting) The ancient fallacy that whenever something goes wrong there’s always someone other than oneself to blame. Although sometimes this fallacy is a practical denial of randomness or chance itself, today it is more often a mere insurance-driven business decision (“I don’t care if it was an accident! Somebody with deep pockets is gonna pay for this!”), though often scapegoating is no more than a cynical ploy to shield those truly responsible from blame. The term “Scapegoating” is also used to refer to the tactic of casting collective blame on marginalized or scorned “Others,” e.g., “The Jews are to blame!” A particularly corrupt and cynical example of scapegoating is the fallacy of Blaming the Victim, in which one falsely casts the blame for one’s own evil or questionable actions on those affected, e.g., “If you move an eyelash I’ll have to kill you and you’ll be to blame!” “If you don’t bow to our demands we’ll shut down the government and it’ll be totally YOUR fault!” or “You bi**h, you acted flirty and made me rape you! Then you snitched on me to the cops and let them collect a rape kit on you, and now I’m going to prison and every bit of it is your fault!” See also, the Affective Fallacy.

1.113 Scare Tactics

(also Appeal to Fear; Paranoia; the Bogeyman Fallacy; Shock Doctrine [ShockDoc]; Rally ‘Round the Flag; Rally ‘Round the President) A variety of Playing on Emotions, a corrupted argument from pathos,

taking advantage of a emergent or deliberately-created crisis and its associated public shock, panic and chaos in order to impose an argument, action or solution that would be clearly unacceptable if carefully considered. E.g., “If you don’t shut up and do what I say we’re all gonna die! In this moment of crisis we can’t afford the luxury of criticizing or trying to second-guess my decisions when our very lives and freedom are in peril! Instead, we need to be united as one!” Or, in the (2017) words of former White House Spokesperson Sean Spicer, “This is about the safety of America!” This fallacy is discussed at length in Naomi Klein’s (2010) [The Shock Doctrine The Rise of Disaster Capitalism](#) and her (2017) [No is Not Enough Resisting Trump’s Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need](#). See also, The Shopping Hungry Fallacy, Dog-Whistle Politics, “We Have to do Something!”, and The Worst Case Fallacy.

1.114 “Scoring”

(also, Moving the Ball Down the Field, the Sports World Fallacy; “Hey, Sports Fans!”) An instance of faulty analogy, the common contemporary fallacy of inappropriately and most often offensively applying sports, gaming, hunting or other recreational imagery to unrelated areas of life, such as war or intimacy. E.g., “Nope, I haven’t scored with Francis yet, but last night I managed to get to third base!” or “We really need to take our ground game into Kim’s half of the field if we ever expect to score against North Korea.” This fallacy is almost always soaked in testosterone and machismo. An associated fallacy is that of Evening up the Score (also, Getting Even), exacting tit-for-tat vengeance as though life were some sort of “point-score” sports contest. Counter-arguments to the “Scoring” fallacy usually fall on deaf ears, since the one and only purpose for playing a game is to “score,” isn’t it?

1.115 The Scripted Message

(also, Talking Points) A contemporary fallacy related to Big Lie Technique, where a politician or public figure strictly limits her/his statements on a given issue to repeating carefully scripted, often exaggerated or empty phrases developed to achieve maximum acceptance or maximum desired reaction from a target audience. See also, Dog Whistle Politics, and Political Correctness, above. The opposite of this fallacy is that of “Venting”.

1.116 Sending the Wrong Message

A dangerous fallacy of logos that attacks a given statement, argument or action, no matter how good, true or necessary, because it will “send the wrong message.” In effect, those who use this fallacy are openly confessing to fraud and admitting that the truth will destroy the fragile web of illusion they have deliberately created by their lies. E.g., “Actually, we haven’t a clue about how to deal with this crisis, but if we publicly admit it we’ll be sending the wrong message.” See also, “Mala Fides.”

1.117 Shifting the Burden of Proof

A classic fallacy of logos that challenges an opponent to disprove a claim rather than asking the person making the claim to defend his/her own argument. E.g., “These days space-alien are everywhere among us, masquerading as true humans, even right here on campus! I dare you to prove it isn’t so! See? You can’t! You admit it! That means what I say has to be true. Most probably, you’re one of them, since you seem to be so soft on space-alien!” A typical tactic in using this fallacy is first to get an opponent to admit that a far-fetched claim, or some fact related to it, is indeed at least theoretically “possible,” and then declare the claim “proven” absent evidence to the contrary. E.g., “So you admit that massive undetected voter fraud is indeed possible under our current system, and could have happened in this country at least in theory, and you can’t produce even the tiniest scintilla of evidence that it didn’t actually happen! Ha-ha! I rest my case.” See also, Argument from Ignorance.

1.118 The Shopping Hungry Fallacy

A fallacy of pathos, a variety of Playing on Emotions and sometimes Scare Tactics, making stupid but important decisions (or being prompted, manipulated or forced to “freely” take public or private decisions that may be later regretted but are difficult to reverse) “in the heat of the moment” when under the influence of strong emotion (hunger, fear, lust, anger, sadness, regret, fatigue, even joy, love or happiness). E.g., Trevor Noah, (2016) host of the Daily Show on American television attributes public approval of draconian measures in the Patriot Act and the creation of the U. S. Department of Homeland Security to America’s “shopping hungry” immediately after 9/11. See also, Scare Tactics; “We Have to Do Something;” and The Big “But” Fallacy.

1.119 The Silent Majority Fallacy

A variety of the argument from ignorance, this fallacy, famously enunciated by disgraced American President Richard Nixon, alleges special knowledge of a hidden “silent majority” of voters (or of the population in general) that stands in support of an otherwise unpopular leader and his/her policies, contrary to the repeated findings of polls, surveys and popular vote totals. In an extreme case the leader arrogates to him/herself the title of the “Voice of the Voiceless”.

1.120 The Simpleton’s Fallacy

(Or, The “Good Simpleton” Fallacy) A corrupt fallacy of logos, described in an undated quote from science writer Isaac Asimov as “The false notion that democracy means that ‘my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge.’ ” The name of this fallacy is borrowed from Walter M. Miller Jr.’s classic (1960) post-apocalyptic novel, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, in which in the centuries after a nuclear holocaust knowledge and learning become so despised that “Good Simpleton” becomes the standard form of interpersonal salutation. This fallacy is masterfully portrayed in the person of the title character in the 1994 Hollywood movie, “Forrest Gump.” The fallacy is widely alleged to have had a great deal to do with the outcome of the 2016 US presidential election, See also “Just Plain Folks,” and the “Plain Truth Fallacy.” U.S. President Barrack Obama noted to the contrary (2016), “In politics and in life, ignorance is not a virtue. It’s not cool to not know what you’re talking about. That’s not real or telling it like it is. That’s not challenging political correctness. That’s just not knowing what you’re talking about.” The term “Simpleton’s Fallacy” has also been used to refer to a deceptive technique of argumentation, feigning ignorance in order to get one’s opponent to admit to, explain or overexplain something s/he would rather not discuss. E.g., “I see here that you have a related prior conviction for something called ‘Criminal Sodomy.’ I may be a poor, naive simpleton but I’m not quite sure what that fine and fancy lawyer-talk means in plain English. Please explain to the jury in simple terms what exactly you did to get convicted of that crime.” See also, Argument from Ignorance, and The Third Person Effect.

1.121 The Slippery Slope

(also, the Domino Theory) The common fallacy that “one thing inevitably leads to another.” E.g., “If you two go and drink coffee together one thing will lead to another and next thing you know you’ll be pregnant and end up spending your life on welfare living in the

Projects,” or “If we close Gitmo one thing will lead to another and before you know it armed terrorists will be strolling through our church doors with suicide belts, proud as you please, smack in the middle of the 1030 a.m. Sunday worship service right here in Garfield, Kansas”!

1.122 The Snow Job

(also Falacia ad Verboſium; Information Bias) A fallacy of logos, “proving” a claim by overwhelming an audience (“snowing them under”) with mountains of true but marginally-relevant documents, graphs, words, facts, numbers, information and statistics that look extremely impressive but which the intended audience cannot be expected to understand or properly evaluate. This is a corrupted argument from logos. See also, “Lying with Statistics.” The opposite of this fallacy is the Plain Truth Fallacy.

1.123 The Soldiers’ Honor Fallacy

The ancient fallacy that all who wore a uniform, fought hard and followed orders are worthy of some special honor or glory or are even “heroes,” whether they fought for freedom or fought to defend slavery, marched under Grant or Lee, Hitler, Stalin, Eisenhower or McArthur, fought to defend their homes, fought for oil or to spread empire, or even fought against and killed U.S. soldiers! A corrupt argument from ethos (that of a soldier), closely related to the “Finish the Job” fallacy (“Sure, he died for a lie, but he deserves honor because he followed orders and did his job faithfully to the end!”). See also “Heroes All.” This fallacy was recognized and decisively refuted at the Nuremberg Trials after World War II but remains powerful to this day nonetheless. See also “Blind Loyalty.” Related is the State Actor Fallacy, that those who fight and die for their country (America, Russia, Iran, the Third Reich, etc.) are worthy of honor or at least pardonable while those who fight for a non-state actor (armed abolitionists, guerrillas, freedom-fighters, jihadis, mujahideen) are not and remain “terrorists” no matter how noble or vile their cause, until or unless they win and become the recognized state, or are adopted by a state after the fact.

1.124 The Standard Version Fallacy

The ancient fallacy, a discursive Argumentum ad Baculum, of choosing a “Standard Translation” or “Authorized Version” of an ancient or sacred text and arbitrarily declaring it “correct” and “authoritative,” necessarily eliminating much of the poetry and underlying

ing meaning of the original but conveniently quashing any further discussion about the meaning of the original text, e.g., the Vulgate or The King James Version. The easily demonstrable fact that translation (beyond three or four words) is neither uniform nor reversible (i.e., never comes back exactly the same when retranslated from another language) gives the lie to any efforts to make translation of human languages into an exact science. Islam clearly recognizes this fallacy when characterizing any attempt to translate the sacred text of the Holy Qur'an out of the original Arabic as a "paraphrase" at very best. An obverse of this fallacy is the Argumentum ad Mysteriam, above. An extension of the Standard Version Fallacy is the Monolingual Fallacy, at an academic level the fallacy of ignorantly assuming (as a monolingual person) that transparent, in-depth translation between languages is the norm, or even possible at all, allowing one to conveniently and falsely ignore everyday issues of translation when close-reading translated literature or academic text and theory. At the popular level the Monolingual Fallacy allows monolinguals to blithely demand that visitors, migrants, refugees and newcomers learn English, either before arriving or else overnight after arrival in the United States, while applying no such demand to themselves when they go to Asia, Europe, Latin America, or even French-speaking areas of Canada. Not rarely, this fallacy descends into gross racism or ethnic discrimination, e.g., the demagoguery of warning of "Spanish being spoken right here on Main Street and taco trucks on every corner!" See also, Othering, and Dog-Whistle Politics.

1.125 Star Power

(also Testimonial, Questionable Authority, Faulty Use of Authority, Falacia ad Vericundiam; Eminence-based Practice) In academia and medicine, a corrupt argument from ethos in which arguments, standpoints and themes of professional discourse are granted fame and validity or condemned to obscurity solely by whoever may be the reigning "stars" or "premier journals" of the profession or discipline at the moment. E.g., "Foster's take on Network Theory has been thoroughly criticized and is so last-week! This week everyone's into Safe Spaces and Pierce's Theory of Microaggressions. Get with the program." (See also, the Bandwagon.) Also applies to an obsession with journal Impact Factors. At the popular level this fallacy also refers to a corrupt argument from ethos in which public support for a standpoint or product is established by a well-known or respected figure (i.e., a star athlete or entertainer) who is not an expert and who may have been well paid to make the endorsement (e.g., "Olympic gold-medal pole-vaulter Fulano de Tal uses Quick Flush Internet--Shouldn't you?" Or, "My favorite rock star warns that vaccinations spread cooties, so I'm not vac-

inating my kids!"). Includes other false, meaningless or paid means of associating oneself or one's product or standpoint with the ethos of a famous person or event (e.g., "Try Salsa Cabria, the official taco sauce of the Winter Olympics!"). This fallacy also covers Faulty use of Quotes (also, The Devil Quotes Scripture), including quoting out of context or against the clear intent of the original speaker or author. E.g., racists quoting and twisting the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s statements in favor of racial equality against contemporary activists and movements for racial equality.

1.126 The Straw Man

(also "The Straw Person" "The Straw Figure") The fallacy of setting up a phony, weak, extreme or ridiculous parody of an opponent's argument and then proceeding to knock it down or reduce it to absurdity with a rhetorical wave of the hand. E.g., "Vegetarians say animals have feelings like you and me. Ever seen a cow laugh at a Shakespeare comedy? Vegetarianism is nonsense!" Or, "Pro-choicers hate babies and want to kill them!" Or, "Pro-lifers hate women and want them to spend their lives barefoot, pregnant and chained to the kitchen stove!" A too-common example of this fallacy is that of highlighting the most absurd, offensive, silly or violent examples in a mass movement or demonstration, e.g. "Tree huggers" for environmentalists, "bra burners" for feminists, or "rioters" when there are a dozen violent crazies in a peaceful, disciplined demonstration of thousands or tens of thousands, and then falsely portraying these extreme examples as typical of the entire movement in order to condemn it with a wave of the hand. See also Olfactory Rhetoric.

1.127 The Taboo

(also, Dogmatism) The ancient fallacy of unilaterally declaring certain "bedrock" arguments, assumptions, dogmas, standpoints or actions "sacrosanct" and not open to discussion, or arbitrarily taking some emotional tones, logical standpoints, doctrines or options "off the table" beforehand. (E.g., "No, let's not discuss my sexuality," "Don't bring my drinking into this," or "Before we start, you need to know I won't allow you to play the race card or permit you to attack my arguments by claiming 'That's just what Hitler would say!' ") Also applies to discounting or rejecting certain arguments, facts and evidence (or even experiences!) out of hand because they are supposedly "against the Bible" or other sacred dogma (See also the A Priori Argument). This fallacy occasionally degenerates into a separate, distracting argument over who gets to define the parameters, tones, dogmas and taboos of the main argument, though at this point reasoned

discourse most often breaks down and the entire affair becomes a naked Argumentum ad Baculum. See also, MYOB, Tone Policing, and Calling “Cards”.

1.128 They’re All Crooks

The common contemporary fallacy of refusing to get involved in public politics because “all” politicians and politics are allegedly corrupt, ignoring the fact that if this is so in a democratic country it is precisely because decent people like you and I refuse to get involved, leaving the field open to the “crooks” by default. An example of Circular Reasoning. Related to this fallacy is “They’re All Biased,” the extremely common contemporary cynical fallacy of ignoring news and news media because none tells the “objective truth” and all push some “agenda.” This basically true observation logically requiring audiences to regularly view or read a variety of media sources in order to get any approximation of reality, but for many younger people today (2017) it means in practice, “Ignore news, news media and public affairs altogether and instead pay attention to something that’s fun, exciting or personally interesting to you.” The sinister implication for democracy is, “Mind your own business and leave all the ‘big’ questions to your betters, those whose job is to deal with these questions and who are well paid to do so.” See also the Third Person Effect, and Deliberate Ignorance.

1.129 The “Third Person Effect”

(also, “Wise up!” and “They’re All Liars”) An example of the fallacy of Deliberate Ignorance, the arch-cynical postmodern fallacy of deliberately discounting or ignoring media information a priori, opting to remain in ignorance rather than “listening to the lies” of the mainstream media, the President, the “medical establishment,” professionals, professors, doctors and the “academic elite” or other authorities or information sources, even about urgent subjects (e.g., the need for vaccinations) on which these sources are otherwise publicly considered to be generally reliable or relatively trustworthy. According to Drexel University researchers (2017), the “Third Person Effect . . . suggests that individuals will perceive a mass media message to have more influence on others, than themselves. This perception tends to counteract the message’s intended ‘call-to-action.’ Basically, this suggests that over time people wised up to the fact that some mass media messages were intended to manipulate them -- so the messages became less and less effective.” This fallacy seems to be opposite to and an overreaction to the Big Lie Technique. See also, Deliberate Ignorance, the Simpleton’s Fallacy, and Trust your Gut.

1.130 The “Thousand Flowers” Fallacy

(also, “Take names and kick butt.”) A sophisticated, modern “Argumentum ad Baculum” in which free and open discussion and “brainstorming” are temporarily allowed and encouraged (even demanded) within an organization or country not primarily in order to hear and consider opposing views, but rather to “smoke out,” identify and later punish, fire or liquidate dissenters or those not following the Party Line. The name comes from the Thousand Flowers Period in Chinese history when Communist leader Chairman Mao Tse Tung applied this policy with deadly effect.

1.131 Throwing Good Money After Bad

(also, “Sunk Cost Fallacy”) In his excellent book, [Logically Fallacious](#) (2015), [Author Bo Bennett](#) describes this fallacy as follows “Reasoning that further investment is warranted on the fact that the resources already invested will be lost otherwise, not taking into consideration the overall losses involved in the further investment.” In other words, risking additional money to “save” an earlier, losing investment, ignoring the old axiom that “Doing the same thing and expecting different results is the definition of insanity.” E.g., “I can’t stop betting now, because I already bet the rent and lost, and I need to win it back or my wife will kill me when I get home!” See also Argument from Inertia.

1.132 TINA

(There Is No Alternative. Also the “Love it or Leave It” Fallacy; “Get over it,” “Suck it up,” “It is what it is,” “Actions/Elections have consequences,” or the “Fait Accompli”) A very common contemporary extension of the either/or fallacy in which someone in power quashes critical thought by announcing that there is no realistic alternative to a given standpoint, status or action, arbitrarily ruling any and all other options out of bounds, or announcing that a decision has been made and any further discussion is insubordination, disloyalty, treason, disobedience or simply a waste of precious time when there’s a job to be done. (See also, “Taboo;” “Finish the Job.”) TINA is most often a naked power-play, a slightly more sophisticated variety of the Argumentum ad Baculum. See also Appeal to Closure.

1.133 Tone Policing

. A corrupt argument from pathos and delivery, the fallacy of judging the validity of an argument pri-

marily by its emotional tone of delivery, ignoring the reality that a valid fact or argument remains valid whether it is offered calmly and deliberately or is shouted in a “shrill” or even “hysterical” tone, whether carefully written and published in professional, academic language in a respected, peer-reviewed journal or screamed through a bull-horn and peppered with vulgarity. Conversely, a highly urgent emotional matter is still urgent even if argued coldly and rationally. This fallacy creates a false dichotomy between reason and emotion and thus implicitly favors those who are not personally involved or emotionally invested in an argument, e.g., “I know you’re upset, but I won’t discuss it with you until you calm down,” or “I’d believe what you wrote were it not for your adolescent overuse of exclamation points throughout the text.” Or alternately, “You seem to be taking the death of your spouse way too calmly. You’re under arrest for homicide. You have the right to remain silent. . .” Tone Policing is frequent in contemporary discourse of power, particularly in response to discourse of protest, and is occasionally used in sexist ways, e.g. the accusation of being “shrill” is almost always used against women, never against men. See also, The F-Bomb.

1.134 Transfer

(also, Name Dropping) A corrupt argument from ethos, falsely associating a famous or respected person, place or thing with an unrelated thesis or standpoint (e.g. putting a picture of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on an advertisement for mattresses, using Genghis Khan, a Mongol who hated Chinese, as the name of a Chinese restaurant, or using the Texas flag to sell more cars or pickups in Texas that were made in Detroit, Kansas City or Korea). This fallacy is common in contemporary academia in the form of using a profusion of scholarly-looking citations from respected authorities to lend a false gravitas to otherwise specious ideas or text. See also “Star Power”.

1.135 Trust your Gut

(also, Trust your Heart; Trust Your Feelings; Trust your Intuition; Trust your Instincts; Emotional Reasoning) A corrupt argument from pathos, the ancient fallacy of relying primarily on “gut feelings” rather than reason or evidence to make decisions. A [recent \(2017\) Ohio State University study finds](#), unsurprisingly, that people who “trust their gut” are significantly more susceptible to falling for “fake news,” phony conspiracy theories, frauds and scams than those who insist on hard evidence or logic. See also Deliberate Ignorance, the Affective Fallacy, and The “Third Person Effect”.

1.136 Tu Quoque

(“You Do it Too!”; also, Two Wrongs Make a Right) A corrupt argument from ethos, the fallacy of defending a shaky or false standpoint or excusing one’s own bad action by pointing out that one’s opponent’s acts, ideology or personal character are also open to question, or are perhaps even worse than one’s own. E.g., “Sure, we may have tortured prisoners and killed kids with drones, but we don’t cut off heads like they do!” Or, “You can’t stand there and accuse me of corruption! You guys are all into politics and you know what we have to do to get reelected!” Unusual, self-deprecating variants on this fallacy are the Ego / Nos Quoque Fallacies (“I / we do it too!”), minimizing or defending another’s evil actions because I am / we are guilty of the same thing or of even worse. E.g., In response to allegations that Russian Premier Vladimir Putin is a “killer,” American President Donald Trump (2/2017) told an interviewer, “There are a lot of killers. We’ve got a lot of killers. What, do you think our country’s so innocent?” This fallacy is related to the Red Herring and to the Ad Hominem Argument.

1.137 Two-sides Fallacy

(also, Teach the Controversy) The presentation of an issue that makes it seem to have two sides of equal weight or significance, when in fact a consensus or much stronger argument supports just one side. Also called “false balance” or “false equivalence.” (Thanks to [Teaching Tolerance](#) for this definition!) E.g., “Scientists theorize that the Earth is a sphere, but there are always two sides to any argument Others believe that the Earth is flat and is perched on the back of a giant turtle, and a truly balanced presentation of the issue requires teaching both explanations without bias or unduly favoring either side over the other”.

1.138 Two Truths

(also, Compartmentalization; Epistemically Closed Systems; Alternative Truth) A very corrupt and dangerous fallacy of logos and ethos, first formally described in medieval times but still common today, holding that there exists one “truth” in one given environment (e.g., in science, work or school) and simultaneously a different, formally contradictory but equally true “truth” in a different epistemic system, context, environment, intended audience or discourse community (e.g., in one’s religion or at home). This can lead to a situation of stable cognitive dissonance where, as UC Irvine scholar Dr. Carter T. Butts describes it (2016), “I know but don’t believe,” making rational discussion difficult, painful or impossible. This fallacy

also describes the discourse of politicians who cynically proclaim one “truth” as mere “campaign rhetoric” used “to mobilize the base,” or “for domestic consumption only,” and a quite different and contradictory “truth” for more general or practical purposes once in office. See also Disciplinary Blinders; Alternative Truth.

1.139 Venting

(also, Letting off Steam; Loose Lips) In the Venting fallacy a person argues that her/his words are or ought to be exempt from criticism or consequence because s/he was “only venting,” even though this very admission implies that the one “venting” was, at long last, freely expressing his/her true, heartfelt and uncensored opinion about the matter in question. This same fallacy applies to minimizing, denying the significance of or excusing other forms of frank, unguarded or uninhibited offensive expression as mere “Locker-room Talk,” “Alpha-male Speech” or nothing but cute, adorable, perhaps even sexy “Bad-boy Talk.” See also, the Affective Fallacy. Opposite to this fallacy are the fallacies of Political Correctness and the Scripted Message, above.

1.140 Venue

The ancient fallacy of Venue, a corrupt argument from *kairos*, falsely and arbitrarily invalidates an otherwise-valid argument or piece of evidence because it is supposedly offered in the wrong place, at the wrong moment or in an inappropriate court, medium or forum. According to PhD student Amanda Thran, “Quite often, people will say to me in person that Facebook, Twitter, etc. are ‘not the right forums’ for discussing politically and socially sensitive issues. ... In this same vein, I’ve also encountered the following argument ‘Facebook, which is used for sharing wedding, baby, and pet photos, is an inappropriate place for political discourse; people don’t wish to be burdened with that when they log in.’ In my experience, this line of reasoning is most often employed (and abused) to shut down a conversation when one feels they are losing it. Ironically, I have seen it used when the argument has already been transpiring on the platform [in] an already lengthy discussion.” See also Disciplinary Blinders.

1.141 We Have to Do Something

(also, the Placebo Effect; Political Theater; Security Theater; We have to send a message) The dangerous contemporary fallacy that when “People are scared / People are angry / People are fed up / People are hurting / People want change” it becomes necessary

to do something, anything, at once without stopping to ask “What?” or “Why?”, even if what is done is an overreaction, is a completely ineffective sham, an inert placebo, or actually makes the situation worse, rather than “just sitting there doing nothing.” (E.g., “Banning air passengers from carrying ham sandwiches onto the plane and making parents take off their newborn infants’ tiny pink baby-shoes probably does nothing to deter potential terrorists, but people are scared and we have to do something to respond to this crisis!”) This is a badly corrupted argument from pathos. (See also “Scare Tactic” and “The Big ‘But’ Fallacy.”)

1.142 Where there’s Smoke, there’s Fire

(also Hasty Conclusion; Jumping to a Conclusion) The dangerous fallacy of ignorantly drawing a snap conclusion and/or taking action without sufficient evidence. E.g., “Captain! The guy sitting next to me in coach has dark skin and is reading a book in some kind of funny language all full of accent marks, weird squiggles above the ‘N’s’ and upside-down question marks. It must be Arabic! Get him off the plane before he blows us all to kingdom come!” A variety of the “Just in Case” fallacy. The opposite of this fallacy is the “Paralysis of Analysis.”

1.143 The Wisdom of the Crowd

(also, The Magic of the Market; the Wikipedia Fallacy; Crowdsourcing) A very common contemporary fallacy that individuals may be wrong but “the crowd” or “the market” is infallible, ignoring historic examples like witch-burning, lynching, and the market crash of 2008. This fallacy is why most American colleges and universities currently (2017) ban students from using Wikipedia as a serious reference source.

1.144 The Worst-Case Fallacy

(also, “Just in case;” “We can’t afford to take chances;” “An abundance of caution;” “Better Safe than Sorry;” “Better to prevent than to lament.”) A pessimistic fallacy by which one’s reasoning is based on an improbable, far-fetched or even completely imaginary worst-case scenario rather than on reality. This plays on pathos (fear) rather than reason, and is often politically motivated. E.g., “What if armed terrorists were to attack your county grain elevator tomorrow morning at dawn? Are you ready to fight back? Better stock up on assault rifles and ammunition today, just in case!” See also Scare Tactics. The opposite of this is the Positive Thinking Fallacy.

1.145 The Worst Negates the Bad

(also, Be Grateful for What You've Got) The extremely common modern logical fallacy that an objectively bad situation somehow isn't so bad simply because it could have been far worse, or because someone, somewhere has it even worse. E.g., "I cried because I had no shoes, until I saw someone who had no feet." Or, "You're protesting because you earn only \$7.25 an hour? You could just as easily be out on the street! I happen to know there are people in Uttar Pradesh who are doing the very same work you're doing for one tenth of what you're making, and they're pathetically glad just to have work at all. You need to shut up, put down that picket sign, get back to work for what I care to pay you, and thank me each and every day for giving you a job!"

1.146 Zero Tolerance

(also, Zero Risk Bias, Broken Windows Policing, Disproportionate Response; Even One is Too Many; Exemplary Punishment; Judenrein) The contemporary fallacy of declaring an "emergency" and promising to disregard justice and due process and devote unlimited resources (and occasionally, unlimited cruelty) to stamp out a limited, insignificant or even nonexistent problem. E.g., "I just read about an actual case of cannibalism somewhere in this country. That's disgusting, and even one case is way, way too many! We need a Federal Taskforce against Cannibalism with a million-dollar budget and offices in every state, a national SCAN program in all the grade schools (Stop Cannibalism in America Now!), and an automatic double death penalty for cannibals; in other words, zero tolerance for cannibalism in this country!" This is a corrupt and cynical argument from pathos, almost always politically driven, a particularly sinister variety of Dog Whistle Politics and the "We Have to do Something" fallacy. See also, "Playing on Emotions," "Red Herring," and also the "Big Lie Technique".