

Fallacies 1

Affirming the Consequent, Denying the Antecedent, Begging the Question, and Straw Man

Day 3 – Philosophical Method

Affirming the Consequent

A ***conditional statement*** is a statement of the form

if A then C

Where A is called the ***antecedent*** and C is called the ***consequent***.

Affirming the Consequent

Example:

If you get good grades then you will get into a good college.

Affirming the Consequent

Example:

If **you get good grades** then you will get into a good college.

antecedent

Affirming the Consequent

Example:

If **you get good grades** then you will get into a good college.

antecedent

consequent

Affirming the Consequent

Example:

If **you get good grades** then you will get into a good college.

You got into a good college.

You got good grades.

Affirming the Consequent

Example:

If **you get good grades** then **you will get into a good college**.

You got into a good college.

You got good grades.

Even if the conditional statement is true, a student might still be able to get into a good college without good grades.

Affirming the Consequent

Example:

If **you get good grades** then **you will get into a good college.**

You got into a good college.

You got good grades.

Even if the conditional statement is true, a student might still be able to get into a good college without good grades (e.g., if the student's parents were major donors to the school, or if the student received an athletic scholarship, or as the result of an affirmative action program.)

Denying the Antecedent

Example:

If you eat a whole gallon of ice cream, then you will have a stomach ache.

Denying the Antecedent

Example:

If **you eat a whole gallon of ice cream**, then **you will have a stomach ache**.

antecedent

consequent

Denying the Antecedent

Example:

If **you eat a whole gallon of ice cream**, then **you will have a stomach ache**.

You didn't eat a gallon of ice cream.

You didn't get a stomach ache.

Denying the Antecedent

Example:

If **you eat a whole gallon of ice cream**, then **you will have a stomach ache**.

You didn't eat a gallon of ice cream.

You didn't get a stomach ache.

You may have gotten a stomach ache even though you didn't eat a gallon of ice cream.

Denying the Antecedent

Example:

If **you eat a whole gallon of ice cream**, then **you will have a stomach ache**.

You didn't eat a gallon of ice cream.

You didn't get a stomach ache.

You may have gotten a stomach ache even though you didn't eat a gallon of ice cream (e.g., maybe it was those nachos, or all those Krispy Kreme doughnuts, or anxiety over the APUSH practice exam next block.)

Begging the Question (Circular Argument)

Begging the question means using the conclusion of an argument as a premise.

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Example:

Freedom of speech is important because people should be able to speak freely.

Begging the Question (Circular Argument)

Begging the question means using the conclusion of an argument as a premise.

Example:

People should be able to speak freely.

Freedom of speech is important.

Begging the Question (Circular Argument)

People should be able to speak freely.

Freedom of speech is important.

Note: This type of argument is valid. But its premise does not provide us with any reason to believe the conclusion to be true, since it is just a reformulation of the conclusion.

Begging the Question

(Circular Argument)

Freedom of speech is your right as a citizen.

The Bill of Rights guarantees freedom of speech.

People should be able to speak freely.

Freedom of speech is important.

Note: The offending premise may be combined with other premises which also fail to give reason to believe the conclusion.

Straw Man

This fallacy involves attributing statements to an opponent which your opponent does not accept, then arguing that those statements are incorrect. You argue against a *straw man*, rather than your actual opponent.

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Example:

My opponents accuse me of using campaign contributions for personal purposes. Let me tell you about a gift my family received from a supporter -- a little black and white spotted cocker spaniel my daughter calls Checkers. My kids love this dog, and I don't care what anyone says, we are going to keep it.