

## **(Most quotes and definitions from Wikipedia)**

### **Poe's Law (Nathan Poe 2005)**

"Without a winking smiley or other blatant display of humour, it is impossible to create a parody of fundamentalism that someone won't mistake for the real thing."

Relates to the impossibility of parodying extremism. In particular, it addresses the difficulty of an independent observer being able to distinguish fundamentalism from parodies of fundamentalism.

### **Godwin's Law (Mike Godwin 1990)**

"As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches 1."

### **Hanlon's razor (Robert Hanlon 1980)**

"Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity." or "Never assume malice when stupidity will suffice."

## **No True Scotsman (Antony Flew):**

Or, the self-sealing fallacy, is a fallacy of equivocation and question begging. An ad hoc shift in argument, also known as "moving the goalposts".

Argument: "No Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge."

Reply: "But my uncle Angus, who is a Scotsman, likes sugar with his porridge."

Rebuttal: "Aye, but **no true Scotsman** puts sugar on his porridge."

## ***Argumentum ad Ignorantiam,* Argument from Ignorance:**

A logical fallacy in which it is claimed that a premise is true only because it has not been proven false.

- \* Something is *currently* unexplained or insufficiently understood or explained, so it is not (or must not be) true.
- \* Because there appears to be a lack of evidence for one hypothesis, another chosen hypothesis is therefore considered proven.

**Argument from Personal Incredulity,  
Argument from Personal Belief,  
Argument from Personal Conviction:**

An assertion that, because one personally finds a premise to be unlikely or unbelievable, the premise can be assumed to not be true. Alternately, that another preferred but unproven premise must be true instead.

- \* I can't believe this is possible, so it can't be true.
- \* That's not what people say about *X*; people instead agree with what I am saying.

***Argumentum ad Populum,*  
Appeal to the masses,  
Appeal to belief,  
Appeal to the majority,  
Appeal to the people,  
Argument by consensus,  
Authority of the many,  
Bandwagon Fallacy:**

A fallacious argument which concludes that a proposition must be true because many or all people believe it.

## **Fallacy of Accident:**

Also called destroying the exception or a *dicto simpliciter ad dictum secundum quid* – makes a generalization that disregards exceptions:

1. Cutting people is a crime.
2. Surgeons cut people.
3. Therefore, surgeons are criminals.

## **Converse Fallacy of Accident:**

Also called reverse accident, destroying the exception, or a *dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter* – argues from a special case to a general rule:

"If we allow people with glaucoma to use medicinal marijuana then everyone should be allowed to use marijuana."

## **Fallacy of the Consequent:**

Draws a conclusion from premises that do not support that conclusion:

1. If I have the flu, then I have a sore throat.
2. I have a sore throat.
3. Therefore, I have the flu. (Other illnesses may cause sore throat.)

## **Irrelevant Conclusion (also called *Ignoratio Elenchi*):**

Diverts attention away from a fact in dispute rather than address it directly. This is sometimes referred to as a "red herring". Subsets include:

- \* purely personal considerations (*argumentum ad hominem*: "his argument about global warming is wrong because he squishes kittens"),
- \* popular sentiment (*argumentum ad populum* – appeal to the majority),
- \* fear (*argumentum ad baculum*: "if we don't do this the terrorists will win"),
- \* conventional propriety (*argumentum ad verecundiam* – appeal to authority)

## **Begging the question:**

Also called *Petitio Principii*, *Circulus in Probando* – arguing in a circle, or assuming the answer – demonstrates a conclusion by means of premises that assume that conclusion.

"We must institute the death penalty to discourage violent crime."

(This statement assumes the violent crime rate will fall when the death penalty is imposed.)

## **Call to Perfection:**

This is committed when one argues to postpone some action or policy until some unlikely event or impossible change is achieved.

"I'll do it the day that pigs can fly."

(Since pigs do not fly and will probably never be able to, the action or policy will probably never take place.)

## **Fallacy of False Cause or *Non Sequitur*:**

(Latin for "it does not follow") – incorrectly assumes one thing is the cause of another (e.g., "Our nation will prevail because God is great.")

- \* A special case of this fallacy also goes by the Latin term *post hoc ergo propter hoc* -- the fallacy of believing that temporal succession implies a causal relation.
- \* Another special case is given by the Latin term *cum hoc ergo propter hoc* – the fallacy of believing that happenstance implies causal relation (aka as fallacy of causation versus correlation: assumes that correlation implies causation).

## **Fallacy of Many Questions (*Plurium Interrogationum*):**

Groups more than one question in the form of a single question.

"Is it true that you no longer beat your wife?"

(Either a yes or no answer will still be an admission of guilt to wife-beating.)