Chapter Ten
The Quality of Arguments: Fallacies in Argumentation

Chapters 4 – 9 focused on the elements of argument, how those elements are structured to create arguments, and how various arguments can be combined into coherent patterns. Implicit in those discussions is the idea that some arguments are better than other arguments—that some arguments are of higher quality than other arguments. This chapter focuses directly on the quality of arguments. What are the criteria that separate good arguments from poor ones?

This chapter concentrates on the logical criteria that separate good arguments from poor arguments. Logical criteria for assessing the strength of an argument are important, but they are only part of the story. Other extra-logical elements, such as the elegance of an argument, how well an argument is adapted to the audience, the clarity and passion with which the argument is expressed are also important parts of the quality of an argument. This chapter covers only the logical criteria for assessing argument quality and the other elements are discussed elsewhere in this book especially in Chapter 26 that focuses on how an argument is delivered.

The concept known as “fallacies” is used to address the logical quality of arguments. Fallacies point to errors in evidence or reasoning, errors that weaken or undermine the strength of an argument. Different textbooks treat fallacies differently; some list a large number of fallacies and treat each of them independently. For many people, such an approach is cumbersome and less than coherent. Alternatively, philosophers Ralph H. Johnson and J. Anthony Blair devised a system of identifying fallacies that depends on three simple criteria for a good argument and they define a fallacy as any violation of these criteria.¹ This chapter follows the approach taken by Johnson and Blair, by identifying the three criteria for a good argument then, as they do, by detailing specific fallacies that are related to each of these three criteria.

Criteria for Logical Assessment of Arguments

Some who write about the logical assessment of arguments see argument quality as falling into the categories of “adequate” and “inadequate.” For example, Professor Trudy Govier writes that:

A cogent argument must pass all three [criteria for good argument.] All its premises must be acceptable. They must be relevant to the conclusion. And taken together they must provide adequate grounds for that conclusion. If any one of these conditions is not satisfied, the argument is not cogent. It does not offer strong support to the conclusion.²

The viewpoint taken in this book is different. Rather than using a categorical logic of “good—bad” or “adequate—inadequate” to assess the quality of argument, this text uses a variable logic of “better—worse” or “more adequate—less adequate.” Rather than seeing arguments as falling

¹ Johnson and Blair. Logical Self-Defense, 2006 Idebate Press.
² A Practical Study of Argument, pp. 74-75.
into just two categories of “adequate” and “inadequate,” this text views arguments as ranging along a spectrum from especially poor to extremely good. Most fall somewhere between these extremes. Few are so good that they cannot be improved by logical and extra-logical criticism. Similarly, few are so poor that they cannot be improved.

Many times debaters express a desire to produce the perfect argument, the argument that has no possible refutation. This desire reflects a basic misunderstanding about the nature of debate. Debate exists to find critical points of disagreement about substantive and controversial issues. If disagreement does not exist, the issue is not debatable and thus is not the kind of issue that debaters engage. Therefore, the perfect argument, even if it were possible to produce, would be trivial because it would not be about a substantive and controversial issue. Substantive and controversial issues are such that arguments about them are, by their nature, never irrefutable. An argument about a substantive, controversial issue can never be proven beyond all doubt. Therefore, this text speaks of supporting a claim rather than proving a claim.

Therefore, the question is, what are some logical criteria to determine whether the support that an argument offers is more or less adequate or inadequate? Following Johnson and Blair, this text maintains that the three criteria for assessing the quality of an argument are acceptability, relevance, and sufficiency. The following diagram, taken directly from their book, illustrates these criteria:

Before examining each of these standards individually, a few words about how the standards relate to the structure of an argument is in order. The standard of acceptability applies to the evidence on which the argument is built. In other words, to be logically adequate, an argument needs to be based on evidence that is acceptable to the audience. The standards of relevance and sufficiency apply to the links that are drawn between evidence and claim. At minimum, the link needs relate to the evidence—claim relationship. Sometimes a link is relevant to a claim, but is

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3 Logical Self-Defense, pp. 54 – 55.
4 Logical Self-Defense, p. 55.
still not sufficient. The relationship between these three criteria and the structure of argument that has been presented in this book is illustrated in the chart below:

As the chart above indicates, the standard of acceptability applies to the element of argument called *evidence* and the standards of relevance and sufficiency apply to the element of argument called the *link*. Each of these standards will now be considered individually.

**The Standard of Acceptability**

As stated earlier, the standard of acceptability applies to evidence. As suggested in Chapter Five, evidence is the foundation of an argument. It is that element of argument without which a claim cannot be established.

The standard of acceptability means that evidence must be acceptable to the judge or audience before the argument can proceed. Audiences and judges will have different levels of acceptability for any particular piece of evidence. For instance, an audience or judge may view certain evidence as “unquestionably true,” “probable,” “plausible,” etc. At minimum, the judge or audience ought to be willing to accept the evidence “for the purposes of this argument.” To say that evidence is acceptable “for the purposes of this argument” means that the audience or judge is willing to tentatively accept the evidence so that the argument can proceed.

Realizing that the standards for acceptability of evidence may vary from audience to audience and from circumstance to circumstance, this text suggests three conditions that determine, more or less, the acceptability of evidence. Govier originally posited seven acceptability conditions

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5 pp. 140 – 155.
that are reduced to three in this text because they are the ones most useful for debaters. Like other standards of argument quality, the position taken in this book is that evidence should be viewed as “more or less” acceptable rather than absolutely or categorically “acceptable” or “unacceptable.”

First, evidence can be considered acceptable if it is common knowledge. In other words, if the evidence is known to be accurate by virtually everyone in the debater’s audience that evidence meets the condition of acceptability. Some examples that most would consider to be common knowledge include statements like “Chairman Mao was the leader of the cultural revolution,” or “Nelson Mandela served as President of South Africa,” or “Mahatma Gandhi employed non-violent civil disobedience.”

Second, if evidence is not common knowledge, it can still be considered acceptable if it is supported elsewhere, usually in a published source or by a recognized authority. For instance, most people would not consider as common knowledge the idea that China claims their ownership of the Diaoyu Islands goes back to the Ming dynasty. However, to make this acceptable evidence, a debater could cite the Economist magazine.\(^6\) The knowledge that this evidence was published is a reputable source would make it acceptable to most audiences. Recognized authorities also can be used to help a debater make evidence acceptable. For instance, quoting Liu Yang about challenges for females in the Chinese space program would make that information more acceptable since Yang was the first Chinese female astronaut.

Finally, evidence that is not common knowledge can be made acceptable by constructing a cogent sub-argument. In the case that a debater comes to believe that the evidence presented is of questionable acceptability to the judge or the audience, the debater can create a sub argument to support the evidence. Using a cogent sub-argument to make evidence acceptable is illustrated in the following illustration:

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The debater transforms the evidence of questionable acceptability into a claim supported by evidence that is acceptable. The original evidence of questionable acceptability can lead to an unsuccessful claim. To remedy this situation, the debater can transform the old evidence by producing a new sub-claim, using new acceptable evidence, and that sub-claim can then replace the old evidence that was questionably acceptable and produce a successful claim.

In summary, the standard of acceptability applies to evidence. Without acceptable evidence, the claim itself cannot be supported. Acceptable evidence meets one of three standards: it is common knowledge, it is supported by a respected publication or an authority, or it is supported by a cogent sub-claim. These three standards are neither absolute nor perfect, thus meeting one of them makes the evidence more-or-less acceptable, not absolutely acceptable.

**The Standard of Relevance**

The standard of relevance is related to the link between evidence and claim. This standard asks whether that link successfully connects the evidence to the claim. The goal of an argument is to transfer the acceptability of evidence to the claim. The link is what either succeeds or fails in achieving that goal. The relevance of the link is actually quite a minimal standard. The standard is met if the evidence has anything at all to do with the claim. In other words, the standard of relevance asks whether or not the link, even minimally succeeds in transferring the acceptability of the evidence to the claim.

The previous section provided three criteria of acceptability. However, such criteria do not exist for the standard of relevance. The standard of relevance is met if the acceptability of evidence has anything at all to do with the acceptability of the claim. This standard is such a minimal one that failure to meet it is quite rare. Most often, the evidence is not totally irrelevant to the claim.
One way that evidence in a cause and effect claim can be irrelevant is when the cause comes after the effect. One example of such an argument that fails to meet the standard of relevance is the causal claim that the Warsaw Ghetto uprising caused Kristallnacht, a series of violent anti-Jewish attacks led by Nazi Party officials Nazi storm troopers. The argument attempts to link the Warsaw Ghetto uprising with Kristallnacht. This link is completely irrelevant because Kristallnacht occurred in November 1938 and the Warsaw Ghetto uprisings did not occur until 1943. The link between cause and effect is not at all relevant because the purported cause happened after the effect.

Another example involves the claim that the death sentence imposed on Yao Jiaxin was justified since he was a member of the “fu er dai,” or the “rich second generation.” Whether or not he was rich is not related to whether or not he deserved the death sentence, thus the link between the appropriateness of the death penalty and his wealth exhibits the fact that the argument fails to meet the standard of relevance.

Thus, when constructing or evaluating arguments, debaters and judges alike need to pay attention to the question of relevance. Is the evidence related to the claim? This test is a minimal one. A debater’s evidence may be related to the claim but still be insufficient to support it.

The Standard of Sufficiency

The standards of relevance and sufficiency both are related to the link between the evidence and claim. The standard of relevance asks if there is any link at all between evidence and claim whereas the standard of sufficiency asks if that link is good enough to convince an audience of the claim. In other words, does the link fully transfer the acceptability of the evidence to that of the claim? So for instance, a debater might claim that Genetically Engineered foods are dangerous to human health on the basis of evidence of five examples. The five examples of Genetically Engineered foods certainly are relevant to the claim but they may not be sufficient to support it fully. An opposing debater might respond that of the hundreds of examples of Genetically Engineered foods, the selection of five examples is not enough to prove the claim that Genetically Engineered foods are generally harmful. Thus, the link between the evidence (5 examples) and claim (harm to human health) is relevant, but not sufficient.

The question of sufficiency varies according to the specific situation. Claims argued in legal contexts vary from those argued in social science or in debates about public policy. The standard of sufficiency frequently involves how much certainty is required to accept a claim. In legal contexts, the amount of certainty is different in criminal and civil cases. In a criminal case, courts of some nations require that the claim that the party is guilty of a crime be proven “beyond a reasonable doubt” whereas in civil cases, the standard is “preponderance of evidence.”

For instance, in the case of an argument in social sciences, the standard of evidence is between 95% and 99%. This standard is called the “level of significance.” Unless the social scientist is
able to show results that are likely to be repeatable 95% or 99% of the time, the social science community is not likely to accept those claims and the scientist’s results are said not to be statistically significant and thus, not sufficient.

So standards of sufficiency vary from field to field and from context to context. One reason that these standards vary so widely has to do with the pragmatic risk of believing a claim to be true vs. the pragmatic risks of believing that claim to be false. A higher standard is thus set in a criminal case where a person’s freedom or life is at risk than in a civil case where the person’s money is at risk.

Thus, acceptability of evidence along with relevance and sufficiency of the link between evidence and claim constitute the standards for assessing the quality of an argument. These standards do not suggest that the argument is perfect or completely disqualified. These standards place the argument somewhere along a continuum between very good and very poor.

These standards for the quality of argument are useful in general for assessing whether an argument is relatively good or relatively poor. A specific application of the standards has to do with a concept called “fallacy.” A fallacy is an error in reasoning and has a negative effect on the assessment of an argument’s quality. In the next section, fallacies will be identified that are directly related to the standards of quality presented here.

**Fallacies and Argument Adequacy**

The presence or absence of fallacies is a good general method to place arguments along the continuum of very good to very poor. The absence of fallacies does not guarantee that the argument is a good one nor does the presence of a fallacy automatically disqualify an argument from consideration. Fallacies invite, perhaps require, the arguer to improve the argument in order to make it more persuasive. In other words, the presence or absence of fallacies does not automatically mean people should or should not give consideration to the argument. The presence of one or more fallacies does direct a listener to give more critical attention to the claim.

**Three Basic Fallacies**

The system used in this text includes three basic fallacies, one corresponding to each of Johnson and Blair’s three criteria for a logically adequate argument. These basic fallacies include the problematic premise, the irrelevant reason, and the hasty conclusion. Problematic premises are problems with the acceptability of evidence. Irrelevant reasons indicate a lack of relationship between evidence and claim and hasty conclusions indicate that the relationship between evidence and claim is insufficient.
Although each fallacy has been placed in a particular category, some of the fallacies can logically fall into more than one category. This system of categorization is intended only to illustrate the basic categories of fallacies. No claim to a broader theory including a master taxonomy is made.

Problematic Premises

A problematic premise refers to an argument that for some reason or another fails to fulfill the acceptability requirement. In this case, unacceptable evidence usually results in a claim that is unsuccessful at gaining the support of the audience or the judge.

A premise is not problematic if it meets any one of the three acceptability requirements discussed earlier. Evidence can be problematic when a debater needs to, but does not, provide further support for the evidence.

For instance, a debater might argue against the use of airbags and seatbelts by using as evidence that when these devices were introduced in the United States, they had no positive effect on the number of automobile accidents nor on the number of deaths associated with these accidents. Such evidence might not be accepted because it is not common knowledge, was not supported by a cogent sub argument, nor was it supported by a respectable source or authority.

So, problematic premises are about evidence. Two variants on problematic premises are discussed below:

**Begging the question** is a fallacy that occurs in an argument when the evidence is essentially the same as the claim. Because the evidence and the claim are the same, the argument essentially contains no evidence at all.
Take for instance the argument that “programs to provide greater access to health care are good because everyone should have access to medical care.” Nothing is substantively different between the statements that “everyone should have access to medical care” and “programs to provide greater access to health care are good.” Since the statements are generally the same, one cannot be taken as evidence for the other. If anyone believes one of the statements, they automatically believe the other. As Johnson and Blair note, “if the conclusion is acceptable, then no argument is needed to support it.”

The fallacy of incompatibility also is a kind of problematic premise and as such is related to the standard of acceptability. Audiences rightly expect a certain degree of consistency in evidence presented. Incompatibility occurs when evidence lacks, for one reason or another, that degree of consistency. When one piece of evidence is incompatible with another, the result is that the audience may consider neither piece of evidence as credible and the claim will probably be unsuccessful.

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7 p. 80.
For example: when a debater offers a statement as evidence that is at odds with another statement offered by the debater at a different place or time or when a debater’s argument is incompatible with some action the debater has performed or recommended elsewhere.

In the first case, consider the case of a person who maintains that certain government programs are good, yet in a different province asserts that those programs have damaged the nation’s economy. Audiences are unlikely to find either statement acceptable as evidence because they are not incompatible with one another.

Debaters who fail to meet the standard of acceptability may have committed a fallacy that is called a problematic premise. Begging the question and the fallacy of incompatibility are two specific kinds of problematic premises. Now attention will shift from evidence to links and to fallacies related to the standards of relevance and sufficiency.

**Irrelevant Reason**

This category of fallacies sometimes is called by its Latin name, *non sequitor*, meaning “it does not follow. An irrelevant reason is one that in combination with all other evidence offered fails to minimally satisfy the criteria of relevance.”

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Only on very rare occasions do debaters present evidence that is clearly irrelevant to their claims. As a result, clear-cut examples of this fallacy are uncommon. An example of such a fallacy occurred when an applicant for an engineering position in a job interview at an engineering firm was asked to explain his job qualifications. The applicant replied that he has parents were elderly and that he had two children, he was recently divorced and had lost his job. Clearly the evidence this applicant provided is an example of the fallacy of irrelevant reason. The evidence might have been relevant to a different claim such as “Why do you need this job?” but not to the question of “Why are you qualified for this job.”

Johnson and Blair present an example of this fallacy in their text:

A Member of Parliament in Canada once charged, in the House of Commons, that the Federal Department of Health and Welfare had been cooperating with the Kellogg Company in permitting the sale of a cereal (Kellogg’s Corn Flakes) that had “little or no nutritional value.” Marc Lalonde, then the Minister of Health seeking to rebut that charge stated: “As for the nutritional value of Corn Flakes, the milk you have with your Corn Flakes has great nutritional value.”

Lalonde’s claim (implied rather than explicit) is that corn flakes have nutritional value. His evidence that milk has great nutritional value is clearly not relevant to the nutritional value of corn flakes. Thus, he has presented a fallacious argument because his evidence provides no support to his claim.

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9 pp. 65–66.
Even though clear-cut cases of irrelevant reason may be relatively rare, several variants on this fallacy are more common. The three examples that follow show instances where an argument is directed toward some issue other than the claim the debater is making. As a result, these fallacies can be classified as irrelevant reasons.

**Argument ad hominem.** means that an argument involves an irrelevant attack on the arguer’s character or background that is not relevant to the argument being made.

Of course, not all *ad hominem* arguments are fallacious—only those when the attack is not relevant to the arguer’s claim. If an attack is relevant or not is often a matter of debate. For instance, an arguer might claim that pollution in China is getting worse. Then someone might respond: “But of course you would think that. You are from Beijing.” Is this response an irrelevant *ad hominem* argument or not? The answer is that it depends first, on whether being “from Beijing” is considered a personal attack, and second, on whether or not the fact that a person is from Beijing is relevant to the original claim. If the statement “you are from Beijing” is considered a personal attack, then the argument is *ad hominem.* But if being from Beijing is relevant to whether or not a person believes that “pollution is getting worse” then even though the argument is *ad hominem* it is not irrelevant, thus, not an irrelevant *ad hominem* fallacy.

Some *ad hominem* attacks are not fallacies. Consider a completely hypothetical example: suppose someone presents highly credible evidence accusing a candidate for minister of Health and Welfare of cheating on her medical exams. Such an attack is unquestionably an attack on the candidate but is clearly relevant to her potential role as head of the ministry. Thus, the argument is not a fallacious *ad hominem* argument.

**A straw person fallacy** is another kind of fallacy that fails to meet the criterion of relevance. It fails to meet this criterion by intentionally misinterpreting an opponent’s argument. The fallacy occurs when a debater construes the argument of another to be other than what it is, then attacks the misconstrued argument rather than the actual argument. Following the metaphor of “straw person fallacy,” the debater reconstructs the original argument into a weaker, argument of straw then attacks that argument rather than the original.
For instance, someone might oppose the death penalty because of the risk of executing an innocent person, particularly because once a person’s life is taken, it can never be given back. A critic using a straw person fallacy might respond: “your stand not to penalize murders because an innocent person might be punished is irrational. We might as well open the doors of all prisons and let everyone go to avoid convicting an innocent person.” This response uses a straw person argument because the argument the debater is attacking is not the original argument the other debater made. The original debater did not suggest that the risk of convicting an innocent person means we should never convict anyone, simply that we should not use a punishment that takes a life because life can never be restored.

A red herring fallacy is another argument that shifts the focus away from the current discussion in order to sidestep or even end that discussion. An argument that is similar to but different from the one involved in the current discussion is introduced in the hopes that the topic of the discussion will be changed in ways that are irrelevant to the original.
The red herring fallacy was originally named for a practice used in English foxhunts. At the end of the hunt, the hunters would place a herring on the path of the fox so that the hounds would lose track of the fox. A red herring argument is similarly designed to cause debaters to lose track of the important issues.

In the 2004 U.S. presidential election, two of the main issues were the U.S. economy and the war in Iraq. Not wanting to discuss those main issues, one party introduced policies in the U.S. congress to ban gay marriage. In this case, the media and much of the electorate began to focus on gay marriage and discontinued the discussion of the original issues of economy and war.

The three above issues are examples of arguments that are fallacious because they fail the criterion of relevance. Of course, many other ways to avoid this criterion are possible. A few of them are briefly defined below:

**Poisoning the well** is a fallacious argument that attempts to discredit a person or a source in advance of their argument. “Dr. Summers is a Republican. We can only expect her to be against affirmative action.”

**Guilt by association** is a fallacious attempt to attack a person’s argument not because on the issues pertinent to the argument, but on the basis of groups and people with whom the person is associated. “How can we possibly support Ms. Cooper’s views on foreign affairs? After all, she married a socialist.”

**An appeal to fear** involves an attempt to invoke fear to take the focus off the argument. An appeal to fear is only fallacious when fear is used solely to shift the focus from the issue. “If we elect my opponent, we should all build bomb shelters for our families immediately and prepare to be attacked because my opponent has very little foreign policy experience.”

**An appeal to popularity** uses the popularity of a person, product, or belief to justify a favorable conclusion about that person, product or belief. “Most Serbs support President Boris Tadic. So should you.”

**An appeal to tradition** attempts to argue in favor of a particular action on the grounds of tradition rather than on the basis of the merits of that action. “The U.S. Constitution has allowed citizens to possess guns for the past 200 years so we should continue to do so for the next 200 years.”

The previous fallacies include arguments that fail to meet the conditions of relevance. The fallacies in the next section include those that fail to meet the conditions of sufficiency.
Hasty Conclusions

The general fallacy category of hasty conclusions sometimes is simply called “jumping to a conclusion.” This general category of fallacies is one wherein all of the evidence and arguments the debater offers, taken in combination with one another, do not meet the test of sufficiency.

These arguments may not meet the test of sufficiency because the evidence was not systematically gathered, because the sampling of evidence was not systematic, or because the debater ignored the presence of contrary evidence. Thus, the following examples are ones where an argument is relevant to the claim the debater is making, but the evidence supporting the claim is relevant but not sufficient. As a result, they are classified under the general category of hasty conclusion. Two common examples and a few other less common examples will be discussed.

**Hasty generalization,** the first of these examples, is a fallacy of reasoning by example. Arguments that commit this fallacy when the examples selected to support the claim are insufficient either in number or in their representativeness.

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10 pp. 70–72.
Earlier a sample argument about Genetically Engineered Foods (GEF) was discussed. In that case, the claim made was that GEF is dangerous to human health. Five examples of GEF were presented as evidence. But the selection of only five examples from the hundreds of available examples GEF foods is not enough to prove the link between the evidence and the general claim of the danger of GEF foods. Thus, this example is a hasty generalization.

**Slippery slope arguments** sometimes but not always are fallacious. Using such arguments, debaters try to connect a series of events in a causal chain that ultimately "culminate[s] in calamity."\(^{11}\)

Contrary to popular opinion, slippery slope arguments are not necessarily fallacies.\(^ {12}\) They only are fallacies when all of the connections in the causal chain are not properly made. Even though

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\(^{11}\) Govier, p. 439.

the connections are relevant to the claim, they may be fallacious because the connections are insufficiently documented.

Americans who oppose restrictions on gun ownership commonly argue that one form of control will lead to another, which will eventually lead to the prohibition of all guns, including hunting rifles. The argument goes that “If we allow restrictions on the ownership of semiautomatic firearms, then antigun politicians feeling their political muscles will see handgun ownership as their next target. If they succeed in banning the ownership of handguns, then it will be a short time until they are able to build political momentum to outlaw all kinds of firearms including hunting rifles as well as gun collections.” The argument as presented above is a slippery slope fallacy because the causal connections between each of the steps are not well documented.

The arguments described above are fallacious because, even though they may be relevant to the claims they are making, their premises or evidence are insufficient to establish the claims. A large number of other fallacies also can be included in this category of hasty conclusions. Some of these examples are briefly described below:

**Two wrongs** is a label used for a fallacy commonly called “Two wrongs don’t make a right.” As “a misplaced appeal to consistency. A person is urged to accept, or condone, one thing that is wrong because another similar thing, also wrong, has occurred or has been accepted and condoned.”

**Improper appeal to practice** is a fallacy that assumes that a person is justified in doing things that are common practice, even if that practice clearly is wrong. “Why should I pay the women in my business wages equal to men? Other businesses pay men more so I should be able to do the same.”

**Fallacy of composition** is a fallacy in which the evidence is drawn from some part of a whole but the conclusion is about the whole. “He Jingkai, a debater from China, is a superb debater. Therefore, China has some of the best debaters in the world.” China may well have excellent debaters, but this argument nevertheless, makes a fallacious statement about the relationship of the part (He Jingkai) to the whole (Chinese debaters).

**Fallacy of division** involves a fallacious argument in which the evidence is drawn from the whole, but the conclusion is about the part. The argument assumes that what is true of the whole must be true of its constituent parts. “Harvard is an excellent university, therefore Lawrence Tribe, who is a law professor at Harvard, must be an excellent professor.” Like the above example, the claim may be correct, but the reasoning is fallacious because it makes an improper statement about the relationship between the whole (Harvard) and its constituent parts (Professor Tribe).

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13 Govier, p. 444.
14 page 439.
**Post hoc:** this fallacy, also called by its Latin name *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, means “after this, therefore before this.” This fallacious argument assumes that because one thing predates another, the first must have caused the second. A person may argue that “After Barak Obama took office, the U.S. economy went into a recession; thus, Obama’s policies were the cause of the recession.” Whether Obama’s policies contributed to the recession has not been argued well here. The debater has simply assumed a cause-and-effect relationship.

**Faulty analogy** is a fallacy that occurs when two cases are compared to each other but are not similar in terms of the relationship stated in the comparison. Were someone to argue that Nelson Mandela is today’s Abraham Lincoln, that argument would be subject to the charge of faulty analogy. Whether or not that charge is correct would depend on whether or not the argument presented sufficient similarities between Mandela and Lincoln and on whether or not Mandela and Lincoln were different in significant ways.

The fallacies in the preceding section are related to the standard of sufficiency. In prior sections we described fallacies related to each of the standards of a quality argument: acceptability, relevance, and sufficiency. This list of fallacies certainly is not exhaustive.

**Summary**

Several of the previous chapters in this text have described the kinds of arguments, the elements that comprise them, and the various structures into which arguments are crafted. This chapter changed directions to discuss the quality of arguments—those features that separate better arguments from worse arguments. The three criteria discussed were acceptability of evidence along with relevance and sufficiency of the link between evidence and claim. Along with these three criteria, the chapter discussed the most basic of fallacies that correspond to each of the three criteria: problematic premises, irrelevant reasons, and hasty conclusion. Then each of these categories was exemplified by more specific fallacies classified under each.

The chapter also emphasized that fallacies are not the only criteria relevant to argument quality. Fallacies only relate to the logical dimension of argument. Even then, the presence of a fallacy does not mean an argument is not cogent or persuasive—only that it could be made more cogent and persuasive by removing the fallacy. Similarly, the absence of a fallacy does not mean the argument is persuasive—only that an argument is more persuasive and more cogent absent fallacies. As such, fallacies are as much a call for debaters to improve their arguments as they are a call for judges and audiences to reject these arguments.