

Philosophism, Logic, Ethics, and Fallacies

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Abstract

The primary objective of logic is the pursuit of truth. To attain truth by means of logic, one must determine the validity and expose the fallacy of a proposition or argument. The relationship and distinction between truth and validity play a vital role in the realm of logic to achieve truth that will delve the field of Ethics to avoid the illogical system called Philosophism. Ultimately, logic must not be separated to reality.

What is Philosophism? It came from two Greek words: *philos* which means filial love and *sophizo* which means cunning device. The Greek word *philos* is the prefix word of PHILOSOPHY which means love (Gr. *philos*) of wisdom (Gr. *sophia*). The Greek word *sophizo* is the derivative of the Latin word *sophisma* which is the root word of sophism and sophistry. These words signify plausible but false reasoning. The synonymous word for sophism in terms of logic is FALLACY which means deceptive argument. It came from *fallere* the Latin word for “to deceive”. PHILOSOPHISM, then, simply means “love of deceptive reasoning” [1].

Even though modern logicians try to restrict logic within the bound of formal correctness or validity of an argument irrespective of the truth or falsity of its premises [2], yet when comes to the discussion of fallacy they inevitably addressed the question of the agreement or disagreement of a term, proposition and syllogism to fact and truth.

Moreover, it must be pointed out that logic does not deals only with our internal thought through deductive inference (from universal to particular) but also with the external world through inductive inference (from particular to universal). We know reality by perceiving the particular things of the natural world by using our sense experience and generalized them into universal truth [3]; thus, in the final analysis, induction always precedes deduction.

It is clear that reality and validity must never be separated in the realm of logic. We must remember that LOGIC is defined as the science and art of right thinking and correct reasoning in order to arrive at truth [4]. We cannot positively use valid argument if it only means that a false conclusion necessarily follows from false premises. It can only be used negatively in refuting an opposing position via *reductio ad absurdum*. The valid reduction of an argument to reach absurdity is not used to prove its invalidity but its error and falsity.

In fact, all reasoning about arguments has underlying ethical assumptions in them [5]. It intends to persuade or convince an audience. An argument is designed to change the mind of someone who has an erroneous belief. It arises out of concern to correct the epistemological path of someone threading in the wrong direction for no one in his right mind will just allow his neighbor to believe in inconsistent and absurd belief [6].

Logic does not merely pertain to the valid deduction or induction of a conclusion from premises. Its primary concern is the attainment of truth. And in any pursuit of truth one must first of all know how to expose deception hidden in the misleading use of words and ideas in an argument that pretends to be true. Hence, it is necessary for us to enumerate the different fallacies often committed by ignorant (paralogist), deceiver (philosophist) and inaccurate thinker.

We can divide fallacies based on three divisions of logic which correspond to the three basic operations in our knowing process [7].

Firstly, the basic mental act that we almost automatically do is the apprehension of our experience at the moment of consciousness. Through simple apprehension we know the essence or nature of a thing by abstracting concept or idea from the percept which we usually express by using an external sign called TERM. A term may be either an articulate sound or a written word insofar as it means (connotes) something in its comprehension and refers to (denotes) something in its extension. Definition deals with the connotation of a term while Division and Classification deals with the denotation of a term.

Secondly, the next basic mental act we do is the enunciation of relationship between concepts commonly known as judgment. We judge either by affirming (mental composition) or denying (mental division) the agreement between ideas. We expressed our judgment through a connection of terms called PROPOSITION. A proposition is a declarative sentence composed of quantifier, subject-term, copula, and predicate-term.

Thirdly, the basic mental act we do after we put concepts together into a proposition is the eduction of correlation between propositions by our reasoning process. The inference of a previously unknown proposition from the combination of known propositions may be in the form of either direct/immediate argumentation (such as opposition, conversion, obversion, possibility, and actuality) or indirect/mediate inference (such as deduction and induction). The conclusion of the former does not bring new truth but just a reformulation of the truth of the original premise while the latter ends with a new truth by passing from one proposition to another through the mediation of a third proposition. These series of propositions called SYLLOGISM, as we have seen, always consist of two premises (major and minor) and an inferred conclusion.

At this point, we are now in the position of distributing the different fallacies into three end results of the basic operations of our mind:

I. Conceptual Fallacies

A. Fallacies of Definition

1. Fallacy of Accidental Definition
2. Fallacy of Circular Definition
3. Fallacy of Figurative Definition
4. Fallacy of Obscure Definition
5. Fallacy of Negative Definition
6. Fallacy of Redundant Definition
7. Fallacy of Too Narrow Definition
8. Fallacy of Too Wide Definition

B. Fallacies of Division

1. Fallacy of Cross Division
2. Fallacy of Remote Division
3. Fallacy of Too Narrow Division
4. Fallacy of Too Wide Division

II. Propositional Fallacies

A. Fallacies in Language

1. Fallacy of Accent or Prosody
2. Fallacy of Amphiboly
3. Fallacy of Figures of Speech
4. Fallacy of Hasty Generalization
5. Fallacy of Irrelevant Premises

B. Fallacies of Equivocation

1. Fallacy of Quantity
 - a. Fallacy of Composition
 - b. Fallacy of Division
2. Fallacy of Quality
 - a. Fallacy of Specific Accident
 - b. Fallacy of Converse Accident
 - c. Fallacy of Simple Accident

C. Fallacies of Presumption

1. Petitio Principii (Begging the Question)
 - a. Assumptio Non Probata
 - b. Circulus in Probando
2. Ignoratio Elenchi (Irrelevant Conclusion)
 - a. Argumentum ad Auctoritatem
 - b. Argumentum ad Baculum
 - c. Argumentum ad Captandum Vulgus
 - d. Argumentum ad Crumenam
 - e. Argumentum ad Hominem
 - f. Argumentum ad Ignorantiam
 - g. Argumentum ad Iudicium
 - h. Argumentum ad Misericordiam
 - i. Argumentum ad Populum
 - j. Argumentum ad Vericundiam
 - k. Argumentum ex Concessio
3. Fallacy of Complex Question
4. Fallacy of Non Sequitor
 - a. Fallacy of Simple Non Sequitor
 - b. Fallacy of False Cause

III. Syllogistic Fallacies

A. Fallacies of Education

1. Fallacy of Incorrect Contraposition
2. Fallacy of Incorrect Conversion
3. Fallacy of Incorrect Obversion

B. Fallacies in Categorical Syllogisms

1. Fallacy of Four Terms (Quaternio Terminorem)
2. Fallacy of Ambiguous Middle
3. Fallacy of Undistributed Middle
4. Fallacy of Negative Premises
5. Fallacy of Particular Premises
6. Fallacy of Illicit Minor
7. Fallacy of Illicit Major
8. Fallacy of IEO

C. Fallacies in Hypothetical Syllogisms

1. Fallacy of Rejecting the Antecedent
2. Fallacy of Accepting the Consequent
3. Fallacy of Sublate-Posit (Tollendo Ponens)

The errors of reasoning which man may commit are impossible to enumerate in its totality, let alone an exhaustive explanation of them. It would not be possible for us to give all the erroneous epiphenomena of his mind. The above list of fallacies is obviously incomplete and if we will discuss each of them, it would take a book on logic to accomplish it. Thus, we left the reader to study these fallacies by using common books on logic.

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Notes and References

1. "A fallacy is a deceptive argument; that is, an argument that seems to be conclusive but is actually not conclusive. Either its sequence seems to be valid but is actually invalid, or else its premises seem to be true but are actually false. The word "fallacy" is derived from the Latin word *fallo*, which means "I deceive." An appearance of validity and truth is essential to a fallacy, for it would deceive no one unless it at least seemed to be valid and true." - Andrew H. Bachuber, Introduction to LOGIC, New York: Appleton-Century-Croft, Inc., 1957, p.176.

2. "An argument must satisfy two conditions to establish the truth of its conclusion. It must be valid, and all of its premises must be true. Such an argument is termed 'sound'. To determine the truth or falsehood of premises is the task of scientific inquiry in general since premisses may deal with any subject matter at all. But determining the validity or invalidity of arguments is the special province of deductive logic. The logicians is interested in the question of validity even for argument that might be unsound because their premises might happen to be false." - Irving M. Copi, Symbolic Logic, New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1979, p.5.

3. "There is no one kind of thing that we 'perceive' but many different kinds, the number being reducible if at all by scientific investigation and not by philosophy: pens are in many ways though not in all ways unlike rainbows, which are in many ways though not in all ways unlike after-image, which in turn are in many ways but not in all ways unlike pictures on the cinema-screen - and so on, without assignable limit." - J.L. Austin, Sense and Sensibilia, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964, p.4

"All human knowing is relation to an object." - Martin Buber, The Knowledge of Man, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965, p.163.

4. "Logic is both a science and an art; it is concerned with the quest of knowledge and truth, and it is also a study of the validity or correctness of our reasoning." - John A. Mourant, Formal Logic: An Introductory Textbook, New York: The MacMillan Co., 1963, p.2.

For more technical details on the relationship and distinction between truth and validity in the realm of logic, read the following articles:

<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/courses/log/tru-val.htm>

<http://philosophy.lander.edu/logic/tvs.html>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logical-truth/>

<http://www.xenodochy.org/gs/validtrue.html>

<http://www.xenodochy.org/mail/mdonvt.html>

<http://www.philosophypages.com/lq/e01.htm>

5. “Just as ethical assumptions underlie proposals, so also does an ethical assumption inform the whole proposal for teaching written argument that this book explains.” - Jeanne Fahnestock & Marie Secor, *A Rhetoric of Argument*, New York: Random House, Inc. 1982, p.3.

“Judgments of value are judgments about what is good and bad, desirable or undesirable. Judgments of obligation focus on what is right and wrong and on what one do or forego.” - John S. Feinberg & Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993, p.18.

6. “Nobody is deliberately inconsistent in his beliefs. It is simply impossible to believe, fully and without reservation two things which you know are inconsistent with each other. It seems we are obliged to believe only what we think is consistent, without having any real choice in the matter. In this way we are all logicians, simply because we are human. When we study logic, we are teaching ourselves to do deliberately, by rule, something we have been doing semiconsciously, by hunch, ever since the age of four.” - Wilfrid Hodges, *Logic*, New York: Penquin Books, 1977, p.15.

7. “There are three operations of the mind which are immediately concerned in Argument; which are called by logical writers: 1st, Simple Apprehension; 2nd, Judgment; 3rd, Discourses of Reasoning.” - Archbishop Whately (quoted by Charles H. Welch, *An Alphabetical Analysis*, 10 vols, London: Berean Publishing Trust, 1958, vol.10, p.327.

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