

The Thinker's Guide

To

Fallacies:

The Art of Mental Trickery
and Manipulation

By Dr. Richard Paul and Dr. Linda Elder

The Foundation for Critical Thinking

To understand the human mind, understand self-deception.
Anon

The word 'fallacy' derives from two Latin words, fallax ("deceptive") and fallere ("to deceive"). This is an important concept in human life because much human thinking deceives itself while deceiving others. The human mind has no natural guide to the truth, nor does it naturally love the truth. What the human mind loves is itself, what serves it, what flatters it, what gives it what it wants, and what strikes down and destroys whatever "threatens" it.

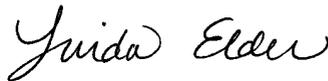
The study of fallacies can be pursued in at least two different ways. It can be approached traditionally: in which case one defines, explains, and exemplifies ways in which unsound arguments can be made to appear sound. Or it can be approached deeply, in which case one relates the construction of fallacies to the pursuit of human interests and irrational desires. Using the first approach, students gain little by memorizing the names and definitions of fallacies. They soon forget them. Their minds are left largely untouched and therefore unmoved. On the other hand, the second approach makes possible the acquisition of lifelong insights into how the mind – every mind – uses unsound arguments and intellectual "tricks" to further its ends.

When we look closely at human decisions and human behavior, we can easily see that what counts in human life is not who is right, but who is winning. Those who possess power in the form of wealth, property, and weaponry are those who decide what truths will be trumpeted around the world and what truths will be ridiculed, silenced, or suppressed. The mass media of the world generate an unending glut of messages that continually sacrifice truth to "spin." When we reach beneath the surface of things, we find a world in which the word 'communication' and the word 'manipulation' collapse into virtual synonyms.

Students need seminal insights and intellectual tools that enable them to protect themselves from becoming intellectual victims in a world of swarming media piranhas, or, just as bad, from joining the swarm as a junior piranha in training. Insights and tools, grounded in intellectual integrity, should be the ultimate aim of the study of "fallacies." They have been our aim in this guide.



Richard Paul
Center for Critical Thinking



Linda Elder
Foundation for Critical Thinking

Contents

Truth and Deception in the Human Mind	3
Uncritical Persons (intellectually unskilled thinkers)	3–4
Skilled Manipulators (weak-sense critical thinkers)	4–5
Fair-Minded Critical Persons (strong-sense critical thinkers)	5–6
The Concept of Fallacies of Thought.....	6–7
Naming Fallacies	7–8
Mistakes Versus Fallacies	8
There is No Exhaustive List of Fallacies	9–10
Faulty Generalizations	10–12
Analyzing Generalizations	13–15
Post Hoc Generalizations	16
Analogies and Metaphors	16–18
44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument	19–38
Accuse Your Opponent of Doing What He is Accusing You of or worse.....	20
Accuse Him of Sliding Down A Slippery Slope (that leads to disaster).....	20
Appeal to Authority.....	20–21
Appeal to Experience.....	21
Appeal to Fear.....	21
Appeal to Pity (or sympathy).....	21–22
Appeal to Popular Passions	22
Appeal to Tradition or Faith (“the tried and true”).....	22–23
Assume a Posture of Righteousness	23
Attack the person (and not the argument)	23
Beg the Question	24
Call For Perfection (Demand impossible conditions).....	24
Create a False Dilemma (the Great Either/Or)	25
Devise Analogies (and Metaphors) That Support Your View (even if they are misleading or “false”)	25
Question Your Opponent’s Conclusions	26
Create Misgivings: Where There’s Smoke, There’s Fire	26–27
Create A Straw Man.....	27–28
Deny or Defend Your Inconsistencies	28
Demonize His Side Sanitize Yours	28–29

Evade Questions, Gracefully.....	29
Flatter Your Audience.....	29
Hedge What You Say.....	29
Ignore the Evidence.....	30
Ignore the Main Point.....	30
Attack Evidence (That Undermines Your Case).....	30
Insist Loudly on a Minor Point.....	30–31
Use the Hard-Cruel-World Argument (to justify doing what is usually considered unethical).....	31
Make (Sweeping) Glittering Generalizations.....	31
Make Much of Any Inconsistencies in Your Opponent's Position.....	32
Make Your Opponent Look Ridiculous ("Lost in the Laugh").....	32
Oversimplify the Issue.....	32
Raise Nothing But Objections.....	32
Rewrite History (Have It Your Way).....	33
Seek Your Vested Interests.....	33
Shift the Ground.....	33
Shift the Burden of Proof.....	33–34
Spin, Spin, Spin.....	34
Talk in Vague Generalities.....	34–35
Talk Double Talk.....	35
Tell Big Lies.....	36
Treat Abstract Words and Symbols As If They Were Real Things.....	36
Throw In A Red Herring (or two).....	37
Throw in Some Statistics.....	37
Use Double Standards (whenever you can).....	37
44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument (Chart).....	38
Fallacy Detection: Analyzing a Speech from the Past.....	39–44
Fallacy Detection: Analyzing a Current Presidential Speech.....	45–50
Fallacy Detection: Analyzing a Speech from a Presidential Candidate.....	50–53
Avoid Two Extremes:.....	53–54
1) Finding Fallacies Only in the Thinking of Others (None in Yourself), and	
2) Finding an Equal Number of Fallacies in Everything you Read.	
Conclusion: Fallacies in An Ideal (And in a Real) World.....	54–55

Truth and Deception in the Human Mind

The human mind is a marvelous set of structures and systems. It is a center of consciousness and action. It forms a unique identity. It creates a view of the world. Rich experience emerges from its interactions with the world. It thinks. It feels. It wants. It apprehends truths and suppresses errors. It achieves insights and fabricates prejudices. Both useful truths and harmful misconceptions are its intermixed products. It can as easily believe what is false as what is true.

It can see beauty in right conduct and justify what is flagrantly unethical. It can love and hate. It can be kind and cruel. It can advance knowledge or error. It can be intellectually humble or intellectually arrogant. It can be empathic or narrow-minded. It can be open or closed. It can achieve a permanent state of expanding knowledge or a deadening state of narrowing ignorance. It both transcends the creatures of lesser ability and insults their innocence and nobility by its self-deception and cruelty.

How can humans create within their own minds such an inconsistent amalgam of the rational and the irrational? The answer is self-deception. In fact, perhaps the most accurate and useful definition of humans is that of "the self-deceiving animal." Deception, duplicity, sophistry, delusion, and hypocrisy are foundational products of human nature in its "natural," untutored state. Rather than reducing these tendencies, most schooling and social influences redirect them, rendering them more sophisticated, more artful, and more obscure.

To exacerbate this problem, not only are humans instinctively self-deceptive, they are naturally sociocentric as well. Every culture and society sees itself as special and as justified in all of its basic beliefs and practices, in all its values and taboos. The arbitrary nature of its folkways is known to its anthropologists (if it has any), but not to its overwhelming majority.

Uncritical Persons (intellectually unskilled thinkers)

The over-whelming preponderance of people have not freely decided what to believe, but, rather, have been socially conditioned (indoctrinated) into their beliefs. They are unreflective thinkers. Their minds are products of social and personal forces they neither understand, control, nor concern themselves with. Their personal beliefs are often based in prejudices. Their thinking is largely comprised of stereotypes, caricatures, oversimplifications, sweeping generalizations, illusions, delusions, rationalizations, false dilemmas, and begged questions. Their motivations are often traceable to irrational fears and attachments, personal vanity and envy, intellectual arrogance and simple-mindedness. These constructs have become a part of their identity.

Such persons are focused on what immediately affects them. They see the

world through ethnocentric and nationalistic eyes. They stereotype people from other cultures. When their beliefs are questioned — however unjustified those beliefs may be — they feel personally attacked. When they feel threatened, they typically revert to infantile thinking and emotional counter attacks.

When *their* prejudices are questioned, they often feel offended and stereotype the questioner as “intolerant” and “prejudiced.” They rely on sweeping generalizations to support their beliefs. They resent being “corrected,” disagreed with, or criticized. They want to be re-enforced, flattered, and made to feel important. They want to be presented with a simple-minded, black-and-white, world. They have little or no understanding of nuances, fine distinctions, or subtle points.

They want to be told who is evil and who is good. They see themselves as “good.” They see their enemies as “evil.” They want all problems to admit to a simple solution and the solution to be one they are familiar with — for example, punishing those who are evil by use of force and violence. Visual images are much more powerful in their minds than abstract language. They are overly impressed by authority, power, and celebrity. They are eminently ready to be directed and controlled, as long as those doing the controlling flatter them and lead them to believe that their views are correct and insightful.

The mass media are structured to appeal to such persons. Subtle and complex issues are reduced to simplistic formulas (“Get tough on crime! Three strikes and you’re out! Adult crime, adult time! You are either for us or against us!”) Spin is everything; substance is irrelevant.

Skilled Manipulators (weak-sense critical thinkers)

There is a much smaller group of people who are skilled in the art of manipulation and control. These people are shrewdly focused on pursuing their own interest without respect to how that pursuit affects others. Though they share many of the characteristics of uncritical thinkers, they have qualities that separate them from uncritical persons. They have greater command of the rhetoric of persuasion. They are more sophisticated, more verbal, and generally have greater status. On average, they have more schooling and achieve more success than uncritical persons. They typically acquire more power and occupy positions of authority. They are accustomed to playing the dominant role in relationships. They know how to use the established structure of power to advance their interests. Since they are fundamentally concerned, not with advancing rational values, but with getting what they want, they are careful to present themselves as sharing the values of those they manipulate.

Skilled manipulators are rarely insightful dissenters, rebels, or critics of society. The reason is simple. They cannot effectively manipulate

members of a mass audience if they appear to that mass to be invalidating their beliefs.

Manipulators do not use their intelligence for the public good. Rather they use it to get what they want in alliance with those who share their vested interests. Manipulation, domination, demagoguery, and control are their tools.¹

Persons skilled in manipulation want to influence the beliefs and behavior of others. And they have insight into what makes people vulnerable to manipulation. As a result, they strive to appear before others in a way that associates themselves with power, authority, and conventional morality. This impetus is evident, for example, when politicians appear before mass audiences with well-polished, but intellectually empty, speeches.

There are a number of alternative labels for the roles that "manipulators" play, including: the spin master, the con artist, the sophist, the propagandist, the indoctrinator, the demagogue, and often, the "politician." Their goal is always to control what others think and do by controlling the way information is presented to them. They use "rational" means only when such means can be used to create the appearance of objectivity and reasonability. The key is that they are always trying to keep some information and some points of view from being given a fair hearing.

Fair-Minded Critical Persons

(strong-sense critical thinkers)

Finally, there is an even smaller group of people who, though intellectually skilled, do not want to manipulate and control others. These are the people who combine critical thought, fair-mindedness, self-insight, and a genuine desire to serve the public good. They are sophisticated enough to recognize how self-serving people use their knowledge of human nature and command of rhetoric to pursue selfish ends. They are acutely aware of the phenomenon of mass society and of the machinery of mass persuasion and social control. Consequently, they are too insightful to be manipulated and too ethical to enjoy manipulating others.

They have a vision of a better, more ethical, world, which includes a realistic knowledge of how far we are from that world. They are practical in their effort to encourage movement from "what is" to "what might be." They gain this insight by struggling with their own egocentric nature and coming to see (in deeper and deeper ways) their own involvement in irrational processes.

No one becomes a fair-minded thinker first and a selfish person later.

¹ A demagogue is never a true critic of society but a sophist, for he/she "tries to stir up the people by appeals to emotion, prejudice, etc. in order to win them over quickly and so gain power." (*Webster's New World Dictionary*).

Selfish thinking is instinctive. It is an in-born state. We are all initially focused on ourselves: our own pain, desires, concerns. In the first instance, we pay attention to the needs of others only to the extent that we are forced to do so. Only through a commitment to our own intellectual and ethical development can we develop the intellectual traits characteristic of fair-mindedness. The key is that fair-minded people consistently strive to achieve the widest, most informed viewpoint. Fair-minded persons want no point of view to be suppressed. They want public discussion to include equal coverage of dissenting as well as dominant points of view. They want people to learn how to detect when someone is trying to manipulate them into believing or doing what they would not believe or do had they access to more information or further reasoning from dissenting points of view. They want everyone to see-through the “dirty tricks” of manipulative persuasion. They want to publicly disclose situations in which people of wealth and power are manipulating people with little wealth and power. They want to help people recognize how the wealthy and powerful often prey on the credulity, gullibility, and vulnerability of the poor or poorly schooled.

It should be noted that those we call the “manipulators” are often the victims of their own propaganda and devices. Caught up in their own propaganda and narrowness of vision, they sometimes fail as a result. Many businesses fail because of their inability to critique their own illusions. Nations often fail to act successfully because their leaders are caught up in their own unrealistic descriptions of the world (and of their enemies). Manipulators are not usually grand conspirators. Their one-sidedness is obvious only to those who can appreciate the difference between “self-serving” and “fair-minded” thinking. Only those capable of self-critique and self-insight can accurately assess the extent to which they are involved in the social, psychological, and intellectual manipulation of others.

The Concept of Fallacies of Thought

The meanings of the word, “fallacy” found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* are:

1. Deception, guile, trickery, trick.
2. Deceptiveness, aptness to mislead, unreliability.
3. A deceptive or misleading argument, a sophism. In Logic esp. a flaw, material or formal, which vitiates a syllogism. Also, sophistical reasoning, sophistry.
4. A delusive notion, an error, esp. one founded on false reasoning. Also, the condition of being deceived, error.
5. Sophistical nature, unsoundness (of arguments); erroneousness, delusion. To be a human thinker is often to be a “self-deceived” thinker and hence a “fallacious” thinker. However, to think of ourselves as believing what is false (or as defending and justifying prejudices,

The word ‘fallacy’ derives from two Latin words, *fallax* (“deceptive”) and *fallere* (“to deceive”)

stereotypes, and misconceptions) is a painful thought. The human mind has developed ways to protect itself from that pain.

These ways have been labeled by psychologists as “defense mechanisms.” They deny or distort reality. Their use is not deliberate and conscious, but unpremeditated and subconscious. They include repression, projection, denial, rationalization, and stereotyping.

Naming Fallacies

The philosopher Schopenhauer, in commenting on tricks of persuasion, once remarked:

It would be a very good thing if every trick could receive some short and obviously appropriate name, so that when a man used this or that particular trick, he could at once be reproved for it.

Unfortunately, there are an unlimited number of maneuvers one can make in camouflaging poor reasoning, making bad thinking look good, and obscuring what is really going on in a situation. Furthermore, most people are resistant to recognizing poor reasoning when it supports what they intensely believe. It is as if people subconsciously accept the premise “all is fair in the scramble for power, wealth, and status.” Any argument, any consideration, any mental maneuver or construction that validates emotionally-charged beliefs seems to the believer to be justified. The more intense the belief, the less likely that reason and evidence can dislodge it.

Most people deeply believe in — but are unaware of — the following premises:

- 1) IT'S TRUE IF I BELIEVE IT.
- 2) IT'S TRUE IF WE BELIEVE IT.
- 3) IT'S TRUE IF I WANT TO BELIEVE IT.
- 4) IT'S TRUE IF IT SERVES MY VESTED INTEREST TO BELIEVE IT.

The human mind is often myopic, inflexible, and conformist, while at the same time highly skilled in self-deception and rationalization. People are by nature highly egocentric, highly sociocentric, and wantonly self-interested. Their goal is not truth but advantage. They have not acquired their beliefs through a rational process. They are highly resistant to rational critique. Blind faith, fear, prejudice, and self-interest are primary organizers of much human thinking. Self-delusion, in conjunction with lack of self-command, characterize much human thinking. A highly compromised integrity is the result. If you point out a mistake in thinking to most persons, you may silence them momentarily. But most, like rubber bands that have momentarily been stretched and let go, will soon revert to whatever it was they believed in the first place.

It is for this reason that cultivation of intellectual virtues is so crucial to human development. Without a long-term transformation of the mind, little can be done to produce deeply honest thought. When challenged, the human mind operates from its most primitive intellectual instincts. This can be verified in the history of politics, economics, religion, and war — indeed in any history that deeply plumbs the human mind in action.

Consequently, it is important to learn to recognize the most common tricks of persuasion, that we might better understand ourselves and others. Used on others, fallacies are intellectually indefensible tricks of persuasion and manipulation; used on ourselves, they are instruments of self-deception.

In this guide we concentrate on the most common and flagrant intellectual tricks and snares. Sometimes these tricks are “counterfeits” of good thinking. For example, a false dilemma is the counterfeit of a true dilemma. We shall see this most obviously in dealing with errors of generalization and comparison.

Mistakes Versus Fallacies

“What about mistakes?” you might ask. Isn’t it possible that some of the time we commit fallacies inadvertently, unintentionally, and innocently?

The answer is, of course, yes. Sometimes people make mistakes without any intention of tricking anyone. The test to determine whether someone is merely making a mistake in thinking is relatively simple. After the mistake is pointed out to the person, and the person is explicitly faced with the problems in the thinking, observe to see whether he or she honestly changes. In other words, once the pressure to change is removed, does the person revert to the original fallacious way of thinking, or does he demonstrate that he has truly been persuaded (and modified his thinking accordingly)? If the person reverts, or invents a new rationalization for his behavior, we can conclude that the person was using the fallacy to gain an advantage and not making a simple mistake.

There is No Exhaustive List of Fallacies

It is not possible to create an exclusive and exhaustive list of fallacies. The intellectual tricks, traps, and snares humans so commonly engage in (or fall prey to) can be described from many differing standpoints and in a variety of differing terms. In this guide, we deal only with those most common or most easily recognized. There is nothing sacred about our list or our analysis. Here is a list of common problems in human thinking. See if you can add to this list. It is common for people (in their thinking) to:

- be unclear, muddled, or confused
- jump to conclusions
- fail to think-through implications
- lose track of their goal
- be unrealistic
- focus on the trivial
- fail to notice contradictions
- use inaccurate information in their thinking
- ask vague questions
- give vague answers
- ask loaded questions
- ask irrelevant questions
- confuse questions of different types
- answer questions they are not competent to answer
- come to conclusions based on inaccurate or irrelevant information
- use only the information that supports their view
- make inferences not justified by their experience
- distort data and represent it inaccurately
- fail to notice the inferences they make
- come to unreasonable conclusions
- fail to notice their assumptions
- make unjustified assumptions
- miss key ideas
- use irrelevant ideas
- form confused ideas
- form superficial concepts
- misuse words
- ignore relevant viewpoints
- fail to see issues from points of view other than their own
- confuse issues of different types
- lack insight into their prejudices
- think narrowly
- think imprecisely
- think illogically
- think one-sidedly
- think simplistically
- think hypocritically
- think superficially
- think ethnocentrically
- think egocentrically
- think irrationally
- be incompetent at problem solving
- make poor decisions
- lack insight into their own ignorance

Few of these flaws fall neatly under traditional fallacy labels. Nevertheless, it is useful to have some sense of what the common fallacies are and of how to distinguish them from sound reasoning.

All fallacies result from an abuse of a way of thinking that is sometimes justified. For example, generalization is one of the most important acts of human thinking. Making comparisons by analogy and metaphor is another. As we begin to focus on fallacies, we will begin with a detailed emphasis on generalizations and comparisons (and the errors of thought that emerge from their misuse). We will then focus in detail on some of the most widely used fallacies. We do not have the space to approach all fallacies in this same detailed way. In total, we focus on 44 fallacies (which we introduce as "*44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument*"). We view these fallacies as unethical strategies for winning arguments and manipulating people. They are the "dirty tricks" of intellectual life. Those who use them with success are able to do so precisely because, at some level, they deceive themselves into believing that their reasoning is sound.

Faulty Generalizations

As humans, we live in a world of abstractions and generalizations. All words that name or characterize what we think about are products of the mental act of generalizing.² But as semanticists rightly remind us: "cow 1 is not cow 2 is not cow 3." Each and every existing thing is unique. Bishop Butler put this point in a memorable way in remarking, "Everything is itself and not another."

² For example, when we call a person a "woman" we abstract from everything that is individual and personal about her and focus on what she has in common with everyone else of her gender. A parallel point can be made about virtually every word. The point is that we cannot live a human life except with the tools of (linguistic) abstraction. They enable us to do virtually all uniquely human activities. So, being indispensable, abstractions can't be all bad in and of themselves.

The function of generalizations is quite simple. Without generalizations we could not explain anything. Things would occur around us for no reason that we could fathom. We would stand around in a stupor, unable to relate anything to anything else, for a generalization is simply a way to take some set of things (that we don't understand) and compare them with something we do understand by means of some "abstract" words.

How does critical thinking help us with the forming of generalizations and abstractions? Again, the answer is quite simple. Critical thinking enables us to take command of the abstractions we create in our own minds, the generalizations we make about the world, and therefore, ultimately, the quality of our reasoning.

So why, then, do so many people mishandle abstractions and misuse generalizations? Once again, the answer is simple. Having very little understanding of them, most people are uncomfortable with abstractions. They don't understand reasoning. The whole notion of things intellectual is really—if truth be told—pretty much of a puzzle to them. Without critical thinking skills, one doesn't know how to form reasonable and useful abstractions and generalizations. One does not know how to bring them alive in the mind or apply them with discipline in the world.

Despite the uniqueness of things, the words we use in categorizing what we experience glosses over uniqueness and concentrates on similarities or differences (in general). As such, we talk in general terms about tables, chairs, cows, crows, people, poems, and social movements. Despite the fact that there are useful things we can say about individual tables, chairs, cows, crows, people, poems, and social movements, we are nevertheless forced to “generalize” in countless ways. We talk in general terms about nearly everything that interests us: life and death, love and hate, success and failure, war and peace.

We should be careful, therefore, not to triumph in a discussion by saying “THAT IS A GENERALIZATION!” (and therefore “automatically” faulty). We must remember that generalizing is integral to the foundations of communication. It enables us to construct the concepts through which we conduct all our thinking.³

For a particular generalization to be a “fallacy,” it must be based either on too few instances or unrepresentative ones. For example, if we meet three amusing Italians while on a visit to Rome, we are not justified in making the generalization that all or most Italians are amusing (there is no reason to think that the three we met were representative of all or most Italians). On the other hand, determining whether a generalization is justified is not merely a matter of counting instances. For example, if you touch a hot stove and burn your hand, one instance should be enough to convince you of the wisdom of the generalization, “Never touch a hot stove with your bare hand.” On the basis of very few experiences you would be justified in making the even wider generalization, “Never touch extremely hot objects with your naked flesh.”

Well, then, how can we ensure that we are making justifiable generalizations? The answer is that we need to make sure we have sufficient evidence to justify our generalizations. For example, the more diverse the group we are generalizing about, the harder it is to generalize in a justifiable way about it. Thus, it is easier to make generalizations about frogs (given the consistency in frog behavior) than it is about domesticated dogs (whose behavior varies more, from dog to dog and dog species to dog species). In a like manner, it is easier to generalize about domesticated dogs than it is about humans (whose behavior varies along many parameters). Humans behavior is highly diverse. Consider yourself as an example.

You were born into a culture (European, American, African, Asian). You were born at some point in time (in some century in some year). You were born in some place (in the country, in the city, in the North or South, East or West). You were raised by parents with particular beliefs (about the family, personal relationships, marriage, childhood, obedience, religion, politics,

³ As an exercise you might re-read this paragraph noting as you go how many general ideas are in it, each with a range of generalizations behind them. You might also notice that in this section of the text, we are making generalizations about generalizations.

schooling, etc.). You came to the world with certain predispositions that influenced your development as you interacted with your environment. You formed various associations, largely based on who was around you, associations with people who had distinct viewpoints, values, and who adhered to certain taboos. Because of all of these influences, you are a complex and unique individual. One should therefore be cautious in forming generalizations about you, just as you should be cautious in forming generalizations regarding others.

This does not mean of course that there are no important generalizations we can make about humans. For example, there are features we share with all other humans. For instance, given what we know about the human mind we can make the following generalizations:

1. It is essential for our intellectual growth that we come to know the scope and limits of our intellectual capacities.
2. Most people do not recognize their tendency to think egocentrically and ethnocentrically.
3. Most people resist understanding the implications of their social conditioning and the ethnocentrism inherent in it.

One important series of studies, the Milgram Experiments,⁴ document the human tendency to conform (uncritically) to the commands of authority figures, even when those authority figures have no power to punish or compel them to conform and even when the authority figures are asking them to do what they know to be “unethical.”

Another series of studies of the “mutual images of the enemy,” document a striking intellectual disability of humans. It occurs when groups come in conflict with each other for the same goal. Each side to the conflict then attributes the same virtues to itself and the same vices to the enemy. WE are “trustworthy, peace-loving, honorable, and humanitarian.” THEY (our enemies) are “treacherous, warlike, and cruel.”⁵

We can readily find examples of this phenomenon in the daily news, which is filled with positive characterizations of “our side” and caricatures of those who oppose us. Self-aggrandizing generalizations that feed the human ego are always welcome and easily “believed.” Negative generalizations of those who oppose us are also welcome, as easily believed, and for similar reasons. As social animals we do not want to face our fear and distrust of members of groups we oppose. We avoid facing the fact that we are very much like the people we hate and fear. The pain, the suffering, the waste of resources that result from acting on the thinking we generate egocentrically and sociocentrically, boggles the mind.

⁴ See studies by Stanley Milgram at www.stanleymilgram.com

⁵ See studies by Jerome K. Frank, et al, www.globalcommunity.org

Analyzing Generalizations

If we are to aspire to reasonability, we must be willing to question our own generalizations as well as the generalizations of others. We must be willing to strip the labels off of the objects of our experience and ask ourselves (again and again), "What do we really know about this or that or that other?"

Traditionally, faulty generalizations have been labeled either "hasty" or "unrepresentative." We boil these labels down to two pieces of advice: first, begin to recognize when generalizations are being made; and second, determine whether the generalization is supported by sufficient evidence to justify it. In other words, make sure you have taken the time to accumulate enough facts to support the generalization, and make sure the evidence you have is "representative" of the full range of relevant information. Qualify your generalization whenever necessary (most, many, some, a few, rather than "all").

Remember that you are a human and speak a human language and that the language you speak is shot-through with generalizations and abstractions. Try to develop the ability to strip off whatever language you are inclined to use in "interpreting" the facts inherent in your experience (i.e., confine yourself to the statement of specific facts without putting a "spin" on those facts). See whether you can be more accurate, precise and less biased in your descriptions by reducing your interpretive generalizations to a minimum.

Consider now the following examples of generalizations commonly made by people, some of which are reasonable, others not:

EXAMPLE: "Yesterday I met the most remarkable person. He/she is kind, considerate, sensitive, and thoughtful."

COMMENT: Generalizations about the character of a person after just one day with them are rarely justifiable.

EXAMPLE: "Well aren't you going to stand up for our country? I thought you were a patriot."

COMMENT: The suppressed generalization here is : *one should never criticize one's country, because such criticism is inconsistent with loyalty.* By the way, people who unconsciously make this (political) generalization often make a similar one about love between humans: "If you really loved me you wouldn't criticize me." Both generalizations ignore the fact that reasonable critique is a necessary and healthy element of creating a better world. Many of our greatest critics have also been our greatest patriots. Tom Paine is a case in point.

EXAMPLE: "Why do you always have to be so critical? Can't you just be human for once?"

COMMENT: Besides the fact that "so critical" is overly vague, we have the suppressed (and absurd) generalization that *critique is inhuman.* Note also the suppressed generalization that you are "always" critical. That you are sometimes critical is probable; that you are often critical is possible, but that *you are always critical* is highly unlikely.

EXAMPLE: "No, I'm not a rational person. I have FEELINGS!"

COMMENT: These statements imply that *being reasonable and having feelings are incompatible.* Not so. A reasonable person can have feelings as intense as those of an irrational person. The difference is that the emotional responses of a reasonable person make sense. They "fit" the circumstances. A reasonable person is more integrated, lives fewer contradictions, has greater insight. For a rational person, the consistency between thought, feeling, and desire lays a foundation for intensity and commitment. The generalization that being reasonable and having feelings are incompatible is based on a stereotype, not an insight.

EXAMPLE: "Let's face it. The answer is LOVE. That's the only way to create a better world."

COMMENT: If everyone loved everyone else, no doubt we would have a better world. But how is all this love to be produced in a world shot-through with greed, violence, selfishness, and cruelty, all of which result from innate egocentricity and ethnocentricity? How could we change people's thinking so as to bring about this massive outpouring of love? The notion that *LOVE is the answer* is a not very helpful generalization. It needs to be qualified in a multitude of ways.

EXAMPLE: "The money we are spending to save lives by preventing bioterrorism makes little sense when compared with what it would cost to save lives through other means. We spend hundreds of billions to save lives that might be at risk while we allow hundreds of people to die every day on the home front. According to the Institute of Medicine some 18,000 people die prematurely every year as a result of being uninsured. That's six 9/11s."

(This example was adapted from an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 27, 2003).

COMMENT: If the facts asserted are correct, the reasoning in this example makes an important point. The generalization implicit here seems justifiable — that money spent to save lives should be spent where it will do the most good.

EXAMPLE: “There is enough food produced in the world to feed everyone. Why do I say so? Here’s why: World production of grain alone is over 1.5 billion tons, enough to supply the entire world population with two pounds of grain per day. This, with the current production of vegetables, fruits, nuts, and meat, is enough to supply each man, woman, and child with 3000 calories a day — equal to the consumption of an average American.”

COMMENT: If the facts asserted are correct, the reasoning makes an important point. The generalization, that *there is enough food produced in the world to feed everyone*, is plausible.

EXAMPLE: “Hunger is the result of overpopulation, if people had fewer children they would not be hungry.”

COMMENT: In assessing this statement, let us consider some relevant facts. According to The Institute for Food and Development Policy (www.foodfirst.org), overpopulation is not the cause of hunger. It is usually the other way around: hunger is one of the real causes of overpopulation. The more children a poor family has, the more likely some will survive to work in the fields or in the city to add to the family’s small income and later, to care for the parents in their old age. High birth rates are symptoms of the failures of a social system — inadequate family income, nutrition, education, health care and old-age security. If the facts asserted in this report are correct, the generalization is not justified.

In examining generalizations make sure you understand precisely what is being said. For example, if someone comments on the importance of loving the country, one would do well to spend some time spelling out what precisely is and is not implied by the expression. For example, what exactly is it that one is supposed to love: the land, the weather, the ideals, the mass media, hollywood movies, the criminal justice system, the medical system, puritanical attitudes, the politicians, the laws that have been passed, the wealth, the military, the foreign policy? Once one is clear about what a generalization is saying (and not saying), it is important to determine the information and evidence that would be required to justify it. Moreover, as we have said mentioned before, it is important to minimize faulty generalizations by carefully using qualifiers like “most,” “some,” and “a few.” Remember these rules:

- Don’t say *all* when you mean *most*.
- Don’t say *most* when you mean *some*.
- Don’t say *some* when you mean a *few*.
- And don’t say a *few* when you mean just *one*.

Post Hoc Generalizations

"Post hoc ergo propter hoc" is a Latin phrase for a well-known mistake in generalizing. It literally means "After that therefore caused by it." It refers to the mistake of inferring that something that came before something else must necessarily have caused it. Here is an obvious example of it.

"Yesterday I got a stomach ache after doing algebra. I will avoid doing algebra in the future." Here is another: "Yesterday my son was in a car crash. Right before it happened, I had a feeling something bad was going to happen. This proves that you can hurt the people you love by thinking negative thoughts about them."

The fact is that before any given event happens, other things happen, usually many, many things. That does not mean that all of these earlier events caused what came afterwards. Monday comes before Tuesday, but does not cause it. Summer comes before Fall, but does not cause it. I put on my shoes before I eat my breakfast, but putting on my shoes does not cause me to eat my breakfast.

EXAMPLE: The last time we had a major strike of teachers, a student died in a fight. That just shows you the irresponsibility of teachers striking.

COMMENT: Sorry, but no causal connection has been established. The mere fact that the strike occurred prior to the fight is no good reason to consider it a cause.

EXAMPLE: "Last time I had dinner at Jack's house, I had a bad stomach ache the very next day. The food at Jack's house must have been bad."

COMMENT: I'm afraid we must decline this "post hoc" generalization about the nature of the food at Jack's house. There are many other possible causes of the stomach ache in question. You could check and see whether the other people who ate at Jack's house also got sick.

Analogies and Metaphors

We seek to understand new experiences and phenomena by likening them to what we already understand. When we explicitly recognize that the similarity is only *partial*, we should recognize that we are speaking analogically or metaphorically. The basic difference between an analogy and a metaphor is simple. When we put the word 'like' in our description, we create an analogy (He is LIKE a rat). When we omit the word 'like' we create a metaphor (He IS a rat.). Analogies and metaphors help us make sense of the world. We often explain something by comparing it (point by point) with something similar. Metaphors and analogies provide provisional models for understanding what we don't yet "literally" understand.

There are, in any case, three kinds of statements: literal statements, analogical statements, and metaphorical statements. There are many tree stumps in this forest (literal). A tree stump is like a chair in the forest (analogical). Every tree stump in this forest, and there are thousands, is a tribute to the power of the lumber industry and a testament to its indifference to ecology (metaphorical).

Let us now move to some examples of analogies or metaphors. Both are used to make sense of things. Let us consider how “useful” or “illuminating” each attempt is. In some cases, we will need to clarify the statement and context before evaluating it.

EXAMPLE: “Life is like a beautiful and winding lane, on either side bright flowers, beautiful butterflies and tempting fruits, which we scarcely pause to admire and taste, so eager are we to hasten to an opening which we imagine will be more beautiful still.” G.A. Sala

COMMENT: What do you think? Each of us must consult our own experience to decide how useful this analogy is.

EXAMPLE: Life is the childhood of our immortality. — Goethe

COMMENT: This analogy assumes the existence of God and the soul. If you grant that assumption, then the analogy holds. If you don't, then it doesn't.

EXAMPLE: “Common sense does not ask an impossible chessboard, but takes the one before it and plays the game.” Wendell Phillips

COMMENT: The point behind this metaphor is that rather than trying to make the impossible happen, we should deal with the inescapable realities of our lives. Can anyone argue with that? Perhaps not, but there may be much argument about what is actually impossible and what inescapable.

EXAMPLE: “The question is, are you going to stand up for your country or not?”

COMMENT: What does “stand up” mean? Why not “lie down” for your country or “jump up and down” for it? The speaker is no doubt asking us to act patriotically, but what does that mean? In one interpretation — “my country right or wrong” — you defend your country even when it is waging an unjust war. If you refuse to do so, you are labeled unpatriotic. In another interpretation it is your duty to support your country in a war IF IT IS JUSTIFIED and to oppose it if it is not.

EXAMPLE: “War is the business of barbarians.” — Napoleon

COMMENT: It is too bad that Napoleon did not mean what he said.

EXAMPLE: "The blood, and only the blood, of the German people will determine our destiny." — Adolph Hitler

COMMENT: A typical statement by one of the world's most notorious sophists and demagogues: vague, threatening, and misleading. A probable paraphrase might be: "Germany will win in any conflict if Germans are willing to die to bring that about." Another possible interpretation might be: "Germany is the master race and racial characteristics are what determine who ultimately wins or loses."

EXAMPLE: "The chief evil of war is more evil. War is the concentration of all human crimes. Here is its distinguishing, accursed brand. Under its standard gather violence, malignity, rage, fraud, perfidy, rapacity, and lust. If it only slew man, it would do little. It turns man into a beast of prey." — Channing

COMMENT: Few people think of this metaphor when patriotic music is playing and the troops are marching off to wage war. Do you agree or disagree with the metaphor and/or the point behind our comment on it?

44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument

If you want to become aware of how politicians, the news media, the advertising industry, public relations experts, government officials and assorted friends and enemies use the arts of manipulation and con artistry against you — enter their point of view! Learn the art of intellectual dirty tricks so that, if necessary, you can out-think the tricksters.

First remember that those who strive to manipulate you always want something from you: your money, your vote, your support, your time, your soul — something! But they also need you to be unaware of what they are about. They always have something (often a lot) to hide. In any case, their goal is not the use of sound evidence and valid reasoning. In every case, they insult our intelligence by assuming that a manipulative trick will work on us, that we are not insightful enough to see what they are doing.

Your goal should be to recognize fallacies for what they are — **the dirty tricks of those who want to gain an advantage**. Fallacies are therefore stratagems for gaining influence, advantage, and power (over the sheep of society). You will withstand their impact more effectively when you know these fallacies inside and out. When you come to see how counterfeits of good reasoning pervade everyday life (and are the life blood of the mass media) you are better able to resist their influence. When you are inoculated against fallacies, your response to them is transformed. You ask key questions. You probe behind the masks, the fronts, the fostered images, the impressive pomp and ceremony. You take charge of your own mind and emotions. You become (increasingly) your own person.

Let us now turn to some of the most prominent fallacies used in thinking. As you read through these dirty tricks, imagine yourself instructing unscrupulous persons in the art of manipulating the sheep of the world. Imagine yourself in the “business” of seeking influence over others. You want to get their vote, support, money or what have you. Something is at stake that you care about. You face some opposition. You want to “win” the argument, gain the influence. And you don’t care (at some level) what you have to do to achieve your goal. What can you do? Use any one or more of the *44 foul ways to win an argument* described in this section. If you don’t mind being unscrupulous, you can manipulate and control the simple-minded. These foul ways work — even with otherwise highly sophisticated persons. You can observe the practices of politicians (and other propagandists) successfully using them everyday. And don’t worry about feeling guilty. Your instinctive skill in self-deception will most likely keep you from noticing that you are doing something unethical. Here is your battery of strategies for overcoming your conscience, *44 foul ways to win an argument*.

Dirty Trick # 1

Accuse Your Opponent of Doing What He is Accusing You of (or worse)⁶

This is sometimes called, "Pointing to another wrong." When under attack and having trouble defending themselves, manipulators turn the tables.

They accuse their opponent of doing what they are being accused of. "You say that I don't love you! I think it is you who does not love me!"

Manipulators know this is a good way to put their opponents on the defensive. You may want to up the ante by accusing your opponent of doing something worse than what he is accusing you of. "How dare you accuse me of being messy? When was the last time you even took a shower?"

Dirty Trick # 2

Accuse Him of Sliding Down A Slippery Slope (that leads to disaster)

The slippery slope is used when a person implies that if someone does one thing (A), it will inevitably lead to a domino effect of negative things that, in the end will result in something terrible. In other words, "A" is not so bad, but A leads to B and B leads to C and C is horrible! Imagine a mother lecturing her teenage daughter: "OK, maybe there is nothing wrong with a kiss, but remember where kissing leads and where that leads and that. Before you know it you'll be the mother of an unwanted baby! Your young life will be ruined forever!" Manipulators who use this argument conveniently forget that many people walk carefully on slippery ground and don't fall down.

Dirty Trick # 3

Appeal to Authority⁷

Most people are in awe of those with power, celebrity, or status. In addition, there are many sacred symbols (flags, religious images, sacred words, etc.) to which people feel intense identification and loyalty. Though power, celebrity, and status rarely correlate in any way with knowledge and insight, people are mesmerized by them.

Demagogues that successfully manipulate people know that most people are readily tricked in this way. So they wrap themselves in the flag and associate themselves with power, celebrity, or status (in any way they can). This includes looking for scientists and other "knowledgeable" persons to "support" their views.

Cigarette companies once hired scientists who were (in effect) prepared to say that there was no PROOF that cigarettes caused lung cancer — though they knew (or should have known) that the proof was there. Cigarette

⁶ Traditionally called "Tu Quoque" – literally, "you also"

⁷ Traditionally called "Argumentum ad Verecundiam"

companies also founded "The American Tobacco Institute," a body of researchers supposedly seeking to discover the effects of smoking on health. In reality, the researchers were seeking to defend the interests of the tobacco industry under the guise of scientific authority. They deceived millions of people (and caused millions of deaths along the way). Naturally, they could only do this by deceiving themselves into thinking that they were simply being *scientifically careful*. And, of course, they made a lot of money in the process (which strongly influenced their ability to deceive themselves).

Dirty Trick # 4

Appeal to Experience

Skilled manipulators, con artists, and politicians often imply that they have "experience" to back them up, even when their experiences are limited, or non-existent. They know it is much harder for someone to deny what they say if they speak with the voice of experience. Of course, they will sometimes come up against an opponent who has more experience than they do. In that case, they attack their opponent's experience — as not representative, as biased, as limited, as distorted, or as subjective.

Dirty Trick # 5

Appeal to Fear

Deep down, most people have a lot of fears - fear of death, disease, loss of love, loss of attractiveness, loss of youth, loss of income, loss of security, rejection by others. The unprincipled manipulators know that people tend to react primitively when any of these fears are activated. Thus they represent themselves as having the ability to protect people against these threats (even when they can't). Distrust authorities who say that certain groups (or people) are inherently dangerous. "Remember, these people are threatening our freedom, our way of life, our homes, our property." Politicians often use this strategy quite effectively to make sure people line up behind governmental authority and do what the government — that is, what politicians — want.

Dirty Trick # 6

Appeal to Pity (or sympathy)

Manipulators know how to portray themselves (and their situation) in such a way as to make people feel sorry for them or at least gain their sympathy, especially when they don't want to take responsibility for something they have done.

Consider the student who, when confronted with the fact that she hasn't done her homework, whines, and says something like, "You don't understand how hard my life is. I have so much to do. It's very hard for me

to get my homework done. I'm not lucky like some students. Since my parents can't afford to send me to college, I have to work 30 hours a week to pay my own way. When I come home from work, my roommate plays music until midnight so I can't study. What am I supposed to do? Give me a break!"

Appeal to pity can also be used to defend someone the manipulator identifies with, as in "Before you criticize the President, recognize that he has the hardest job in the world. He must stay up late at night, worrying about our well being, trying to find a way to act in the welfare of all of us. The fate (and weight) of the free world rests heavy on his shoulders. How about some consideration for the poor man!" Use of this ploy enables the manipulator to divert attention from those innocent people harmed by a presidential decision or policy.

Dirty Trick # 7

Appeal to Popular Passions⁸

Manipulators, and other masters of counterfeit, subterfuge, and ruse are careful to present themselves as people who share the values and views of *their audience*, especially the "sacred" beliefs of the audience. Everyone has some prejudices and most people feel hatred toward something or someone. Masters of spin stir up prejudices, hatred and irrational fears. They imply that they agree with the audience. They act as if they share their views. They work to convince the audience that their opponent doesn't hold sacred the beliefs they hold sacred.

There are many possible variations on this strategy. One has been called the "Just Plain Folks Fallacy" in which the manipulator says or implies something like this:

"It's good to be back in my home (city/state/country) and with people I can really trust. It's great to be with people who face things squarely, who use their common sense to get things done, people who don't believe in highfalutin ways of thinkin and actin."

Dirty Trick # 8

Appeal to Tradition or Faith ("the tried and true")

This strategy is closely related to the previous one, but emphasizes what seems to have passed the test of time. People are often enslaved by the social customs and norms of their culture, as well as traditional beliefs. What is traditional seems right. "This is the way we have always done things." Manipulators imply that they hold firm to what their audience is familiar and comfortable with. They imply that their opponent will destroy these traditions and faith. They don't worry about whether these traditions

⁸ traditionally called "Argumentum ad Populum"

harm innocent people (like the cruel customs and laws against Blacks before the Civil Rights movement). They create the appearance of being independent in their views while the views they “independently” reach just happen to coincide with those of the crowd. They know that people are usually suspicious of those who go against present social norms and established traditions. They know enough to avoid openly opposing the social customs to which people are unconsciously (and slavishly) bound.

Dirty Trick # 9

Assume a Posture of Righteousness

People begin with the deep-seated belief that they (their nation, their religion, their motivation) is especially pure and ethical. We sometimes bungle things, but we are always pure of heart. “We hold the highest ideals of any country. Of course, we make mistakes and sometimes commit follies. But our intentions are always good. Unlike others in the world we are innocent of guile. We are good hearted.” National and international news (designed for national consumption) is always written with this premise in the background. We may blunder, but we always intend to do the right thing. Manipulators take advantage of this questionable premise by speaking and writing with such assumptions in the background. This posture is related to the fallacy of begging the question and leads to question-begging epithets. See “question begging.”

Dirty Trick # 10

Attack the person (and not the argument)⁹

When the opponent makes reasonable arguments, manipulators ignore those arguments and instead find a way to personally attack the reasoner. Name-calling (even mud slinging) often works (depending on how you do it). The spin artist knows what a particular audience will reject and insinuates that his opponent supports those *terrible* things. For example, the opponent might be labeled a communist or an atheist. Or it might be said of him that he supports terrorism, or is soft on crime. This strategy is sometimes called “poisoning the well.” It leads to the audience dismissing an opponent in a sweeping way — no matter what the opponent says in his defense. Of course, the spin artist knows the importance of correctly reading the audience to make sure that he doesn’t go too far. He realizes that the more subtle he can be, the more effective his manipulation will be.

⁹ traditionally called “Argumentum ad Hominem”

Dirty Trick # 11

Beg the Question¹⁰

One easy way to prove a point is to assume it in the first place. Consider this example:

“Well, what form of government do you want, a government by liberal do-gooders ready to spend your hard-earned dollars or a government led by business minds that understand how to live within a tight budget and generate jobs that put people to work?”

This statement includes the following assumptions that should not be taken for granted:

1. that a liberal government would spend money unwisely.
2. that business people know how to live within a tight budget and generate jobs that put people to work.

One variation on this fallacy has been called “question-begging epithets,” the use of words or phrases that prejudge an issue by the way the issue is put. For example, “Shall we defend freedom and democracy or cave in to terrorism and tyranny?” By putting the question in this way we avoid having to talk about uncomfortable questions like: “But are we really advancing human freedom? Are we really spreading democracy (or just extending our power, our control, our dominance, our access to foreign markets)?” Pay close attention to the words people use when articulating the “facts” with respect to an issue. They will often choose words that presuppose the correctness of their position on an issue.

Dirty Trick # 12

Call For Perfection (Demand impossible conditions)

Your opponent wants you to agree to X, and you realize you can't argue against X without losing credit in the eyes of the audience. Fine, agree to X, but only under the following conditions... “Yes, we do want a democracy, but only when we can have a TRUE DEMOCRACY and that means this and that and that will have to be changed before we consider it.” By making a maneuver of this kind, you divert the audience so that they do not discover that, in fact, you have no intention whatsoever of allowing X to take place. This is similar to dirty trick #32, raising “nothing but objections.”

¹⁰ traditionally called “Petitio Principii”

Dirty Trick # 13

Create a False Dilemma (the Great Either/Or)

A true dilemma occurs when we are forced to choose between two equally unsatisfactory alternatives. A false dilemma occurs when we are persuaded that we have only two, equally unsatisfactory choices, when we really have more than two possibilities available to us. Consider the following claim: "Either we are going to lose the war on terrorism or we will have to give up some of our traditional freedoms and rights."

People are often ready to accept a false dilemma because few feel comfortable with complexity and nuanced distinctions. They like sweeping absolutes. They want clear and simple choices. So, those skilled in manipulating people, face them with false dilemmas (one alternative of which is the one the manipulator wants them to choose, the other alternative clearly unacceptable). They present arguments in *black or white* form. For example, "You are either for us or against us. You either support democracy and freedom or terrorism and tyranny." They realize that only a small minority of people will respond to such a false dilemma with the observation: "But these are not our only choices. In between the extremes of A and Z are options B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K ..."

Dirty Trick # 14

Devise Analogies (and Metaphors) That Support Your View (even if they are misleading or "false").

An analogy or metaphor is a comparison that is not literally true. Consider, "don't you think it is about time for us to SLAP DOWN those judges who are SOFT on crime!" Here the two phrases in CAPS are used metaphorically. They are not literally intended. They are metaphors attractive to many people whose information about the criminal justice system principally comes from "cops and robbers" television shows and sensationalized stories in the mass media.

To win arguments, then, manipulators use comparisons that make them look good and their opponent look bad: "You are treating me like my father used to treat me! He was so unfair, and so are you." Or, "The way you are treating me is like kicking a horse when he is down. Can't you see I have had a hard day?!" The analogies and metaphors that work depend in part on the prejudices and beliefs of the audience. This means understanding the world view of the audience, as well as the root metaphors underlying them. For example, if manipulators are trying to influence someone with a religious world view, they are more likely to be successful using religious metaphors and analogies. Of course, the skilled manipulator knows that when talking to a fundamentalist Christian, it is a mistake to choose metaphors from the Koran.

Dirty Trick # 15

Question Your Opponent's Conclusions

The manipulator wants to lead the audience to accept his conclusions. He wants the audience to reject the conclusions or interpretations of his opponent. If he remembers the Latin phrase "non-sequitur" which means, literally, "It does not follow," he can accuse his opponent of being illogical and call into question his opponent's reasoning. As soon as his opponent asserts a conclusion, the manipulator can say:

"Wait a minute. That does not follow! Your conclusion does not follow from your premises. First you said "X" and now you are saying "Y." How did you get from X to Y? How can you justify such a leap? What you say is not logical. You haven't proven Y, only X."

Through this strategy, the manipulator can obscure any legitimate points made by the opponent. At the same time, he himself will seem to be logical and dispassionate.

Dirty Trick # 16

Create Misgivings: Where There's Smoke, There's Fire

The manipulator knows that once serious charges are made against a person, it may be difficult if not impossible for the accused to clear away the suspicion that there must have been *something* to the charge.

Lingering suspicions may destroy a person's chance to maintain his honor in the public eye. Rumors take on a life of their own. This is therefore one of the foulest of the 44 foul ways to win an argument.

During the McCarthy era many families, friendships, and careers were destroyed, because of the power of rumor and the "where there is smoke, there is fire" mentality. Senator McCarthy and his Committee on Un-American Activities would drag people before a public tribunal and imply that if they truly loved the country they would cooperate with the committee by giving them the names of persons with left-leaning views. When their request was refused, a vast television audience would draw the conclusion that the "uncooperative" citizens were communists and therefore, "Un-American." Most people who elected to challenge the Committee On Un-American Activities lost their jobs; their families were ostracized; and their children mocked and bullied at school. Most were blackballed and could no longer find employment in their profession.

Of course, this making of perverse charges can often be done off the record, in private conversations. Once the rumor is launched, there is no need to do more. People love to spread stories: "Of course, I don't believe it, but did you know that there has been some talk of Jack beating his wife and children? Ugly, isn't it?"

When this trick is used by governmental officials, it is usually called spreading “disinformation” (false charges that the government knows will be believed). For example, planting stories about “atrocities” of one country (which never in fact occurred) is very effective for validating an aggressive attack by another country. Hitler used this strategy effectively. The US government has often spread disinformation — for example, to justify sending Marines into Central or South American Countries to depose one government and put a more “friendly” government into power. The fact that these stories will be discredited years later is of no consequence, of course, to the fabricators of such stories. Disinformation often works. The discrediting of it is usually too late to matter. Years later, people don't seem to care.

Since most people think in simplistic ways, manipulators and politicians can often get them to reject someone simply by mentioning something about the person that seems inappropriate or that goes against social conventions. For example, “Kevin has already admittedly smoked marijuana. That tells us a lot about him!” Or, “look at that teenage girl wearing that skimpy top. I guess we know what she is after.”

Dirty Trick # 17

Create A Straw Man

Manipulators know the importance of making their opponents look bad. Whatever the views of the opponent, a skilled spin master can make the opponent appear to take another, far less believable, view. The trick of misrepresenting someone's views to gain an advantage is sometimes called creating a “strawman.” A “straw” man is literally not real, though it may look like it is. A strawman argument, then, is a false or misleading representation of someone's reasoning.

Suppose someone wanted to reform our criminal justice system (so that fewer innocent people were wrongfully convicted and thrown into prison). His opponent may well retort with the following strawman argument: “So I guess what you want is to free all criminals and leave us even more threatened than we are now!” Of course, no one said or wants that, so he is arguing against a “straw” man. By misrepresenting a person's position and presenting it in a form that people will reject, he successfully uses the “strawman” strategy. Of course, in addition to misrepresenting the opponent's argument, he can also claim that the opponent is misrepresenting his. In this case, the spinmaster can then claim that it is the opponent that is attacking a “strawman.” In any case, the manipulator wants to ensure that the best representation of his reasoning is compared with the worse possible representation of his opponent's reasoning. Manipulators make their opponent look bad at the same time they make their own case look good.

Imagine that an environmentalist makes the following argument:

"Each of us must do our part to reduce the amount of pollution we are creating on the planet. The automobile industry, for example, needs to find alternative forms of fuel, cleaner forms of fuel. We need to move away from gasoline as our primary automobile fuel source. Otherwise, our planet will needlessly continue to suffer."

A manipulator who is seeking to discredit the environmentalist might misrepresent him as follows:

"What my opponent is really arguing for is more BIG GOVERNMENT. He wants to take away your right to choose and give bureaucracy more and more power over your life. Don't let him get away with it."

Dirty Trick # 18

Deny or Defend Inconsistencies

Manipulators know one looks bad when appearing to be inconsistent, saying one thing and doing another, or sometimes supporting X and sometimes attacking it. When caught in a contradiction, the manipulator has two choices. He can either deny that there is any contradiction at all ("I didn't really say that!") or he can admit the contradiction and defend it as a justifiable change ("The world is changing and we must change with it"). The fact is that human life and society are shot through with contradictions and inconsistencies. Those who have the most integrity are those who admit to contradictions and inconsistencies and work to minimize them. Manipulators work hard to cover them up.

Dirty Trick # 19

Demonize His Side, Sanitize Yours

Most people are not sophisticated. To manipulate them into accepting your side, systematically use "good" words to characterize it, while you systematically use "negative" words to characterize your opponent. You believe in democracy, freedom, stability, compromise, fairness, strength, peace, protection, security, civilization, human rights, sovereignty, reformation, being open, defending the innocent, honor, God's comfort, normalcy, pride, independence, a mission, facing hardship, ... Your opponent believes in tyranny, suppression, conflict, terrorism, aggression, violence, subversion, barbarism, fanaticism, the spread of chaos, attacking the innocent, extremism, dictatorship, plots, cunning, cruelty, destruction.

A variation on this strategy consists in sanitizing your motives, by explaining your reasons to be "righteous." "I am not motivated by profit or greed. I do not want to enhance my power and influence. I don't want to control and dominate. Certainly not. I want to spread the cause of freedom, to share the good life, the blessings of democracy (bla, bla, bla)." You obscure your real motives (that are often selfish and based on considerations of money and power) while playing up motives that sound

good and make you appear high-minded. This strategy is sometimes called "finding the good reason" and includes the practice of giving "lip service" to high-minded principles (asserting them loudly, while ignoring them in practice).

Dirty Trick # 20

Evade Questions, Gracefully

Spin artists who face questions from an audience learn how to predict most of the hard questions they will face and how to evade them, with skill and grace. One way to evade a hard question is to answer it with a joke that deflects the question. Another is to give a truistic answer ("How long will the troops have to remain in country X?" Answer: "As long as it is necessary and not one day longer.") A third is to give an answer so long and detailed that you manage by the length of your answer to slide from one question (a hard one) to another question (an easy one). Manipulators do not directly answer questions when direct answers would get them into trouble or force them to accept a responsibility they want to avoid facing. They learn to use vagueness, jokes, diversions, and truisms to their advantage.

Dirty Trick # 21

Flatter Your Audience

"It's good to be talking to an audience of people with good old fashion common sense and real insights into our social problems." "An intelligent person such as you will not be taken in by..." People are always receptive to flattery. Sometimes, however, one has to be subtle or the audience may suspect you of manipulating them. Most politicians are highly proficient in the art of flattery. Their objective is to win over their audience. They want to lower the defenses of their audience, to minimize any tendency they might have to think critically about what is said.

Dirty Trick # 22

Hedge What You Say

Manipulators often hide behind words, refusing to commit themselves or give direct answers. This allows them to retreat if necessary. If caught leaving out important information, they can then come up with some excuse for not being forthcoming in the first place. Or, if closely questioned, they can qualify their position so that no one can prove them wrong. In other words, when pressed, they hedge. To be an effective manipulator, you must be an effective weasel. You must weasel out of your mistakes, cover up your errors, and guard what you say whenever possible.

Dirty Trick # 23

Ignore the Evidence¹¹

In order to avoid considering evidence that might cause them to change their position, manipulators often ignore evidence. Usually they ignore the evidence in order to avoid having to consider it in their own minds, because it threatens their belief system or vested interests. Imagine a close-minded Christian questioning whether it is possible for an atheist to live an ethical life (lacking the guidance of the bible). If such a person were confronted with examples of atheists who have lived self-sacrificing, compassionate, lives, he would be uncomfortable in his view. He would probably find a way to put the subject out of his mind to avoid the implications of the evidence.

Dirty Trick # 24

Ignore the Main Point¹²

Manipulators know that if you can't win a point, you should divert your audience from it and focus on another point (a point not relevant to the original issue). Those skilled in this practice know how to do it so that their audience doesn't notice the shift.

Dirty Trick # 25

Attack Evidence (That Undermines Your Case)

When a manipulator cannot successfully dodge consideration of evidence that does not support his case, he often attacks that evidence. You can see this in the U.S. government's refusal to accept the fact that Iraq did not have a stockpile of weapons of mass destruction (before it waged war against Iraq). The government had no hard evidence to support its position that Iraq had the weapons, so it tried to manufacture the evidence through flagrant stretches of the imagination. No evidence could convince the government it was wrong (because it wasn't willing to consider the fact that it might be wrong). These dodges could also be covered under the fallacy of double standard.

Dirty Trick # 26

Insist Loudly on a Minor Point

Manipulators know that a good way to distract most people (if it looks like they are losing the argument) is to insist loudly on some minor point. Because most people think superficially, few will notice that the point is minor, especially if they are emotionally attached to it.

Thus, for example, people often miss big issues when the media focus loudly on small ones (as if they were big ones). The problem of malnutrition and starvation in the world is given little coverage in the media, except on special

¹¹ traditionally called Apiorism (invincible ignorance)

¹² traditionally called "Ignoratio elenchu"

occasions (like during a drought or after a Hurricane). At the same time, the fact that a small country is refusing to do what our government wants it to do is treated as an issue of great significance (as if our government had a right to impose its will on other governments).

Dirty Trick # 27

Use the Hard-Cruel-World Argument

(to justify doing what is usually considered unethical).

We often say that noble ends do not justify foul means, but do we believe it? When engaging in unethical practices (like assassinations, forced detentions, and torture) government spokespersons often use the "It's a hard cruel world" argument in defense.

When individuals or countries gain a lot of power, they soon come to believe that they should be able to do pretty much what they want to do. They do this by convincing themselves that their ends are always noble and just, that the only negative things they do in the world are forced on them by evil others who do not share their noble values.

Manipulators, then, often win arguments by insisting that they are being forced to use the means they deeply wish they could avoid, but, alas, it is a hard cruel world.

For example, "We don't want war. We are forced into it." "We don't want unemployment, but free enterprise demands it." "If we give resources to people who haven't worked for them, they will become lazy and we will end up in a totalitarian communist state." "We don't want the CIA to engage in assassination, torture, disinformation, or dirty tricks of any kind, but, unfortunately, we are forced to use these tactics to defend freedom and democracy in the world."

Dirty Trick # 28

Make Sweeping Glittering Generalizations

Manipulators, con artists, spin masters, and politicians will use any generalizations that support their case and that their audience will accept, regardless of whether they have sufficient evidence to support those generalizations. They make positive generalizations that people will readily support, generalizations, for example, about "our" or "their" devotion to God, country, patriotism, family, and free enterprise. Remember that their generalizations are deliberately chosen to coincide with the thinking of their audience. Of course, these manipulators keep their generalizations vague so that they can weasel out of them if necessary.

Dirty Trick #29

Make Much of Any Inconsistencies in Your Opponent's Position

There is inconsistency in the best of us. Everyone sometimes fails to practice what he preaches. Everyone sometimes falls into a double standard. Manipulators exploit any inconsistencies they can find in their opponents' arguments. They are quick to make the charge of hypocrisy, even when they are guilty of flagrant, deep, and multiple forms of hypocrisy themselves, hypocrisy that bothers them not at all.

Dirty Trick # 30

Make Your Opponent Look Ridiculous ("Lost in the Laugh")

Manipulators look for ways to make their opponent, or his position, look ridiculous (and therefore funny). People like a good laugh and they especially like laughing at views that seem threatening to them. A good joke is almost always well received, for it relieves the audience of the responsibility to think seriously about what is making them uncomfortable. Manipulators measure their audience to make sure that their joke does not sound like sour grapes.

Dirty Trick # 31

Oversimplify the Issue

Since most people are uncomfortable making sense of deep or subtle arguments, manipulators oversimplify the issue to their advantage. "I don't care what the statistics tell us about the so-called "abuse" of prisoners, the real issue is whether or not we are going to be tough on crime. Save your sympathy for the victims of crime, not for the criminals." The fact being ignored is that the abuse of prisoners is itself a crime. Unfortunately, people with a certain (over-simple) mind-set do not care about criminal behavior that victimizes "criminals." After all (they think to themselves) the world divides into good guys and bad guys and sometimes the good guys have to do bad things to bad guys. They think the bad guys deserve bad treatment. By oversimplifying the issue, they don't have to deal with what is wrong in our treatment of prisoners.

Dirty Trick # 32

Raise Nothing But Objections

Your opponent is giving good reasons to accept an argument, but the fact is your mind is made up and nothing will change it (of course you don't want to admit that your mind is closed). Skilled manipulators respond with objection after objection after objection. As their opponents answer one objection, they move on to another. The unspoken mindset of the manipulator is "No matter what my opponent says (in giving me reasons), I will keep thinking of objections (the fact is that nothing whatsoever will convince me of the validity of his view)."

Dirty Trick # 33

Rewrite History (Have It Your Way)

The worst deeds and atrocities can disappear from historical accounts (or be made to appear minor) while fantasies and fabrications can be made to look like hard facts. This is what happens in what is sometimes called “patriotic history.” The writing of a distorted form of history is justified by love of country and often defended by the charge of negativity (“You always want to focus on what is wrong with us! What about what is right about us?!”). The fact is that human memory is continually working to re-describe events of the past in such a way as to exonerate itself and condemn its detractors. Historical writing often follows suit, especially in the writing of textbooks for schools. So, in telling a story about the past, manipulators feel free to distort the past in whatever ways they believe they can get away with. As always, the skilled manipulator is ready with (self-justifying) excuses.

Dirty Trick # 34

Seek Your Vested Interests

The manipulator attacks his opponent’s motivation, but insists that his motives are pure. He covers his true motives (i.e. whatever is in his vested interest) by expressing high ideals (freedom, democracy, justice, the American way, which he in fact ignores). When manipulators are seeking their advantage, and their opponent calls them on it, manipulators either deny the charge (usually indignantly) or counter attack by saying that everyone has a right to protect his interests. If pressed further, they may use a “you-do-it-too” defense.

Dirty Trick # 35

Shift the Ground

When a manipulator senses he is losing the argument, he does not give in. He shifts the ground to something else! Sometimes he does this by going back and forth between different meanings of the same word. So if a person says of another that she isn’t educated because she isn’t insightful and has very little knowledge, the manipulator may just shift the ground, saying something like, “Of course she’s educated! Look how many years of school she completed. If that’s not being educated I don’t know what is!”

Dirty Trick # 36

Shift the Burden of Proof

The burden of proof refers to which party in a dispute has the responsibility to prove what he asserts. For example, in a criminal court, the prosecutor has the responsibility to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The defense does not have to prove innocence. Manipulators never want to take on the burden of proof for what they assert. They therefore develop skill in shifting the burden of proof to their opponents. “Wait a minute

before I have to prove that the invasion of Iraq was justified, you need to prove that it wasn't." In point of fact any country that invades another needs to have powerful evidence to justify that act. No country has the obligation to prove that it ought not to be invaded. By international law, the burden of proof is on the other side, the side that initiates violence.

Suppose a manipulator questions your patriotism. You ask him what evidence exists to show you are not. He tries shifting the burden of proof: "Wait a minute, what have you done to show your loyalty to the country. Don't you have socialist views? Aren't you against free enterprise? Didn't you protest the Viet Nam War?" All of these are fallacious attempts to shift the burden of proof.

Dirty Trick # 37

Spin, Spin, Spin

In an editorial in the Wall Street Journal (May 7, 2004) on the prominence of the "spin game" in the media, Daniel Henniger says: "The media world we inhabit is without exception a world of 'spin.' Most people having given up on getting a set of unadorned facts, align themselves with whichever spin outlet seems comfortable." The fact is that it is highly doubtful that "most" people see through the media reliance on spin, since they are so commonly victims of its power. But no skilled manipulator (spin master) will underestimate the power of spin in manipulating consumers of the "news." The manipulator must continually foster the spin that obscures viewpoints he opposes, while at the same time positively representing his own viewpoint (the one he wants the audience to accept).

As a critical consumer one must become aware of the virtual omnipresence of spin and selectivity of coverage in the media, in order to juxtapose opposing spins and decide for oneself which facts are most significant and which interpretations most plausible. The critical consumer expects the media to put spin on *all articles* of news in keeping with the prejudices of the audience they "serve." He must consider alternative ways of looking at the issues in the news media, alternative ways of thinking about what is being presented, what is most significant about it, and how it is best represented.

Dirty Trick # 38

Talk in Vague Generalities

It is hard to prove people wrong when they can't be pinned down. So instead of focusing on particulars, manipulators talk in the most vague terms they can get away with. This fallacy is popular with politicians. For example, "Forget what the spineless liberals say. It's time to be tough: tough on criminals, tough on terrorists, and tough on those who belittle our country." They make sure they don't use specifics that might cause people to question what they are doing (for example, who exactly you are going to be tough on, and what exactly do you intend to do with these

people when you get "tough" with them. Is torture OK? What about humiliation? What about unlimited detention without any charge registered against them? What about placing them in tiny cells without a toilet for days at a time? What about assassination?)

When people use this strategy against you, ask them to give you specific examples of what they mean. Ask for definitions of key terms. Then insist that they show how their definitions are applied in the specific cases. In other words, don't allow them to get away with vague generalities.

Dirty Trick # 39

Talk Double Talk

Let's face it - we often do what we accuse our opponents of doing. But of course we don't want to admit it because that would hurt our cause.

Double talk can be a powerful mode of attack or defense. In double talk (sometimes called doublespeak) we use a positive word or phrase when we do something and a negative word when our opponents do precisely the same thing.

For example, before World War II, the U.S. government called the department that wages war the "War Department." After the war, they decided to call it the "Defense Department." This change has come about because the government does not want to admit that it starts wars. Rather it wants to manipulate people into thinking that it only *defends* the country against *aggressive* others. In short, politically, the word "defense" sells better than the word "war."

When a citizen of a government we are in conflict with secretly gives us information about that enemy, we label it a "brave" and "courageous" act. When someone in our country tells our secrets to that same enemy, we indict that person as a "traitor."¹³ We are clever; you are cunning. We support freedom fighters; you support terrorists. We set up holding centers; you set up concentration camps. We strategically withdraw; you retreat. We are religious; you are fanatic. We are determined; you are pig-headed.

There are literally thousands of words that fall into good-when-I-do-it-bad-when-you-do doublets. Most people are not skilled in detecting doublespeak.

¹³ When innocent people on our side are killed (without even realizing they were in danger), they are called "heroes." When people on the side of our enemy deliberately sacrifice their lives to die for what they believe, we call them "cowards" or "fanatics." We would never, of course, label anyone on our side a "fanatic." Interestingly, when the U.S. government trained Bin Ladin and other Muslim fundamentalists to use terror tactics in fighting the Russians in Afghanistan, we called these fundamentalists "freedom fighters." Now, these same people, because they are fighting us, have been transformed into "terrorists."

Dirty Trick # 40

Tell Big Lies

Most people lie about small things but would be afraid to lie about big things. But manipulators know that if you insist on a lie long enough, many people will believe you — especially if you have the resources of mass media to air your lie.

All skilled manipulators are focused on *what you can get people to believe*, not on what is true or false. They know that the human mind does not naturally seek the truth; it seeks comfort, security, personal confirmation and vested interest.

In fact, people often don't want to know the truth, especially truths that are painful, that expose their contradictions and inconsistencies, that reveal what they don't want to know about themselves or their country.

There are many manipulators highly skilled in telling "big" lies and thus in making those lies seem true. For example, if one studies the history of the CIA, one can document any number of unethical deeds that have been covered up by lies (see any volume of *Covert Action Quarterly* for documentation of the misdeeds and dirty tricks of the CIA in every region of the world).¹⁴ Virtually all of these unethical acts were officially denied at the time of their commission.

Dirty Trick # 41

Treat Abstract Words and Symbols As If They Were Real Things¹⁵

Manipulators know that most people are not linguistically sophisticated. Most people do not reflect on the relation between the way we use language and concrete particulars in the world. They do not deliberately strip off language from specific events and deeds and consider a range of interpretations for making sense of what is happening in the world. Most see their view of the world as accurately reflecting what is going on in the world, even when that view is highly distorted. Abstractions are not abstractions in their minds, but realities. Consider the following examples:

- Freedom supports us.
- Democracy calls.
- Justice insists that we...
- The flag marches on.
- Science says...

Note that in all of these examples, an abstract idea is given a life of its own when coupled with an action verb. How, for example, can a flag march? It's not possible. But people are swayed by this colorful, though highly misleading, use of language.

¹⁴ info@covertactionquarterly.org

¹⁵ Traditionally called "Reification."

Dirty Trick # 42

Throw In A Red Herring (or two)

In this strategy, manipulators divert from the issue by focusing on what is irrelevant (but emotionally loaded). Suppose that a manipulator can't refute the reasoning of his opponent. He doesn't bother trying. Instead, he throws in an emotionally charged issue that will distract the audience from the reasoning of his opponent. Consider this example. The manipulator's opponent has said that the oceans of the world are rapidly dying due largely to human activity, specifically industry waste. Instead of arguing against the position taken by his opponent, the manipulator throws in a "red herring." He says, "What we really need to concern ourselves with is all of the government regulations facing industry today, and all of the jobs that will be lost if bureaucratic regulations continue to grow. We need a country where the people have jobs and their children have opportunities to grow and reach their potential!" How is this retort relevant to the oceans dying?? It's not. It's a red herring thrown in to avoid the issue altogether.

Dirty Trick # 43

Throw in Some Statistics.

People are impressed by numbers, especially precise numbers. So whenever they can, manipulators quote statistics in their favor, even if the source is questionable. Their audience is usually be impressed. By the way, did you know that 78% of the students who read this guide raise their grade point average by 1.33 grade levels within two semesters? It's even higher at your school!

Dirty Trick # 44

Use Double Standards (Whenever You Can)

Most audiences use double standards. One standard for us. Another standard for them. We can't abide countries developing nuclear weapons (except for us and all our friends). We condemn aggression (except when we are the aggressors). We can't tolerate torture and human rights violations by our enemies (although, alas, sometimes we are forced to do these things ourselves).

44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument

Accuse Your Opponent of Doing What He is Accusing You of
(or worse)

Accuse Him of Sliding Down A Slippery Slope
(that leads to disaster)

Appeal to Authority

Appeal to Experience

Appeal to Fear

Appeal to Pity (or sympathy)

Appeal to Popular Passions

Appeal to Tradition or Faith
("the tried and true")

Assume a Posture of Righteousness

Attack the person
(and not the argument)

Beg the Question

Call For Perfection
(Demand impossible conditions)

Create a False Dilemma
(the Great Either/Or)

Devise Analogies (and Metaphors)
That Support Your View
(even if they are misleading or "false")

Question Your Opponent's Conclusions

Create Misgivings: Where There's Smoke, There's Fire

Create A Straw Man

Deny or Defend Your Inconsistencies

Demonize His Side Sanitize Yours

Evade Questions, Gracefully

Flatter Your Audience

Hedge What You Say

Ignore the Evidence

Ignore the Main Point

Attack Evidence
(That Undermines Your Case)

Insist Loudly on a Minor Point

Use the Hard-Cruel-World Argument
(to justify doing what is usually considered unethical)

Make (Sweeping) Glittering Generalizations

Make Much of Any Inconsistencies in Your Opponent's Position

Make Your Opponent Look Ridiculous ("Lost in the Laugh")

Oversimplify the Issue

Raise Nothing But Objections

Rewrite History (Have It Your Way)

Seek Your Vested Interests

Shift the Ground

Shift the Burden of Proof

Spin, Spin, Spin

Talk in Vague Generalities

Talk Double Talk

Tell Big Lies

Treat Abstract Words and Symbols As if They Were Real Things

Throw In A Red Herring (or two)

Throw in Some Statistics

Use Double Standards
(whenever you can)

Fallacy Detection: Analyzing a Speech from the Past

Now test yourself on the fallacies you have just read. Read through the following excerpts (from a historically important political speech, a speech whose persuasive power won a national election in 1897). See how many of the *44 foul ways to win an argument* this writer used.

Before reading the speech, consider the following description by James Truslow Adams¹⁶, American historian, of the national mood at the time:

...powerful business interests were chafing because we did not annex Hawaii. Senator Lodge had his eye on Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Roosevelt was anxious for something to do with his ships...Mr Pulitzer, owner of *The World*, remarked "that he rather liked the idea of a war — not a big one — but one that would arouse interest and give him a chance to gauge the reflex in circulation figures."...a group of powerful business men and politicians bent on imperial expansion; a group of newspapers callously searching for sensational news which could be translated into circulation; and a shiny new gun in our hands of which we were proud (pp. 81-82).

Now imagine yourself a voter in the U.S. in 1898 listening to the following excerpts from a speech, *The March of the Flag*, given by Albert J. Beveridge (who would soon become U.S. Senator). Using the chart in the right

44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument

Accuse Your Opponent of Doing What He is Accusing You of
Accuse Him of Sliding Down A Slippery Slope
Appeal to Authority
Appeal to Experience
Appeal to Fear
Appeal to Pity (or sympathy)
Appeal to Popular Passions
Appeal to Tradition or Faith
Assume a Posture of Righteousness
Attack the person
Beg the Question
Call For Perfection
Create a False Dilemma
Devise Analogies (and Metaphors)
That Support Your View
Question Your Opponent's Conclusions
Create Misgivings:
Where There's Smoke, There's Fire
Create A Straw Man
Deny or Defend Your Inconsistencies
Demonize His Side Sanitize Yours
Evade Questions, Gracefully
Flatter Your Audience
Hedge What You Say
Ignore the Evidence
Ignore the Main Point
Attack Evidence
Insist Loudly on a Minor Point
Use the Hard-Cruel-World Argument
Make Sweeping Glittering Generalizations
Make Much of Any Inconsistencies
in Your Opponent's Position
Make Your Opponent Look Ridiculous
Oversimplify the Issue
Raise Nothing But Objections
Rewrite History
Seek Your Vested Interests
Shift the Ground.

¹⁶ Adams, J. 1932. *History of the United States*, vol. 4

hand margin on the previous page, read through the excerpts indicating which of the manipulative strategies are being used in this speech. Perhaps the best way to do this is to write in the margins the fallacies you notice as you read through these passages.

The Opening:

Fellow citizens: It is a noble land that God has given us; a land that can feed and clothe the world; a land whose coast lines would enclose half the countries of Europe; a land set like a sentinel between the two imperial oceans of the globe, a greater England with a nobler destiny. It is a mighty people that He has planted on this soil; a people sprung from the most masterful blood of history; a people perpetually revitalized by the virile, man-producing working folk of all the earth; a people imperial by virtue of their power, by right of their institutions, by authority of their heaven-directed purposes — the propagandists and not the misers of liberty. It is a glorious history our God has bestowed on His chosen people; a history whose keynote was struck by the Liberty Bell; a history heroic with faith in our mission and our future; a history of statesmen who flung the boundaries of the republic out into unexplored lands and savage wildernesses; a history of soldiers who carried the flag across the blazing deserts and through the ranks of hostile mountains, even to the gates of sunset; a history of a multiplying people who overran a continent in half a century; a history of prophets who saw the consequences of evils inherited from the past, and of martyrs who died to save us from them; a history divinely logical, in the process of whose tremendous reasoning we find ourselves today.

Beveridge's definition of the issue:

Therefore, in this campaign, the question is larger than a party question. It is an American question. It is a world question. Shall the American people continue their resistless march toward the commercial supremacy of the world? Shall free institutions broaden their blessed reign as the children of liberty wax in strength, until the empire of our principles is established over the hearts of all mankind?

Have we no mission to perform, no duty to discharge to our fellow man? Has the Almighty Father endowed us with gifts beyond our deserts and marked us as the people of His peculiar favor, merely to rot in our own selfishness, as men and nations must who take cowardice for their companion and self for their deity — as China has, as India has, as Egypt has?

Shall we be as the man who had one talent and hid it, or as he who had ten talents and used them until they grew to riches? And shall we reap the reward that waits on our discharge of our high duty as the sovereign power of earth; shall we occupy new markets for what our farmers raise, new markets for what

our factories make, new markets for what our merchants sell — aye, and, please God, new markets for what our ships shall carry?

...Shall our commerce be encouraged until, with Oceanica, the Orient, and the world, American trade shall be the imperial trade of the entire globe?

...we must deal from this day on with nations greedy of every market we are to invade; nations with statesmen trained in craft, nations with ships and guns and money and men...The world still rubs its eyes from its awakening to the resistless power and sure destiny of this republic.

Beveridge refers to the Spanish-American War as:

...the most holy ever waged by one nation against another — a war for civilization, a war for a permanent peace, a war which, under God, although we knew it not, swung open to the republic the portals of the commence of the world.

His view of the history of U.S. conquest:

... God bless the soldiers of 1898, children of the heroes of 1861, descendants of the heroes of 1776! In the halls of history they will stand side by side with those elder sons of glory, and the opposition to the government at Washington shall not deny them.

No! They shall not be robbed of the honor due them, nor shall the republic be robbed of what they won for their country. For William McKinley is continuing the policy that Jefferson began, Monroe continued, Seward advanced, Grant promoted, Harrison championed, and the growth of the republic has demanded.

44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument

Accuse Your Opponent of Doing What He is Accusing You of
 Accuse Him of Sliding Down A Slippery Slope
 Appeal to Authority
 Appeal to Experience
 Appeal to Fear
 Appeal to Pity (or sympathy)
 Appeal to Popular Passions
 Appeal to Tradition or Faith
 Assume a Posture of Righteousness
 Attack the person
 Beg the Question
 Call For Perfection
 Create a False Dilemma
 Devise Analogies (and Metaphors)
 That Support Your View
 Question Your Opponent's Conclusions
 Create Misgivings:
 Where There's Smoke, There's Fire
 Create A Straw Man
 Deny or Defend Your Inconsistencies
 Demonize His Side Sanitize Yours
 Evade Questions, Gracefully
 Flatter Your Audience
 Hedge What You Say
 Ignore the Evidence
 Ignore the Main Point
 Attack Evidence
 Insist Loudly on a Minor Point
 Use the Hard-Cruel-World Argument
 Make Sweeping Glittering Generalizations
 Make Much of Any Inconsistencies in Your Opponent's Position
 Make Your Opponent Look Ridiculous
 Oversimplify the Issue
 Raise Nothing But Objections
 Rewrite History
 Seek Your Vested Interests
 Shift the Ground.

His view of our conquering other countries:

Hawaii is ours; Puerto Rico is to be ours; at the prayer of the people Cuba will finally be ours; in the islands of the East, even to the gates of Asia, coaling stations are to be ours; at the very least the flag of a liberal government is to float over the Philippines, and I pray God it may be the banner that Taylor unfurled in Texas and Fremont carried to the coast — the stars and stripes of glory.

Concerning the objection that subjugating other countries conflicts with the right of a people to self-determination, he says:

The opposition tells us that we ought not to govern a people without their consent. I answer: the rule of liberty, that all just government derives its authority from the consent of the governed, applies only to those who are capable of self-government. I answer: We govern the Indians without their consent, we govern our territories without their consent, we govern our children without their consent. I answer: How do you assume that our government would be without their consent?

Beveridge believes that people would welcome our domination:

Would not the people of the Philippines prefer the just, humane, civilizing government of this republic to the savage, bloody rule of pillage and extortion from which we have rescued them?

He views other countries as motivated by power and greed. He sees us as guided by the interests of the people we conquer:

Shall we turn these people back to the reeking hands from which we have taken them? Shall we abandon them to their fate, with the wolves of conquest all about them — with Germany, Russia, France, even Japan, hungering for them? Shall we turn these people back to the reeking hands from which we have taken them? Shall we abandon them to their fate, with the wolves of conquest all about them?

Concerning the objection that countries have a right to rule themselves:

...[To give them self-rule] would be like giving a razor to a babe and telling it to shave itself. It would be like giving a typewriter to an Eskimo and telling him to publish one of the great dailies of the world.

Will you affirm by your vote that you are an infidel to American vigor and power and practical sense? Or, that we are of the ruling race of the world; that ours is the blood of government; ours the heart of dominion; our the brains and genius of administration.

Distance is no objection to our conquering foreign lands in keeping with our destiny, for technological development is conspiring with us: Steam joins us; electricity joins us, the very elements are in league with our destiny. Cuba not contiguous! Hawaii and the Philippines not contiguous! Our navy will make them contiguous. Dewey and Sampson and Schley have made them contiguous, and American speed, American guns, American heart and brain and nerve will keep them contiguous forever. Think of the thousands of Americans who will pour into Hawaii and Puerto Rico when the republic's laws cover those islands with justice and safety! Think of the tens of thousands of Americans who will invade mine and field and forest in the Philippines when a liberal government, protected and controlled by this republic, if not the government of the republic itself, shall establish order and equity there! Think of the hundreds of thousands of American who will build a soap-and-water, common-school civilization of energy and industry in Cuba, when a government of law replaces the double reign of anarchy and tyranny. Think of the prosperous millions that empress of islands will support when, obedient to the law of political gravitation, her people ask for the highest honor liberty can bestow, the sacred Order of the Stars and Stripes, the citizenship of the Great Republic!

What does all this mean for every one of us? It means opportunity for all the glorious young manhood of the republic — the most virile, ambitious, impatient, militant

44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument

Accuse Your Opponent of Doing What He is Accusing You of
 Accuse Him of Sliding Down A Slippery Slope
 Appeal to Authority
 Appeal to Experience
 Appeal to Fear
 Appeal to Pity (or sympathy)
 Appeal to Popular Passions
 Appeal to Tradition or Faith
 Assume a Posture of Righteousness
 Attack the person
 Beg the Question
 Call For Perfection
 Create a False Dilemma
 Devise Analogies (and Metaphors)
 That Support Your View
 Question Your Opponent's Conclusions
 Create Misgivings:
 Where There's Smoke, There's Fire
 Create A Straw Man
 Deny or Defend Your Inconsistencies
 Demonize His Side Sanitize Yours
 Evade Questions, Gracefully
 Flatter Your Audience
 Hedge What You Say
 Ignore the Evidence
 Ignore the Main Point
 Attack Evidence
 Insist Loudly on a Minor Point
 Use the Hard-Cruel-World Argument
 Make Sweeping Glittering Generalizations
 Make Much of Any Inconsistencies in Your Opponent's Position
 Make Your Opponent Look Ridiculous
 Oversimplify the Issue
 Raise Nothing But Objections
 Rewrite History
 Seek Your Vested Interests
 Shift the Ground.

manhood the world has ever seen. It means that the resources and the commerce of these immensely rich dominions will be increased as much as American energy is greater than Spanish sloth; for Americans henceforth will monopolize those resources and that commerce.

In Cuba alone there are 15,000,000 acres of forest unacquainted with the ax. There are exhaustless mines of iron. There are priceless deposits of manganese... There are millions of acres yet unexplored... The resources of Puerto Rico have only been trifled with. The riches of the Philippines have hardly been touched by the finger-tips of modern methods.

It means new employment and better wages for every laboring man in the Union. It means higher prices for every bushel of wheat and corn, for every pound of butter and meat, for every item that the farmers of this republic produce. It means active, vigorous, constructive investment of every dollar of moldy and miserly capital in the land.

It means all this tomorrow, and all this forever... The commercial supremacy of the republic means that this nation is to be the sovereign factor in the peace of the world.

For the conflicts of the future are to be conflicts of trade — struggles for markets — commercial wars for existence.

Ah! As our commerce spreads, the flag of liberty will circle the globe, and the highways of the ocean — carrying trade to all mankind — be guarded by the guns of the republic. And, as their thunders salute the flag, benighted people will know that the voice of liberty is speaking, at last, for them; that civilization is dawning, at last, for them — liberty and civilization, those children of Christ's gospel, who follow and never precede the preparing march of commerce.

The American people have the most tremendous tasks of history to perform. They have the mightiest commerce of the world to conduct. They cannot halt their imperial progress of wealth and power and glory and Christian civilization... It is a time to cheer the beloved President of God's chosen people, till the whole world is vocal with American loyalty to the American government.

Fellow Americans we are God's chosen people. Yonder at Bunker Hill and Yorktown His providence was above us. ... We cannot fly from our world duties; it is ours to execute the purpose of a fate that has driven us to be greater than our small intentions. We cannot retreat from any soil where Providence has unfurled our banner; it is ours to save that soil for liberty and civilization. For liberty and civilization and God's promise fulfilled, the flag much hence forth be the symbol and the sign to all mankind — the flag! —

Fallacy Detection: Analyzing a Current Presidential Speech

Now read the speech *We Will Finish the Work of the Fallen* by President George Bush Jr. regarding the state of the war in Iraq on April 13, 2004. Identify any fallacies you think are being used in the speech.

Following is President George Bush's opening statement at a news conference (April 14, 2004) as recorded by The New York Times. The complete lead for the statement is "We Will Finish the Work of the Fallen."

Thank you. Good evening. Before I take your questions, let me speak with the American people about the situation in Iraq. This has been tough weeks in that country. Coalition forces have encountered serious violence in some areas of Iraq. Our military commanders report that this violence is being instigated by three groups. Some remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime along with Islamic militants have attacked coalition forces in the city of Falluja. Terrorists from other countries have infiltrated Iraq to incite and organize attacks.

In the south of Iraq, coalition forces face riots and attacks that are being incited by a radical cleric named al-Sadr. He has assembled some of his supporters into an illegal militia and publicly supported the terrorists groups Hamas and Hezbollah. Al-Sadr's methods of violence and intimidation are widely repudiated by other Iraqi Shia. He's been indicted by Iraqi authorities for the murder of a

44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument

Accuse Your Opponent of Doing What He is Accusing You of
Accuse Him of Sliding Down A Slippery Slope
Appeal to Authority
Appeal to Experience
Appeal to Fear
Appeal to Pity (or sympathy)
Appeal to Popular Passions
Appeal to Tradition or Faith
Assume a Posture of Righteousness
Attack the person
Beg the Question
Call For Perfection
Create a False Dilemma
Devise Analogies (and Metaphors)
That Support Your View
Question Your Opponent's Conclusions
Create Misgivings:
Where There's Smoke, There's Fire
Create A Straw Man
Deny or Defend Your Inconsistencies
Demonize His Side Sanitize Yours
Evade Questions, Gracefully
Flatter Your Audience
Hedge What You Say
Ignore the Evidence
Ignore the Main Point
Attack Evidence
Insist Loudly on a Minor Point
Use the Hard-Cruel-World Argument
Make Sweeping Glittering Generalizations
Make Much of Any Inconsistencies in Your Opponent's Position
Make Your Opponent Look Ridiculous
Oversimplify the Issue
Raise Nothing But Objections
Rewrite History
Seek Your Vested Interests
Shift the Ground.

prominent Shia cleric. Although these instigations of violence come from different factions, they share common goals. They want to run us out of Iraq and destroy the democratic hopes of the Iraqi people.

The violence we have seen is a power grab by these extreme and ruthless elements. It's not a civil war. It's not a popular uprising. Most of Iraq is relatively stable. Most Iraqis, by far, reject violence and oppose dictatorship. In forums where Iraqis have met to discuss their political future and in all the proceedings of the Iraqi Governing Council, Iraqis have expressed clear commitments. They want strong protections for individual rights, they want their independence and they want their freedom.

America's commitment to freedom in Iraq is consistent with our ideals and required by our interests. Iraq will either be a peaceful democratic country or it will again be a source of violence, a haven for terror and a threat to America and to the world.

By helping to secure a free Iraq, Americans serving in that country are protecting their fellow citizens. Our nation is grateful to them all and to their families that face hardship and long separation. This weekend at a Fort Hood hospital, I presented a Purple Heart to some of our wounded, had the honor of thanking them on behalf of all Americans. Other men and women have paid an even greater cost. Our nation honors the memory of those who have been killed and we pray that their families will find God's comfort in the midst of their grief. As I've said to those who have lost loved ones: We will finish the work of the fallen.

America's armed forces are performing brilliantly, with all the skill and honor we expect of them. We're constantly reviewing their needs. Troop strength now and in the future is determined by the situation on the ground. If additional forces are needed, I will send them. If additional resources are needed, we will provide them.

The people of our country are united behind our men and women in uniform. And this government will do all that is necessary to assure the success of their historic mission. One central commitment of that mission is the transfer of a sovereignty back to the Iraqi people. We have set a deadline of June 30. It is important that we meet that deadline. As a proud and independent people, Iraqis do not support an indefinite occupation, and neither does America. We're not an imperial power, as nations such as Japan and Germany can attest. We're a liberating power, as nations in Europe and Asia can

attest as well.

America's objective in Iraq is limited and it is firm. We seek an independent, free and secure Iraq. Were the coalition to step back from the June 30 pledge, many Iraqis would question our intentions and feel their hopes betrayed. And those in Iraq who trade in hatred and conspiracy theories would find a larger audience and gain a stronger hand. We will not step back from our pledge. On June 30, Iraqi sovereignty will be placed in Iraqi hands. Sovereignty involves more than a date and a ceremony. It requires Iraqis to assume responsibility for their own future.

Iraqi authorities are now confronting the security challenge of the last several weeks. In Falluja, coalition forces have suspended offensive operations, allowing members of the Iraqi Governing Council and local leaders to work on the restoration of central authority in that city. These leaders are communicating with the insurgents to ensure an orderly turnover of that city to Iraqi forces so that the resumption of military action does not become necessary. They are also insisting that those who killed and mutilated four American contract workers be handed over for trial and punishment.

In addition, members of the governing council are seeking to resolve the situation in the south. Al-Sadr must answer the charges against him and disband his illegal militia.

44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument

Accuse Your Opponent of Doing What He is Accusing You of
 Accuse Him of Sliding Down A Slippery Slope
 Appeal to Authority
 Appeal to Experience
 Appeal to Fear
 Appeal to Pity (or sympathy)
 Appeal to Popular Passions
 Appeal to Tradition or Faith
 Assume a Posture of Righteousness
 Attack the person
 Beg the Question
 Call For Perfection
 Create a False Dilemma
 Devise Analogies (and Metaphors)
 That Support Your View
 Question Your Opponent's Conclusions
 Create Misgivings:
 Where There's Smoke, There's Fire
 Create A Straw Man
 Deny or Defend Your Inconsistencies
 Demonize His Side Sanitize Yours
 Evade Questions, Gracefully
 Flatter Your Audience
 Hedge What You Say
 Ignore the Evidence
 Ignore the Main Point
 Attack Evidence
 Insist Loudly on a Minor Point
 Use the Hard-Cruel-World Argument
 Make Sweeping Glittering Generalizations
 Make Much of Any Inconsistencies in Your Opponent's Position
 Make Your Opponent Look Ridiculous
 Oversimplify the Issue
 Raise Nothing But Objections
 Rewrite History
 Seek Your Vested Interests
 Shift the Ground.

Our coalition is standing with responsible Iraqi leaders as they establish growing authority in their country. The transition to sovereignty requires that we demonstrate confidence in Iraqis. And we have that confidence. Many Iraqi leaders are showing great personal courage. And their example will bring out the same quality in others.

The transition to sovereignty also requires an atmosphere of security. And our coalition is working to provide that security. We will continue taking the greatest care to prevent harm to innocent civilians. Yet we will not permit the spread of chaos and violence. I have directed our military commanders to make every preparation to use decisive force if necessary to maintain order and to protect our troops.

The nation of Iraq is moving toward self-rule. And Iraqis and Americans will see evidence in the months to come. On June 30 when the flag of free Iraq is raised, Iraqi officials will assume responsibility for the ministries of government. On that day the transitional administrative law, including a bill of rights that is unprecedented in the Arab world, will take full effect. The United States and all the nations of our coalition will establish normal diplomatic relations with the Iraqi government. An American embassy will open and an American ambassador will be posted.

According to the schedule already approved by the governing council, Iraq will hold elections for a national assembly no later than next January. That assembly will draft a new permanent constitution, which will be presented to the Iraqi people in a national referendum held in October of next year. Iraqis will then elect a permanent government by Dec. 15, 2005. An event that will mark the completion of Iraq's transition from dictatorship to freedom.

Other nations and international institutions are stepping up to their responsibilities in building a free and secure Iraq. We're working closely with the United Nations envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and with Iraqis to determine the exact form of the government that will receive sovereignty on June 30. The United Nations elections assistance team headed by Carina Pirelli is in Iraq developing plans for next January's election. NATO is providing support for the Polish-led multinational division in Iraq. And 17 of NATO's 26 members are contributing forces to maintain security. Secretary of State Powell and Secretary of State Rumsfeld and a number of

NATO defense and foreign ministers are exploring a more formal role for NATO such as turning the Polish-led division into a NATO operation and giving NATO specific responsibilities for border control.

Iraqis' neighbors also have responsibilities to make their region more stable. So I'm sending Deputy Secretary of State Armitage to the Middle East to discuss with these nations our common interest in a free and independent Iraq and how they can help achieve this goal.

As we made clear all along, our commitment to the success and security of Iraq will not end on June 30. On July 1 and beyond, our reconstruction assistance will continue and our military commitment will continue. Having helped Iraqis establish a new government, coalition military forces will help Iraqis to protect their government from external aggression and internal subversion.

The success of free government in Iraq is vital for many reasons. A free Iraq is vital because 25 million Iraqis have as much right to live in freedom as we do. A free Iraq will stand as an example to reformers across the Middle East. A free Iraq will show that America is on the side of Muslims who wish to live in peace, as we've already shown in Kuwait and Kosovo, Bosnia and Afghanistan. A free Iraq will confirm to a watching world that America's word, once given, can be relied upon even in the

44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument

Accuse Your Opponent of Doing What He is Accusing You of
 Accuse Him of Sliding Down A Slippery Slope
 Appeal to Authority
 Appeal to Experience
 Appeal to Fear
 Appeal to Pity (or sympathy)
 Appeal to Popular Passions
 Appeal to Tradition or Faith
 Assume a Posture of Righteousness
 Attack the person
 Beg the Question
 Call For Perfection
 Create a False Dilemma
 Devise Analogies (and Metaphors)
 That Support Your View
 Question Your Opponent's Conclusions
 Create Misgivings:
 Where There's Smoke, There's Fire
 Create A Straw Man
 Deny or Defend Your Inconsistencies
 Demonize His Side Sanitize Yours
 Evade Questions, Gracefully
 Flatter Your Audience
 Hedge What You Say
 Ignore the Evidence
 Ignore the Main Point
 Attack Evidence
 Insist Loudly on a Minor Point
 Use the Hard-Cruel-World Argument
 Make Sweeping Glittering Generalizations
 Make Much of Any Inconsistencies in Your Opponent's Position
 Make Your Opponent Look Ridiculous
 Oversimplify the Issue
 Raise Nothing But Objections
 Rewrite History
 Seek Your Vested Interests
 Shift the Ground.

toughest times.

Above all, the defeat of violence and terror in Iraq is vital to the defeat of violence and terror elsewhere, and vital, therefore, to the safety of the American people. Now is the time and Iraq is the place in which the enemies of the civilized world are testing the will of the civilized world. We must not waiver. The violence we are seeing in Iraq is familiar. The terrorist who takes hostages or plants a roadside bomb near Baghdad is serving the same ideology of murder that kills innocent people on trains in Madrid and murders children on buses in Jerusalem and blows up a nightclub in Bali and cuts the throat of a young reporter for being a Jew.

We've seen the same ideology of murder in the killing of 241 marines in Beirut, the first attack on the World Trade Center, in the destruction of two embassies in Africa, in the attack on the D.S.S. Cole and in the merciless horror inflicted upon thousands of innocent men and women and children on Sept. 11, 2001.

None of these acts is the work of a religion. All are the work of a fanatical political ideology. The servants of this ideology seek tyranny in the Middle East and beyond. They seek to oppress and persecute women. They seek the death of Jews and Christians and every Muslim who desires peace over theocratic terror. They seek to intimidate America into panic and retreat, and to set free nations against each other. And they seek weapons of mass destruction to blackmail and murder on a massive scale.

Over the last several decades, we've seen that any concession or retreat

on our part will only embolden this enemy and invite more bloodshed. And the enemy has seen over the last 31 months that we will no longer live

in denial or seek to appease them: For the first time, the civilized world

has provided a concerted response to the ideology of terror, a series of powerful, effective blows.

The terrorists have lost the shelter of the Taliban and the training camps in Afghanistan. They've lost safe havens in Pakistan. They lost an ally in Baghdad, and Libya has turned its back on terror. They've lost many leaders in an unrelenting international manhunt. And perhaps most frightening to these men and their movement, the terrorists are seeing the advance of freedom and reform in the greater Middle East.

A desperate enemy is also a dangerous enemy, and our work may

become more difficult before it is finished. No one can predict all the hazards that lie ahead or the costs they will bring. Yet in this conflict, there is no safe alternative to resolute action.

The consequences of failure in Iraq would be unthinkable. Every friend of America in Iraq would be betrayed to prison and murder as a new tyranny arose. Every enemy of America in the world would celebrate, proclaiming our weakness and decadence, and using that victory to recruit a new generation of killers.

We will succeed in Iraq. We're carrying out a decision that has already been made and will not change. Iraq will be a free, independent country. And America and the Middle East will be safer because of it. Our coalition has the means and the will to prevail. We serve the cause of liberty and that is always and everywhere a cause worth serving.

Fallacy Detection: Analyzing a Speech from a Presidential Candidate

Read the following text by 3rd party presidential candidate Ralph Nader regarding the war in Iraq, foreign policy, and the "war on terrorism." Identify any fallacies you believe are committed within it.

The Bush Administration and the Democratic Party, in varying extremes, are putting the interests of their corporate paymasters before the interests of the people.

By Ralph Nader

44 Foul Ways to Win an Argument

Accuse Your Opponent of Doing What He is Accusing You of
Accuse Him of Sliding Down A Slippery Slope
Appeal to Authority
Appeal to Experience
Appeal to Fear
Appeal to Pity (or sympathy)
Appeal to Popular Passions
Appeal to Tradition or Faith
Assume a Posture of Righteousness
Attack the person
Beg the Question
Call For Perfection
Create a False Dilemma
Devise Analogies (and Metaphors)
That Support Your View
Question Your Opponent's Conclusions
Create Misgivings:
Where There's Smoke, There's Fire
Create A Straw Man
Deny or Defend Your Inconsistencies
Demonize His Side Sanitize Yours
Evade Questions, Gracefully
Flatter Your Audience
Hedge What You Say
Ignore the Evidence
Ignore the Main Point
Attack Evidence
Insist Loudly on a Minor Point
Use the Hard-Cruel-World Argument
Make Sweeping Glittering Generalizations
Make Much of Any Inconsistencies in Your Opponent's Position
Make Your Opponent Look Ridiculous
Oversimplify the Issue
Raise Nothing But Objections
Rewrite History
Seek Your Vested Interests
Shift the Ground.

Concerning the invasion and occupation of Iraq

The quagmire of the Iraq war and occupation could have been averted and needs to be ended expeditiously, replacing US forces with a UN peacekeeping force, prompt supervised elections and humanitarian assistance before we sink deeper into this occupation, with more U.S. casualties, huge financial costs, and diminished US security around and from the Islamic world. The faulty and fabricated rationale for war has the US in a quagmire. Already more than \$155 billion has been spent, adding to huge Bush deficits, when critical needs are not being met at home. We should not be mired in the occupation of Iraq risking further upheavals when our infrastructure, schools and health care are deteriorating. Four years of free public college and university tuition for all students could be paid for by \$155 billion.

Withdraw US Troops

Presence of military hinders progress in Iraq, drains U.S. economy.

Every day our exposed military remains in war-torn Iraq we imperil US security, drain our economy, ignore urgent domestic needs and prevent Iraqi democratic self-rule. We need to announce a withdrawal of our troops, not increase them.

Calls by the major presidential candidates to indefinitely “stay the course” spur the spiral of violence. U.S. presence serves as a magnet for insurrection, kidnapping, terrorism and anarchy. Announcing a definite withdrawal and ending the U.S. corporate takeover of the Iraqi economy and oil will separate mainstream Iraqis from the insurgents and give the vast majority of people there a stake in replacing occupation with independence.

Three-steps to an announced withdrawal:

1. Develop an appropriate peace-keeping force under United Nations auspices from neutral nations with such experience and from Islamic countries. This force should begin to promptly replace all U.S. troops and civilian contractors. Former general Wesley Clark described Bush foreign policy as cowboy unilateralism that goes against everything the U.S. is supposed to represent to the world. It is time for the U.S. to return to the family of nations. The U.S. will have to underwrite a portion of this less expensive short-term force.
2. Free and fair elections should be held as soon as possible under international supervision so democratic self-rule can be put in place in Iraq and allowing Iraq to provide for its own security. Iraq is a country long controlled by a brutal dictator, devastated by economic sanctions and torn apart by war. Some autonomy for Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds makes a new government more workable. Iraq will sort out these issues more easily without the presence of a US occupying force and the projected 14 US military bases that Iraqis see as installing a puppet government fronting for an

indefinite military and oil industry occupation.

3. The U.S. and others should provide interim humanitarian aid to Iraq. Economic sanctions and war have resulted in tremendous damage to people, their children and the Iraqi infrastructure. Until the 1991 Gulf War, Hussein was a US anti-communist ally also used to keep Iran at bay. During the 1980s under Reagan and Bush I US corporations were licensed to export materials to Iraq for chemical and biological weapons. US oil and other corporations should not profit from the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq. Control over Iraqi oil and other assets should be exercised by Iraqis.

Concerning the effect of the “war on terrorism” on civil liberties and constitutional rights

Civil liberties and due process of law are eroding due to the “war on terrorism” and new technology that allows easy invasion of privacy. Americans of Arab descent and Muslim-Americans are feeling the brunt of these dragnet, arbitrary practices. [I support] the restoration of civil liberties, repeal of the Patriot Act, and an end to secret detentions, arrests without charges, no access to attorneys and the use of secret “evidence,” military tribunals for civilians, non-combatant status and the shredding of “probable cause” determinations. They represent a perilous diminishment of judicial authority in favor of concentrated power in the executive branch. Sloppy law enforcement, dragnet practices are wasteful and reduce the likelihood of apprehending violent criminals. [I seek] to expand civil liberties to include basic human rights in employment and truly equal rights regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race or religion.

Warning

Most students who study fallacies begin to find them plentiful in the arguments of those with whom THEY DISAGREE. Realize that fallacies are being used with equal frequency by you, as well as your friends. Test your integrity by diligently seeking fallacies in your own thinking. Remember, "we have met the enemy, and he is us!"

Concerning foreign policy

Our foreign policy must redefine the elements of global security, peace, arms control, an end to nuclear weapons and expand the many assets of our country to launch, with other nations, major initiatives against global infectious diseases (such as AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and virulent flu epidemics) which have and are coming to our country in increasingly drug resistant strains. Other low cost-high yield (compared to massive costs of redundant weapons) that extend the best of our country abroad include public health measures for drinking water safety abroad, tobacco control, stemming soil erosion, deforestation and misuse of chemicals, international labor standards, stimulating democratic institutions, agrarian cooperatives and demonstrating appropriate technologies dealing with agriculture, transportation,

housing and efficient, renewable energy. The UN Development Program and many NGO's working abroad provide essential experience and directions in this regard including ending the specter of hunger, malnutrition and resultant diseases with known and proven remedies and practices. With this foreign policy orientation overhauls we will discover and facilitate the indigenous genius of the Third World, recalling Brazilian Paulo Freire (literacy), Egyptian Hasan Fathi (agrarian housing) and Bangladeshi Mohammed Yunis (microcredit).

Avoid Two Extremes: 1) Finding Fallacies Only in the Thinking of Others (None in Yourself), and 2) Finding an Equal Number of Fallacies in Everything you Read.

There are two dangers to avoid as you begin to identify fallacies in daily life. The first consists in an unconscious bias toward identifying fallacies only in the thinking of others (those with whom you disagree) and none in yourself. In this case, you use fallacy labels as a way to attack anyone with whom you disagree, while you avoid a critical scrutiny of your own use of such fallacies. Your "opponent" uses an analogy, you immediately call it a false analogy. Your opponent makes a generalization, you immediately call it a hasty or unrepresentative generalization. Your mind is set against him and therefore you find fallacies in all his thinking. Your mind is so prejudiced in favor of your own thinking, that, as a result, you find no fallacies in it.

The second danger consists in coming to believe that everyone commits an equal number of fallacies, and therefore that there is no reason to concern yourself with fallacies. "The situation is hopeless," you say to yourself.

The fact is that fallacies are "foul" ways to try to win an argument (or justify a belief) unfairly. Their use is wide spread, especially among those who make it their business to manipulate people. All of us sometimes commit them. But there is often a significant difference in quantity. Compare the problem of fallacy use to the problem of air pollution. All air carries some pollutants, but all air is not highly polluted. It is impossible to think in so careful a way that one never uses a fallacy. But it is possible to minimize that usage.

To protect ourselves we need to be able to recognize when people are trying to manipulate us with fallacious appeals. To maintain our integrity, we must try to avoid using fallacious appeals ourselves. We do this by learning to monitor our own thinking and the thinking of others, using the tools of critical thinking. We must recognize what is encompassed in our own point of view and the limitations of that point of view. We must enter sympathetically into the point of view of others. We must learn how to strip our thinking, and the thinking of others, down to essentials: essential concepts, essential facts, essential inferences, essential assumptions. We

must be willing to scrutinize our thinking with the same care and concern we use in scrutinizing the thinking of our opponents and nay-sayers. Our thinking should be in a state of permanent evolution, systematically building on our strengths and removing our weaknesses — hence, rooting out in the process as many fallacies as we have come to use.

Conclusion:

Fallacies in An Ideal (And in a Real) World

In a world of fair-minded critical thinkers, the list of those who reasoned best and the list of those with the most influence in the world would be one and the same. But we don't exist in an ideal world of intellectually disciplined, empathic thinkers. We live in fundamentally uncritical societies, societies in which skilled manipulators, masters of intellectual tricks and stratagems, are the ones who tend to achieve position, status, and advantage.

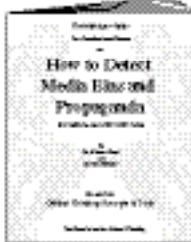
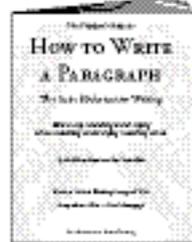
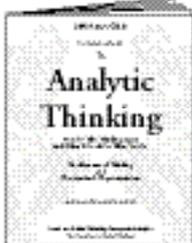
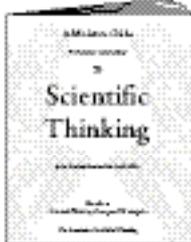
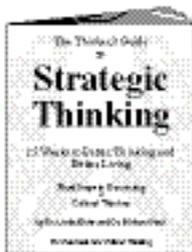
In the everyday world there is a continual struggle for power and control, and in that struggle truth and insight have little chance of competing with big money driving big media. Big money routinely utilizes the resources of media logic, polished rhetoric, and mass propaganda techniques to gain its ends. Most people, being intellectually unsophisticated respond to, and even unknowingly use, fallacious thinking.

As we hope you realize by now, most of what are traditionally called fallacies are in fact highly effective strategies for shaping the opinions and beliefs of others. Fallacies are best understood as “counterfeits” of good reasoning, devices often successful in manipulating the intellectual “sheep” of the world.

Of course, it is important to realize that those who manipulate others typically deceive themselves in the process. Otherwise they wouldn't be able to live with themselves. People want to view themselves as decent and fair-minded, not as manipulators of unsophisticated others. The result is that when people use bad reasoning to manipulate others they must at the same time “deceive” themselves into believing that their thinking is perfectly justified.

In an ideal world, children would be taught to recognize fallacies at an early age. They would learn how common fallacies are in everyday discourse. They would practice identifying fallacies in every dimension of their lives. They would come to understand the frailties and weaknesses of the human mind. They would learn to recognize their own frailties and weaknesses: their own egocentrism and sociocentrism. They would become familiar with the differences between uncritical thinking, sophistic thinking, and fairminded thinking. And, they would become adept at identifying and distinguishing their uncritical, sophistic, and fairminded thinking. They

The Thinker's Guide Library



The Thinker's Guide Library

The Thinker's Guide Library provides convenient, inexpensive, portable references that students and faculty can use to improve the quality of studying, learning, and teaching. Their modest cost enables instructors to require them of all students (in addition to a textbook). Their compactness enables students to keep them at hand whenever they are working in or out of class. Their succinctness serves as a continual reminder of the most basic principles of critical thinking.

For Students & Faculty

Critical Thinking — The essence of critical thinking concepts and tools distilled into a 19-page pocket-size guide. (1-24 copies \$4.00 each; 25-199 copies \$2.00 each; 200-499 copies \$1.75 each)

How to Study & Learn — A variety of strategies—both simple and complex—for becoming not just a better student, but also a master student. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

Analytic Thinking — This guide focuses on the intellectual skills that enable one to analyze anything one might think about — questions, problems, disciplines, subjects, etc. It provides the common denominator between all forms of analysis. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

Scientific Thinking — The essence of scientific thinking concepts and tools. It focuses on the intellectual skills inherent in the well-cultivated scientific thinker. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

How to Read a Paragraph — This guide provides theory and activities necessary for deep comprehension. Imminently practical for students. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

How to Write a Paragraph — Focuses on the art of substantive writing. How to say something worth saying about something worth saying something about. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

The Human Mind — Designed to give the reader insight into the basic functions of the human mind and to how knowledge of these functions (and their interrelations) can enable one to use one's intellect and emotions more effectively (1-24 copies \$5.00 each; 25-199 copies \$2.50 each; 200-499 copies \$1.75 each)

Foundations of Ethical Reasoning — Provides insights into the nature of ethical reasoning, why it is so often flawed, and how to avoid those flaws. It lays out the function of ethics, its main impediments, and its social counterfeits. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

How to Detect Media Bias and Propaganda — Designed to help readers come to recognize bias in their nation's news, to detect ideology, slant, and spin at work, and to recognize propaganda when exposed to it, so that they can reasonably determine what media messages need to be supplemented, counter-balanced or thrown out entirely. It focuses on the internal logic of the news as well as societal influences on the media. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

Asking Essential Questions — Introduces the art of asking essential questions. It is best used in conjunction with the Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking and the How to Study mini-guide. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

For Faculty

Critical Thinking Competency Standards — Provides a framework for assessing students' critical thinking abilities. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

Active and Cooperative Learning — Provides 27 simple ideas for the improvement of instruction. It lays the foundation for the ideas found in the mini-guide **How to Improve Student Learning**. (1-24 copies \$3.00 each; 25-199 copies \$1.50 each; 200-499 copies \$1.25 each)

How to Improve Student Learning — Provides 30 practical ideas for the improvement of instruction based on critical thinking concepts and tools. It builds on, and goes beyond, the ideas in the mini-guide Active and Cooperative Learning. It cultivates student learning encouraged in the How to Study and Learn mini-guide. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

Critical and Creative Thinking — Focuses on the interrelationship between critical and creative thinking through the essential role of both in learning. (1-24 copies \$6.00 each; 25-199 copies \$4.00 each; 200-499 copies \$2.50 each)

For More Information

(To order guides or to inquire about other resources)

Phone: 707-878-9100

Fax: 707-878-9111

E-mail: cct@criticalthinking.org

Web site: www.criticalthinking.org

Mail: Foundation for Critical Thinking

P.O. Box 220

Dillon Beach, CA 94929

"Fallacies" Mini-Guide Price List

(+ shipping and handling)

Item #533m

1-24 copies \$6.00 each

25-199 copies \$4.00 each

200-499 copies \$2.50 each

500-999 copies \$1.75 each

1000-1499 copies \$1.50 each

The Foundation for Critical Thinking

The Foundation for Critical Thinking seeks to promote essential change in education and society through the cultivation of fair-minded critical thinking, thinking predisposed toward intellectual empathy, humility, perseverance, integrity, and responsibility. A rich intellectual environment is possible only with critical thinking at the foundation of education. Why? Because only when students learn to think through the content they are learning in a deep and substantive way can they apply what they are learning in their lives. Moreover, in a world of accelerating change, intensifying complexity, and increasing interdependence, critical thinking is now a requirement for economic and social survival. Contact us to learn about our publications, videos, workshops, conferences, and professional development programs.

About the Authors:



Dr. Linda Elder is an educational psychologist who has taught both psychology and critical thinking at the college level. She is the President of the Foundation for Critical Thinking and the Executive Director of the Center For Critical Thinking. Dr. Elder has done original research into the relation of thought and emotion, the cognitive and the affective, and has developed an original theory of the stages of critical thinking development. She has authored and co-authored a series of articles on critical thinking including a column on critical thinking for the *Journal of Developmental Education*. She has co-authored two books entitled *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life*, and *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life*. She is a dynamic presenter.



Dr. Richard Paul is a major leader in the international critical thinking movement. He is Director of Research at the Center for Critical Thinking, Chair of the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, and author of over 200 articles and seven books on critical thinking. Dr. Paul has given hundreds of workshops on critical thinking and made a series of eight critical thinking video programs for PBS. His views on critical thinking have been canvassed in *The New York Times*, *Education Week*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *American Teacher*, *Educational Leadership*, *Newsweek*, *U. S. News and World Report*, and *Reader's Digest*.

The Foundation for Critical Thinking



www.criticalthinking.org
707-878-9100 • 800-833-3645
cct@criticalthinking.org
ISBN 0-944583-27-X • Item #533m