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## Everybody does it

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*Guidebook of arguments not to be used*



*Alcofribas Editions*

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## Introduction

Every day we commit logical fallacies in our speech, willingly or unwillingly, by accident or with a purpose. Argumentation mistakes constitute an important component of logical problems, what is often called informal logic. Many of these mistakes are popular, and rather visible if one pays attention. We can say we commit them for different reasons. First, because of habit, some of them are rather frequent. Second, because of inattention, we speak without paying much attention to our own words. Thirdly, because of ignorance, since some rational or logical principles are not known to us. Fourthly, because instinctively we want to defend ourselves, so we are ready to say whatever comes to our mind. Let's not forget that arguments are the way we justify what we say or what we do, and often we need to convince others and ourselves that we are right or that everything is fine, contrary to appearances.

Often, those mistakes become some kind of rhetorical tricks, used instinctively to protect oneself and get rid of the interlocutor, his accusations or reproaches. We sense there is something wrong in them, without being able to explain the problem. So the conversation ends there. Or it takes an acrimonious turn. Someone ends up feeling frustrated or offended. Thus our work can help to clarify the issues. In particular through the questions we propose, a path that opens for an enhanced rational procedure and dialogue, less emotional and more peaceful, avoiding all the paralyzing effects of those arguments motivated by fear and bad faith.

Most of those mistakes, when underlined are easily understood. Intuitively, we recognize their nonsense, their weakness, their psychological implications. We already have a certain idea about many of them. So our task here is not so much to make the reader discover those problems, but more bring them to his attention, and they will be easily recognized, because they are quite familiar, and sometimes we ourselves even criticize them when they were used by others in a discussion. For example when children speak to their parents and want to defend themselves in order not to be scolded or punished. Rather than exposing subtle features, we will simply render the visible more visible.

The structure of our treatment of those fallacies is simple.

1. A short dialogue between two persons, showing a common example of how this mistake is featured in daily life.
2. An analysis of the problems contained in the mistake, both cognitive and psychological.
3. An explanation of the dynamic and usefulness of the mistake, the reason of its utilization.

4. The questions that could be used to interrogate the person making this mistake in order to make him reflect upon his own speech and recognize the problem by himself, rather than telling him.

Those simple questions can be used either by the adult or the child.

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## Everybody does it (Bandwagon)

Mother : Why did you fail this test?

Julie : Everybody in the class failed the test!

### Problems

1. It is probably not true. "Everybody" does not exist. There is often at least one exception, some smart person, who manages to succeed where everybody fails.
2. The fact everybody failed does not anyhow explain the bad result. The answer does not fit the question: it avoids it.
3. Julie denies personal responsibility. She tries to establish some mysterious process or collective guilt that would replace one's accountability.

### Why the argument functions

If everyone failed the test, one shouldn't expect any better result from any one in particular. Otherwise the expectation becomes too demanding and rather unreasonable.



1. Is there at least one person who succeeded in the test?
2. Does your answer show that everybody in the class is lazy?
3. Is the teacher unreasonable?
4. Do you always do what other people do?
5. Is it still possible to succeed when everybody else fails?
6. Why did everybody fail the test?

## You too (Appeal to hypocrisy)

Adam : Did you lie to me?

Robert : You lied to me as well

### Problems

1. This argument simply aims at discrediting the opponent, to stop him from speaking and take away his legitimacy, it stops any dialogue and prohibits the quest for truth.
2. The fact that the other person lies does not in any way address the issue that one lied. It does not discharge one from having lied. There is no logical connection.
3. There is a denial of responsibility by attempting to justify one's lying as a response, revenge or imitation of the other's lying.

### Why the argument functions

In order to be credible, one needs to be rather "clean". To expose the lie of someone makes this person less credible. As well, the answer puts the responsibility of the problem on another person, making him feel guilty. And guilt makes one ready to accept anything or puts him on the defensive.

1. Did I make a mistake as well when I lied?
2. Should you copy other people's actions?
3. Do you want to be determined by others' mistakes?
4. Did you lie in order to revenge yourself?
5. Does my lying change anything about your lying?
6. Am I responsible for your actions?





## It's like that because it's like that (Tautology)

Jennifer : Why don't you want to come with me?

Ann : Because I don't want to come with you.

### Problems

1. There is no content. By repeating exactly the same words, there is a refusal to both thinking and dialogue, by not examining reasons for the decision.
2. This is a statement of unquestionable authority where one establishes his right not to answer and imposes his decision in a rather violent fashion.
3. Desire is here postulated as self-founding, which indicates a rather capricious frame of mind, where subjectivity unquestionably rules.

### Why the argument functions

The argument sounds so authoritarian that it prompts the interlocutor to simply accept the situation without any reasons or grounding. Our feelings or desires are considered unquestionable, we don't have to account for them, and others have to accept them just as they are.



1. Do you think repetition of the same words explains anything?
2. Do you have a hard time explaining your choices?
3. Do you like it when others repeat instead of explaining?
4. Is there no reason for our desires?
5. So what then makes you not want to come with me?

## Because it is good (Undifferentiated argument)

Anthony : Why do you prefer carrots rather than broccoli?

Phoebe : Because carrots are good.

### Problems

1. The fact that carrots are good does not exclude the fact that broccoli can be good too. Thus the argument does not provide any reason for choosing one over the other
2. Such an argument shows a difficulty in thinking by sticking to the obvious, what is immediately perceived by the speaker, her subjective preference. She cannot even examine the “other” option.
3. The speaker does not think of others and their possible disagreement, she is in herself and is not ready to imagine possible objections to her statement or any misunderstanding of her choice.

### Why the argument functions

Bringing the concept of “good” sounds objective and positive, it has a convincing effect. It creates an impression that the speaker knows what she is talking about and what she says is unquestionable.

1. Can broccoli be good as well?
2. Could anyone have a reason to claim carrots are bad?
3. Do you think it is obvious for everybody that carrots are good?
4. Do broccoli eaters harm themselves?
5. What can be good in broccoli?
6. Can “good” have different meanings?



## Because he is stupid (Argument *ad hominem*)

Kate : Why do you think his idea is stupid?

Jasper : Because he is really stupid. He often says nonsense.

### Problems

1. The fact that someone is stupid does not automatically prove that everything he says is stupid. It is very possible that a stupid person will say at least one smart thing, even by accident.
2. By giving a general characteristic of the person, the argument attempts to take away any legitimacy from a person speaking, without even examining his idea. This prohibits any further dialogue.
3. The argument does not allow objective and impartial examination of the content; the rash personal conclusion is an easy way to undermine a priori everything someone says, before he even says it.

### Why the argument functions

Devaluation of the whole person devalues all his ideas or actions. It undermines his authority. And even if it doesn't make the other one refuse totally the idea, it will make him doubt.

1. Can he say something smart at least once in his life?
2. Is your conclusion rather hasty?
3. Should you give people benefit of the doubt?
4. Are people condemned to remain the same their whole life?
5. Can someone get smarter?
6. Do you often jump to conclusions so quickly?



## Believe me! (Argument of conviction)

Alice : How do you know it is dangerous to spend a lot of time with a computer?

Arthur : Because I just know it. Believe me!

### Problems

1. This argument brings no objective proof whatsoever and bases itself only on the reliability of the author. It invites the listener to trust the author's opinion without any critical examination.
2. Arthur is truly convinced of what he is saying, meaning he is not ready to dialogue and envisage other possibilities. Such a posture indicates a rigid state of mind and anxiety about losing certitude.
3. Arthur has difficulty to think: he remains with an established conclusion instead of looking for reasons and discovering deeper hypotheses.

### Why the argument functions

It is comforting to rely on someone's solid stand. The amount of certitude and the strong positioning compensate for the lack of content.

1. Should you provide reasons for your beliefs?
2. Could you be wrong while being totally convinced of something?
3. Is scientific theory sometimes proven wrong?
4. Does knowledge need a foundation?
5. Is danger objective, or a matter of choice?
6. Is it possible that you see danger where other people don't?



## Maybe it will (Gratuitous hypothesis)

Father : Did you prepare sufficiently for tomorrow's history exam?

Helen : No, since the teacher may not come.

### Problems

1. The argument bases itself on a mere possibility, which makes it very weak. In order to rely on something, it has to be at least probable. We have no indication or reason showing the teacher may not come.
2. Helen is basing herself on pure hope. It is a comforting position that avoids any responsibility, since she relies on merely possible external circumstances in order to justify her inertia or laziness.
3. Such an argument uses a trick of "anything can happen", which makes it hard to refute: there is no valid proof that the exam cannot be cancelled or that the teacher will definitely be there. The justification is quite undetermined, since anything can happen, so it becomes empty.

### Why the argument functions

The argument utilizes an unknown future, it evokes a possibility which brings hope, it provides an opportunity to avoid reality, thus one can presuppose whatever he wants.

1. Is hope a reliable criterion?
2. Do you have any reasons to suspect the teacher will not come?
3. Is "maybe" sufficient for taking a decision?
4. Is it equally possible or even probable that the teacher will come?
5. Do you have a hard time working?
6. Are you trying to escape reality?
7. Do you often allow external circumstances to determine your actions?



## An expert said so (Argument of authority)

Patricia : Why do you say it is bad to eat fast food?

Jake : Because my trainer told me so.

### Problems

1. The argument appeals to knowledge of someone who might be a specialist, but even specialists can be mistaken. It does not give any foundation for this expert's opinion.
2. The argument uses respect and reverence as a reason to accept a position. It shifts the focus from the content of what is said to who says it and his status.
3. Such an answer prohibits thinking. Once you have quoted the words of an expert, any ideas of your own become less reliable and trustworthy, so it undermines any attempt to bring a new hypothesis. It prohibits as well critical thinking, since we cannot examine the actual foundation of the idea.

### Why the argument functions

Trainer knows that fast food is bad for you, because he has studied the question and has observed the consequences on the health of consumers. Therefore his expertise and his authority automatically validate his opinion in this domain.

1. Can your trainer be mistaken?
2. Is there anyone who is always right?
3. How did your trainer come to this conclusion?
4. Do you blindly trust your trainer?
5. Should you know the reasons yourself in order to take a right decision?
6. Do you tend to rely too much on others' opinions?
7. If there are people who disagree with your trainer, should you trust him anyhow?



## Why not? (Questioning argument)

Mother : Do you want to go on a trip this month?

Monica : Yes. Why wouldn't I want to go?

### Problems

1. Monica does not give any concrete reason for her choice, implying that those reasons are considered obvious to her. She forgets those reasons might not be so for others.
2. There is a slightly aggressive attitude, as it implies that the one asking the question should already know the answer, is wasting time with useless questions, or has doubts that he should not have.
3. Monica reverses the charge and instead of proposing a reason by herself, asks her mother to give possible reasons for her own unwillingness to go, therefore avoiding responsibility for her answer.

### Why the argument functions

The question, proposed in the guise of an argument, ends the conversation, because of its rhetorical nature. It answers without answering. Since it reverses the charge, it puts the interlocutor on the spot, shifting the focus, so he can escape argumentation.

1. Why do you answer a question with a question?
2. Do you think your motivations are obvious to others?
3. Do you think it is useful to state the reasons for your choices?
4. Do you often ask pointless questions?
5. Why would someone else have to explain your own choices?
6. Do you easily get defensive?



## It is always like that. (Argument of habit)

Stacy : Will your parents get angry with you if you come?


Theo : Yes, because they always get angry.

### Problems

1. First of all, “always” is an exaggeration, as it is not possible to be angry all the time, if only because there could be some exception, like a day they are in a particular good mood.
2. The argument shows resentment and spite. Theo caricatures his parents instead of objectively estimating the situation and judging adequately the potential of an angry reaction.
3. Theo overlooks the particular situation at stake and shifts towards a general evaluation: instead of examining this case, which could be an exception, he bases himself on what usually happens. This way he avoids giving an appropriate specific argument.

### Why the argument functions

Since something happens often, there is no strong reason to think it might be otherwise: people usually act according to their personality and routines.

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1. Are your parents sometimes happy with you?
  2. Can you predict everything your parents say or do?
  3. Did your parents ever surprise you?
  4. Do people react sometimes in a strange way?
  5. Is there any reason to get angry with what you did?
  6. Are your parents unreasonable?
  7. Do you tend to exaggerate?
  8. Should you pay the price for your actions?
  9. Is it possible to be angry all the time?



## I had no time. (Appealing to circumstances)

Father : Why did you not finish the project on time?

Kristen : I had many things to do.

### Problems

1. The fact of “having many things to do” does not explain the reason of not finishing this particular project. The reason is too general to account for this particular situation
2. Even if Kristen indeed had “many things to do”, she did some other things, which means she made them a priority. Thus having to do many things does not explain why the project was not considered a priority. We have the same time everyday: 24 hours.
3. “Having many things to do” just like “having no time” is such a vague or meaningless statement that it prohibits taking any responsibility for an action.

### Why the argument functions

The arguments is socially acceptable. Having many things to do makes you busy and respectable. As a result it justifies almost everything.

It is not possible to check if one indeed had too many things to do, or if those activities were a priority, therefore it makes this argument a convenient reason

1. Can you have many things to do and still finish the project?
2. Are you saying that it is the fault of circumstances?
3. Do you determine “things” you do or do “things” determine you?
4. Could you have chosen to do this project instead of other things?
5. Do you have the freedom to choose what you do?
6. Did you have to do all those things or did you want to do them?
7. Do you enjoy to seem busy?
8. Are you responsible for the priorities you set?
9. Does everyone have “many things to do”?
10. Does everyone have the same amount of time every day?



## It is his fault! (Blaming the other)

Mother : Why did you lie to the teacher?

Laura : My brother told me to do it!

### Problems

1. Attesting that “it is someone else’s fault” attempts to deny any freedom of choice, while there is always one. Laura could have chosen not to lie even though someone told her to.
2. It is important for Laura to please people, she is easily influenced and she has a hard time accounting for her own choices, so she uses others to justify her actions.
3. The argument shows that Laura does not want to think neither at the moment of deciding to lie, nor afterwards, when she has to explain her actions. She gives a superficial reason that indicates absence of any minimal analysis or critical thinking.

### Why the argument functions

If someone told you to do something, even if it does not take away your responsibility completely, it seems to significantly diminish it. You now have a “partner in crime”, who can even become the main culprit.

1. Could you have disobeyed your brother?
2. Do you have any right to free choice?
3. Why did you listen to your brother?
4. Do you have a hard time deciding by yourself?
5. Why is it easier to follow others rather than decide by yourself?
6. Do you do everything your brother tells you?
7. Would you jump out of a window if your brother told you to?
8. How do you decide when to listen to others and when to decide by yourself?



## It is almost the same (Sliding of meaning)

Cathy : Does everyone always have the right to express his opinion?

John : Of course. Everyone can think whatever he wants.

### Problems

1. The argument shifts the meaning from expressing to thinking. Even if one can think whatever he wants, he might not have the right to express it, although both ideas are indeed closely related. This can be called a tendency to associative thinking.
2. The answer reveals adamant conviction of John. John insists on the idea of personal freedom so much that he ignores the issue of the right to express or not, which is rather a moral or juridical issue. Sliding of meaning tends in general to take the speaker to his most common thinking grounds.
3. John is not fond of critical thinking, as we notice in his refusal to deal with the problem of criteria for expressing oneself. The absence of critical thinking, the lack of rigorous conceptual habits, are the main causes for sliding of meaning.

### Why the argument functions

One has to pay close attention in order to detect sliding of meanings: they sometimes are quite subtle. That is why they are so much used in rhetorical activities, as a trick to convince or refute someone.

1. Are thinking and speaking equivalent?
2. Do all thoughts have the same value?
3. Is it useful to avoid thinking about certain ideas?
4. Should one learn to restrain himself from speaking?
5. Should one have the right to say whatever comes to his mind?
6. Could people get hurt if you express everything crossing your mind?
7. Do you have the right to reveal someone's secrets?
8. Do you want others to tell you how they judge you?



## It is popular (Appealing to trend)

Mother : Why do you want such an expensive sweater?

Emily : It's a very popular brand, you know.

### Problems

1. The fact that something is popular is not a proof of its worthiness. Fashion changes all the time and is often based on smart advertising campaigns
2. Emily does not want to problematize a common opinion, because she wants to be “with it”. That shows her desire for recognition
3. Emily focuses on the “who” instead of the “what”: the qualities of the sweater become secondary in comparison with who chooses it, especially the quantity of people. This shows difficulty with taking distance and examining a thing for what it is worth
4. Emily is in an excited state of mind, which makes it difficult for her to critically examine reality. As a result she cannot think, she does not want a specific sweater, but what “everybody” wants or should want.

### Why the argument functions

The fact everyone does or has something makes you feel excluded if you don't “participate”, and one does not want to feel this way. We prefer to be “with it” and not feel lonely.

1. Does “popular” mean “good”?
2. If everyone was punished, would you want to be punished as well?
3. Is popularity a smart idea?
4. Do you want to be like everyone else?
5. If you are like everyone else, would you have a personal identity?
6. Do you want to be same or different than others?
7. Why is there diversity in the world?



## It just came out (Appealing to novelty)

Madison : Did you put this application on your phone?

Daniel : Of course! It's great, it just came out!

### Problems

1. The fact that something is new does not prove it is “great”. It might be exactly the opposite. Since the “song” is new, it might just create some excitement that will quickly wear out.
2. Daniel is fascinated with the newness, which shows that he is just looking for excitement and not judging objectively.
3. Daniel bases himself blindly on a presupposition that the latest invention a priori is better than the previous one. He acts on the basis of this belief and not thinking

### Why the argument functions

Progress indeed makes our life better. We have access to products that we could not even imagine before, and they provoke enthusiasm. Often they function better than instruments from the past and offer some functions that did not exist before.

1. What is more reliable: something new or something that was used many times before?
2. If a new application comes out tomorrow, will you stop using the present one?
3. Are all applications from this year better than the ones from last year?
4. Why are people attracted by new things?
5. Is your younger sister or brother better than you because they are newer?
6. When does something stop being new?
7. Is your new friend necessarily better than the old one?
8. Should you throw away old things?
9. What is good about old things?



## We have always done this (Appeal to tradition)

David : Why do you go there for holidays?

Lucas : Because my family has always done it this way.

### Problems

1. The mere fact that a group has always done something should not be a reason to keep doing it. Tradition is not in itself a sufficient or adequate argument to show the value of something.
2. Lucas does not want to try out new things and is stuck in repeating the same scheme. It indicates a closed state of mind and a fear of novelty, a fear of risk and mistake
3. Habit, collective or personal, is not a reason for an action, but a consequence. The fact of always having done something does not give a reason for such a choice in the first place; it just tells us that this choice keeps repeating itself.

### Why the argument functions

When something has worked in the past, when a group repeats successfully a specific action or behavior for a long time, there seems to be no reason to change it for something new and unreliable.

1. Is it good to try new things?
2. What would happen if everything was done the same way it was always done before?
3. Why is there progress?
4. Should we invent new things?
5. Can a new holiday resort be better than a usual one?
6. Do you sometimes get bored with the usual way?
7. Is it difficult to take risks?



## Just like that (Argument of the arbitrary)

Gabriella : Why do you ask me if I like you ?

Caroline : No reason. Just like that.

### Problems

1. “Just like that” does not propose any content that would give a reason for such an interrogation, when there must be a desire or an expectation behind such a question.
2. “Just like that” pretends to attest the neutrality of such a desire. Caroline is preoccupied with defending herself instead of thinking and answering.
3. There is always a reason for every action, an intention. “Just like that” is a way to deny the reality of the question, not to identify its real motivation. Even if one claims “I just wants to know”, he still wants to know for a specific reason.

### Why the argument functions

Often our actions and words are not motivated by any conscious strategy or reflection, but by a simple wish, immediate and superficial: they have no profound meaning or intention. Furthermore, immediate curiosity is a quite natural tendency.



1. Is there always a reason for any action?
2. What is the purpose of a question?
3. Can we want nothing when we ask questions?
4. Do we in general have some expectations when we do something?
5. Why do we generally want to know?

## You will be a bum (Exaggeration)

Nicole : I don't want to go to school any more.

Mother : If you don't study, you will have no job and you might starve to death.

### Problems

1. The exaggerated consequences are made to have an emotional impact upon an interlocutor, by taking the most extreme example of what might happen, which makes little sense.
2. The mother uses a rhetorical trick by imagining consequences that are quite remote, omitting less tragic but more immediate implications. The effect of the argument is expected to be greater.
3. The mother likes to dramatize and take things heavily, envisaging terrible scenarios, instead of calmly examining the ins and outs of the situation
4. The mother has a certain view on life and convictions that stop her from imagining someone her child taking a different course in life without arriving at catastrophic results. She shows a rigid state of mind.

### Why the argument functions

If you don't do what you should accomplish in order to succeed, you indeed have a higher chance to end up in a bad situation.

Evoking catastrophic consequences emotionally motivates us to modify our thinking and the way we behave.

1. Are there successful people who failed in school?
2. Can a bad student manage better in life than a good student?
3. Can being a good student make one's life more difficult?
4. Who is more worried about his reputation: a good student or a bad one?
5. Do you like to dramatize?
6. What other values might there in life beside studying?
7. Can you accept that some children are not gifted for school?





## It is unfair! (Appeal to equality)

Mother : We bought your sister a new dress.

Jessica : How about me! That's not fair.

### Problems

1. Jessica wants equality, what she calls “fairness”, which is not possible, even between brothers and sisters, because we are all different people.
2. Fairness here is viewed in a particular way, as some absolute equality, instead of thinking for example about equity, when one receives what he needs or deserves.
3. Jessica is not generous, as she cannot be happy for a gift another person received, without immediately wanting it for herself.
4. Jessica is anxious about herself and views actions of others as something that determines her self-worth. If someone else got something she did not get, she describes herself as a victim.

### Why the argument functions

The argument reminds us that if you favor a person, you forget the other, especially in a family, provoking jealousy. Equality is one of the principles of justice, where everyone has the same rights.

1. Do things you get define who you are?
2. Is there equality in nature?
3. Would you like that everyone owns exactly the same thing?
4. Do you sometimes get things that your sister does not?
5. Is life fair?
6. Do you want as well to get punished when others get punished?
7. Why do some people have a lot and others little?
8. Is there any usefulness in inequality?



## You cannot prove it is false (Argument of ignorance)

Jake : There is no such things as Martians.

Edward : That's not true. You cannot prove they don't exist.

### Problems

1. The fact that someone cannot prove non-existence of Martians does not automatically prove their existence. First of all, because Jake might be ignorant.
2. The absence of evidence in favor of one position does not immediately prove the contrary position. The latter has to be proven on its own.
3. It is very hard or even impossible to prove that something is not there or does not exist. Edward is playing a trick when he asks Jake to prove the absence of something, instead of proving the presence himself.

### Why the argument functions

The absence of proof is a legitimate criticism of a position, since one should not state something without a clear reason. The trick functions well, since an absolute proof non-existence is almost impossible to establish.

1. Do doubt and ignorance prove anything about the reality of things?
2. Should we be able to prove what we state?
3. Is the absence of evidence a proof of anything?
4. If you cannot prove someone behaved well, does it mean he behaved badly?
5. Is it possible to know everything?
6. Does science come up with discoveries every day?



## Jumping from pillar to post (Irrelevant argument)

Father : Why didn't you do your homework?

Mark : Because I forgot my sweater at school.

### Problems

1. The fact that Mark forgot his sweater does not explain why the work was not done. There is no direct logical connection, so it makes the answer irrelevant.
2. Mark is closed on himself, he says what preoccupies him, thus he does not try to establish any objective connection between forgetting the sweater and the undone work.
3. Mark seems rather fragile, since such a small thing as forgetting something occupies his mind and can make him forget his duty. In order to realize his obligations, he needs a comfortable situation, otherwise he is destabilized.

### Why the argument functions

There is a psychological connection between the question and the answer. The speaker was preoccupied with his sweater, maybe he wondered how to get it back, maybe he feared being scolded, so he could not concentrate on his work, which is understandable. It then works by dazzling the other one with this new issue, who is invited to display empathy.

1. Could you have done your work even though you forgot your sweater?
2. Are you easily distracted?
3. Do you wish to control everything happening to you?
4. Do you have a hard time adapting to new circumstances?
5. Is there a connection between forgetting a sweater and not doing homework?
6. Should we be capable to do things even when we are worried?
7. What stops you from doing your work when you are worried?



## The poor thing! (Appeal to emotions: pity)

Jasper : Do you think that he hit her?

Diana : Of course. Look, at this poor little girl crying and he does not seem to be bothered.

### Problems

1. The argument invites Jasper to feel indignation in relation to the “guilty” person. The reasons provided use emotional pressure in order to obtain an approval of the accusation.
2. The argument is totally subjective: the fact the girl is crying does not prove that the accused hit the girl, even if he looks indifferent. The girl can be crying for different reasons, because of fear, or because someone else hit her.
3. Diana is sensitive and has moral principles defining how one should behave in a given situation, she cannot envisage the possibility that it might be otherwise, displaying certain intellectual rigidity.

### Why the argument functions

If someone does not show any sign of compassion when faced with someone’s pain, there is a strong possibility he has something to do with this pain. Being indifferent to pain, he can easily inflict violence on others. Lack of pity is often associated to guilt, for lack of moral concern.

- ?
1. Can the girl cry because of her own reasons?
  2. Can one maintain composure as a way of self-protection?
  3. Does one’s emotional state necessarily represent a proof of guilt?
  4. Are guilt and indifference related?
  5. Can guilt be proven based on how someone looks?
  6. Are we responsible for someone else’s emotions?

## You should be ashamed (Appeal to emotions: shame)

Kourtney : I don't want to finish my plate.

Mother : You should. Think of all those poor African children who have nothing to eat!

### Problems

1. The argument tries to provoke a feeling of shame: if there are poor African children, then one should be ashamed of not finishing a plate. It is a form of emotional blackmail.
2. There is no direct logical connection: the fact that a child finishes her plate will not influence in any way a state of well-being of African children.
3. The mother has certain moral views and fixed opinions about an issue and that stops her from seeing that there is no objective link between two events. She probably feels bad about children in Africa and wants others to feel the same. But there is no connection with "finishing the plate", which is more connected to the physical state of the person not eating.

### Why the argument functions

There is a natural sentiment of empathy among human beings, what can be called compassion or pity. We feel we should share, and we can feel bad when we have something essential to life that others don't have. Therefore, the perspective of wasting something that others lack can apply strong moral pressure on us, which can be used as a form of emotional blackmail.

1. Will African children stop starving if someone in Europe finishes his dish?
2. Should our actions be determined by how people live in other countries?
3. Why should one compare with poor children and not wealthy ones?
4. Should we use comparison in order to be evaluate a behavior?
5. How do we choose what to compare ourselves to?
6. Should one be responsible for everybody else on this planet?
7. If we think about misery every day, will our life be miserable?



## Not a real boy (No true Scotsman)

Kevin : Daddy, look! They broke my toy!

Father : What is this! Real boys don't whine like this!

### Problems

1. The father evokes a special category of “real boys” which the child should correspond to. Otherwise the child has a problem. This argument puts emotional pressure on the boy, prohibiting him from complaining or crying, because it would mean he is not a boy anymore.
2. The parent has fixed gender views on how boys should behave and instead of explaining to the child why he should not whine in this particular situation, he simply enforces those standards without doubting or discussing them.
3. The parent is impatient, he is not into dialogue, but into results. He wants to stop the whining, that he finds inappropriate, but he does not want to discuss with the child the reasons of this whining or make him reflect about it.

### Why the argument functions

It is a rather efficient way to stop a child from crying, since everyone wants to belong to a “real” group, in this case to be a “real” boy. It appeals to a sense of pride or shame, which often produces some effect on the interlocutor.

1. What determines how a “real boy” behave?
2. Should we question clichés about standard behavior?
3. Why would girls be more allowed to whine than boys?
4. Why do boys and girls have to behave differently?
5. What is the difference between “real” boys and “false” boys?
6. Does the understanding of what a “real boy” is varies according to culture?
7. What happens to a boy if he whines?
8. Should all boys behave the same way?
9. Is there such a thing as a “real girl”?



## Hodge-podge (Kettle argument)

Brian : Hey, you damaged the robot I lent you!

Erick : Not true! It was already damaged. You never use it. And I did not borrow it anyhow.

### Problems

1. The two arguments contradict each other. The first one admits that the robot was borrowed and the third one denies it. The second is irrelevant.
2. Erick is anxious about the accusation, so he is throwing contradictory or desultory statements at his interlocutor because he panics. When one fears, all means are useful in order to survive and eliminate the threat.
3. Erick only wants to defend himself, so he stops thinking. He does not want to disprove the accusation or admit that there is a problem. Objectivity does not interest him, nor the problem of another person. As a result he becomes chaotic.

### Why the argument functions

Because the argument throws in contradictory or disjointed statements, it dazzles the interlocutor. It becomes harder to follow the argumentation and detect incoherencies. It emotionally prompts the accuser to give up on his accusation.

1. If you didn't borrow the robot, how do you know it was already damaged?
2. Do you see a contradiction in your answer?
3. Do you think that what you are saying is clear?
4. Do you tend to panic when someone accuses you of something?
5. Did you borrow the robot or no?
6. Do you have a hard time admitting the truth?
7. What will happen if you admit the truth?



## Because you scolded me (Causal inversion)

Mother : Why did you lie to me?

Jimmy : Because you are scolding me!

### Problems

1. Jimmy is reversing cause and effect. Scolding is not the reason for the lying, but the consequence of it.
2. Jimmy is so nervous about scolding that he loses his capacity to think. He is obsessed with the scolding, that's all he sees. Because of this, the causal relation and the chronology of events disappear in his mind or become confused.
3. The emotional impact of the scolding is quite significant for the child, so because of its importance, it becomes the cause of the problem and therefore the reason for his lying.
4. Jimmy reacts out of spite. He wants to show to the parent that it is his fault that he is lying. If the parent did not scold him, there would be no lying. Because of this spite he ignores the logical problem.

### Why the argument functions

Such an argument can make a parent feel guilty, as the child indirectly blames the parents' teaching methods. He is using his negative emotion as an argument.

1. What happened first: the scolding or the lying?
2. Do you see a logical problem in your answer?
3. Could you have said the truth even if I am scolding you?
4. Does scolding scare you?
5. Are you too sensitive to what people tell you?
6. Do you think you deserved the scolding?
7. Do you think I am unfair?
8. If scolding is the result, what is the reason for your lying?





## It is not me, I was there (Paralogism)

Mother : Why didn't you do your homework?

Nikolas : But I was at home all evening!

### Problems

1. Nikolas starts his answer with "but" which already shows a defensive position. It means that he is not ready for dialogue or facing the true reasons for him not doing the homework, he simply wants to protect himself
2. The fact that Nikolas was at home all evening bears no logical connection with not doing the homework. One can assume on the reverse that if a child is at home, he will more likely be able to do the homework. Out of fear, the child ignores the illogical nature of his speech.
3. Nikolas wants to justify himself against an accusation, so he proposes the first idea that might please the parent: the fact he was at home and didn't go out anymore. He probably hopes that this information will soften parental criticism.

### Why the argument functions

The child knows that his parents prefer him to be at home rather than wandering around. So by strongly attesting he behaved like a good boy, he will escape punishment. Plus "home" and "homework" have a vague resemblance or connection, so they can easily fit together. Often paralogism function because there is either emotional content, or a certain familiarity between ideas.

1. Do you think you answered my question?
2. Why do you start your answer with "but"?
3. Does the fact you were at home all evening explain why you didn't do your homework?
4. Does doing homework depend on a place where you are?
5. If you were at home all evening, what stopped you from doing your homework?
6. Do you want to defend yourself or say the truth?
7. Does this "homework" question scare you?

