

Examrace

Western Logic Formal Fallacy Part 2for Competitive Exams

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Fallacy

- When an argument fails to support its conclusion, that argument is termed as fallacious in nature.
- A fallacious argument is hence an erroneous argument.
- In other words, any error or mistake in an argument leads to a fallacy.
- So, the definition of fallacy is any argument which although seems correct but has an error committed in its reasoning.
- Hence, a fallacy is an error, a fallacious argument is an argument which has erroneous reasoning.
- In the words of Frege, the analytical philosopher, “it is a logician’s task to identify the pitfalls in language.” Hence, logicians are concerned with the task of identifying fallacious arguments in logic which are also called as incorrect or invalid arguments.
- There are numerous fallacies but they are classified under two main heads;
 - Formal Fallacies
 - Informal Fallacies
 - Formal Fallacies:
 - Formal fallacies are those mistakes or errors which occur in the form of the argument.
 - In other words, formal fallacies concern themselves with the form or the structure of the argument.
 - Formal fallacies are present when there is a structural error in a deductive argument.
 - It is important to note that formal fallacies always occur in a deductive argument.

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There are of six types:

Fallacy of Four Terms

- A valid syllogism must contain three terms, each of which should be used in the same sense throughout, else it is a fallacy of four terms.
- This means, an argument must have only three terms. The three terms are; major term, middle term and minor term.
- Each of these terms should be used in the same sense throughout the argument (premises and conclusion) . For example;
 - All dogs are cute
 - All cats are animals
 - Therefore, all dogs are animals
 - Here, the argument has more than three terms; dogs, cute, cats and animals.
 - Another name for this fallacy is *Quaternio Terminorum*.
 - In short, when more than three or less than three terms are used in a syllogism then we have a formal fallacy which is called fallacy of four terms.
 - Hence, a valid syllogism uses only three terms (not more, not less) .

The Fallacy of Undistributed Middle Term

- Undistributed middle term is a fallacy when the middle term of the syllogism is not distributed in either of the premises.
- For a valid syllogism, the middle term must be distributed in at least one of the premise.
- It could be either major premise or the minor premise.
- It is also important to note that the Middle term never appears in the conclusion in a valid syllogism.
- For example,
 - All people are patriotic
 - All Indians are patriotic
 - Therefore, all Indians are people
- Here, the middle term, patriotic is neither distributed in the major premise, nor in the minor premise.
- So, although the argument looks valid, it is a fallacious argument.

The Fallacy of Illicit Process

- When a term distributed in the conclusion is not distributed in the premises, we have a fallacy of undistributed term or illicit process

- This fallacy is further divided into two parts;
 - Illicit Major
 - Illicit Minor

Illicit Major

- When the major term distributed in the conclusion is not distributed in the major premise, we have Illicit major.
- For example, All dogs are mammals , No cats are dogs, Therefore, no cats are mammals
- Here, the major term (mammals) is distributed in the conclusion but it is not distributed in the major premise- All dogs are mammals.

Illicit Minor

- When the minor term distributed in the conclusion is not distributed in the minor premise, we have Illicit minor fallacy.
- For example,
 - All traditionally religious people are old people
 - All traditionally religious people are married people
- Therefore, all married people are old people
- Here, the minor term (married people) is distributed in the conclusion but it is not distributed in the minor premise- All traditionally religious people are married people.

MCQ

1. Formal fallacies are those which

Options:

- A. Occur in the form of the argument
- B. Occur in the structure of the argument
- C. Both A and B
- D. Occur in the content of the argument

Answer: C

2. When an argument has less than three terms, it commits the fallacy of

Options:

- A. Fallacy of four terms
- B. No fallacy is committed
- C. Undistributed Middle term

D. None of these

Answer: A

3. When a term distributed in the conclusion is not distributed in the premises, we have a fallacy of

Options:

A. Illicit Major

B. Illicit Minor

C. Illicit Process

D. Undistributed Middle term

Answer: C

• We learnt about:

#formal

#informal

#fallacies

#relevance

#Fallacyofillicitprocess

#Illicitmajor

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