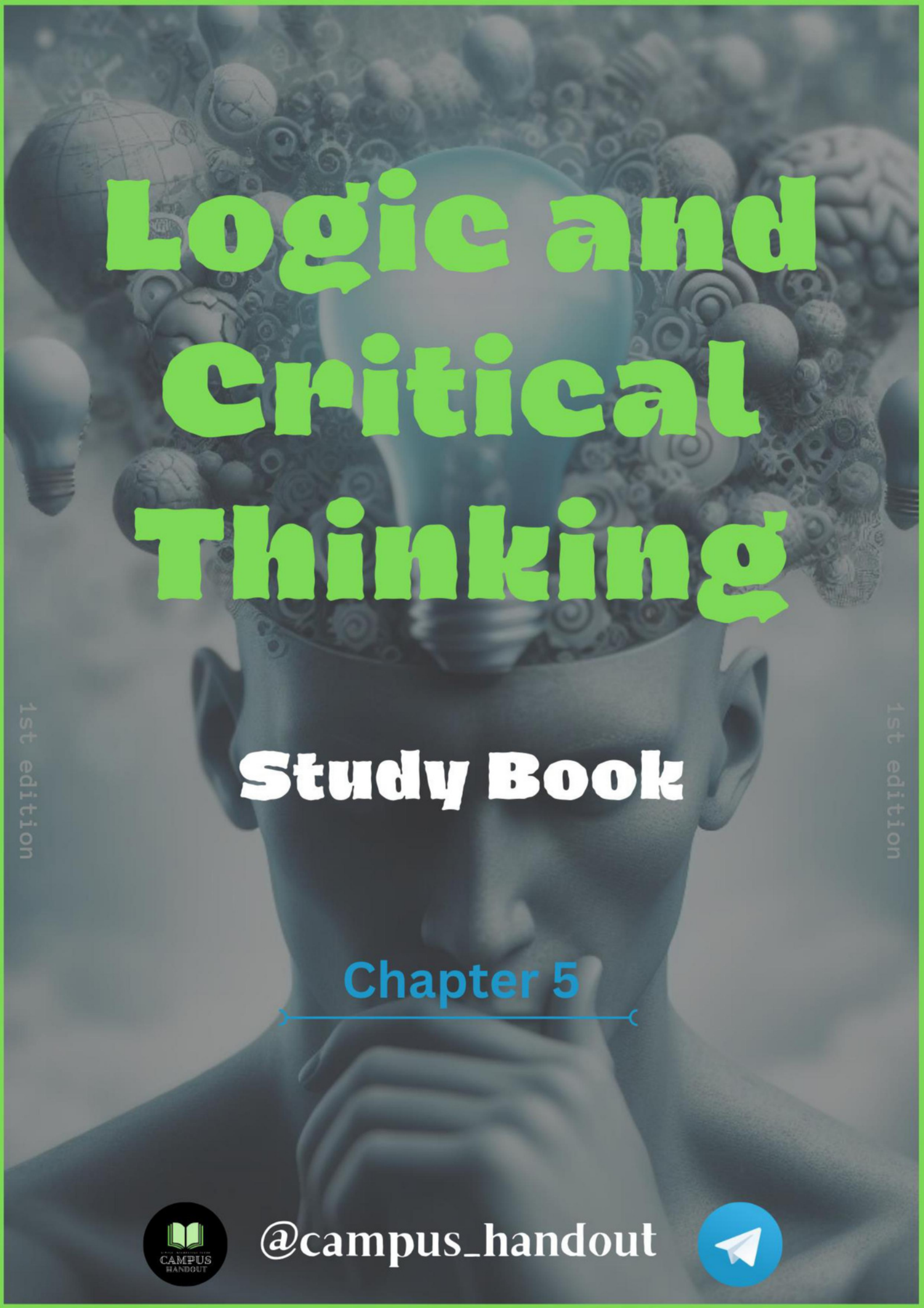

Logic and Critical Thinking
Study Book
Chapter 5
1st edition
1st edition
CAMPUS HANDOUT
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Short Note



Lesson 2: Fallacies of Relevance

- **Fallacies of relevance** are those, (except missing the point) which are committed chiefly due to a **provision premises that are logically irrelevant to the conclusion**
  - Yet the premises are relevant psychologically, so the conclusion may seem to follow from the premises, even though **it does not follow logically**
- In an argument that commits a fallacy of relevance, the **connection between premises and conclusion is emotional**
  - Such arguments are often called **non sequiturs**, which means that the conclusion does not seem to follow from the premises
  - They are also sometimes called **argumentative leaps**, which suggest that since **no connection is seen between the premises and the conclusion**, a huge leap (jump) would be required to move from one (the premises) to the other (the conclusion)
- Unlike the others, the fallacy of **missing the point** is committed due to **an irrelevant conclusion**
- We will discuss eight fallacies of relevance:
  - **Appeal to force**
  - **Appeal to pity**
  - **Appeal to people**
  - **Argument against the person**
  - **Accident**
  - **Straw man**
  - **Missing the point**
  - **Red Herring**

1. Appeal to Force (Argumentum ad Baculum: Appeal to the "Stick")

- It occurs when **an arguer poses a conclusion to another person and tells that person either implicitly or explicitly that some harm will come to him if he does not accept the conclusion**
  - it occurs when a **conclusion defended by a threat** to the well-being of those who do not accept the conclusion
- This fallacy always involves a threat by the arguer to the **physical** or **psychological** well-being of the listener
  - **But this threat is logically irrelevant to the subject matter of the conclusion** even though it seems psychologically relevant
    Example: The following argument, the arguer uses unjustified physical threat on the listeners

- The **argument against the person occurs in three forms:**
  - **The ad hominem abusive**
  - **The ad hominem circumstantial**
  - **The tu quoque**

Ad Hominem Abusive Fallacy

- The second person responds to the first person's argument by **verbally abusing the first person**
- The following is the form of ad hominem argument:
  Premise: A is a person of bad character
  Conclusion: A's argument should not be accepted
- The attack is **directed to destroying the person's credibility**, **so that his argument is discounted** or reduced in plausibility because of the reduction in credibility of the arguer
  - Thus, this type of attack is particularly **effective** where a **person's argument depends on his presumed honesty or good character** for its plausibility.
    Consider the following example
    → In defending animal rights, Mr. Abebe argues that the government should legislate a minimum legal requirement to any individuals or groups who want to farm animals. He argues that this is the first step in avoiding unnecessary pain on animals and protecting them from abuse. But we should not accept his argument because he is a divorced drunk person who is unable to protect even his own family
    - ✓ But it is impossible to conclude that we should reject legislation a minimum legal requirement to protect animals from the idea that Abebe is a drunk and divorced person. This is just an **explicit and direct personal attack**

Ad Hominem Circumstantial Fallacy

- The respondent attempts to **discredit the opponent's argument by alluding to certain circumstances that affect the opponent**
  - By doing so the respondent hopes to show that the opponent is predisposed to argue the way he or she does and should therefore not be taken seriously
- Example
  → Haileselassie I of Ethiopia argued in the League of Nations that member states should give hand to Ethiopia to expel the fascist Italy from the country. But the member states should not listen to the king. Haileselassie I argue in this way because he wants to resume his power once the Italian are expelled from Ethiopia

Key Point Note



Key Point On Lesson 2: Fallacies of Relevance

- **Fallacies of relevance** are those, (except missing the point) which are committed chiefly due to a **provision premises that are logically irrelevant to the conclusion**
  - The fallacy of **missing the point** is committed due to **an irrelevant conclusion**

1. Appeal to Force (Argumentum ad Baculum: Appeal to the "Stick")

- It occurs when **an arguer poses a conclusion to another person and tells that person either implicitly or explicitly that some harm will come to him if he does not accept the conclusion**

  Example:

  → Mr. Kebede you accused me of fraud and embezzlements. You have to drop the charge you filed against me. You have to remember that I am your ex-boss; I will torture both you and your family members if you do not drop your case. Got it?

- Appeal to force **need not use sheer physical force** to support a certain conclusion, it can **use psychological force** to impose a conclusion

2. Appeal to Pity (Argumentum ad Misericordiam)

- It is the attempt to **support a conclusion merely by evoking pity in one's audience** when the **statements that evoke the pity are logically unrelated to the conclusion**
- The appeal to pity fallacy has the following form:

  Premises: You have reason to pity this person, thing or situation (or group)

  Conclusion: You should do X for the benefit of this person (or group), although doing X is not called for logically by the reason given
  - Example:

    → The Headship position in the department of accounting should be given to Mr. Oumer Abdulla. Oumer has six hungry children to feed and his wife desperately needs an operation to save her eyesight
- **There are arguments from pity, which are reasonable and plausible**
  - **If people are not responsible for the situation in which they are in**; it is perfectly **reasonable and sensible to show compassion for these people**

3. Appeal to the People (Argumentum ad Populum)

- **The appeal to the people** (or ad populum fallacy) is an **attempt to persuade a person (or group) by appealing to desires and needs being part of community and belongingness**
  - Example

    → I look out at you all, and I tell you, I am proud to be here. Proud to belong to a party that stands for what is good for the country. Proud to cast my lot with the kind of people who make this nation great. Proud to stand with men and women

who can get our nation back on its feet. Yes, there are those who criticize us, who label our view of trade agreements as "protectionist." But when I look at you hard-working people, I know we're right and the critics are wrong

- **Two approaches** are involved in appeal to people fallacy: **direct** and **indirect**
  - **The direct approach** when an arguer, **addressing a large group of people**, excites the emotions and enthusiasm of the crowd to win acceptance for his or her conclusion
    - This is the strategy used by nearly every **propagandist** and **demagogue**
  - **The indirect approach**, the arguer aims **at one or more individuals separately**, focusing on some aspect of their **relationship to the crowd**
    - The indirect approach is very common in most **advertising industries**
    - There are **three recognizable forms in indirect approach**
      - ✓ **Bandwagon | Vanity | Snobbery**

Bandwagon fallacy

- **Appeals to** the **desire of individuals to be considered as part of the group or community** in which they are living
- Example

→ The majority of people in Ethiopia accept the opinion that child circumcision is the right thing to do. Thus, you also should accept that child circumcision is the right thing to do

Appeal to Vanity

- **Associates** the **product with someone who is admired, pursued, or imitated**, the idea being that **you, too, will be admired and pursued if you use it**
- Example, BBC may show the famous footballer, Frank Lampard, wearing Addidas shoe, and says:

→ Wear this new fashion shoe! A shoe, which is worn only by few respected celebrities! ADIDDAS SHOE!!!

Appeal to Snobbery Fallacy

- It is based on this desire **to be regarded as superior to others**
- Example

→ The newly produced Gebeta Guder wine is not for everyone to drink. But you are different from other people, aren't you? Therefore, the newly produced Gebeta Guder wine is for you

4. Argument against the Person (Argumentum ad Hominem)

- This fallacy **involves two arguers**. One of them **advances (either directly or implicitly) a certain argument** and the other then **responds by directing his or her attention not to the first person's argument but to the first person himself**
  - **It is Attacking the other party's honesty** or **sincerity** in argument

Practice Questions



Practice Questions

Lesson 2: Fallacies of Relevance

Instruction: Identify the fallacies of relevance committed by the following arguments, giving a brief explanation for your answer. If no fallacy is committed, write "no fallacy."

1. The position open in the accounting department should be given to Frank Thompson. Frank has six hungry children to feed, and his wife desperately needs an operation to save her eyesight

☑ Answer: Appeal to pity

2. Whoever thrusts a knife into another person should be arrested. But surgeons do precisely this when operating. Therefore, surgeons should be arrested

☑ Answer: Accident

3. Surely you welcome the opportunity to join our protective organization. Think of all the money you will lose from broken windows, overturned trucks, and damaged merchandise in the event of your not joining

☑ Answer: Appeal to force

4. We've all heard the argument that too much television is the reason our students can't read and write. Yet many of today's TV shows are excellent. Grey's Anatomy unveils the personal lives of interns at an urban hospital, Gossip Girl explores the world of privileged teenagers at an elite private school, and American Idol uncovers hidden musical talent. Today's TV is just great!

☑ Answer: Red herring

5. Dan Marino, former quarterback for the Miami Dolphins, argues that NutriSystem is a great weight loss program. But that's exactly what you would expect, given that Marino owns stock in NutriSystem. Thus, you shouldn't take his arguments seriously

☑ Answer: Circumstantial Fallacy

6. TV commentator Larry Kudlow argues that government should get off the back of the American businessman. Obviously, Kudlow wants to abolish government altogether. Yet without government there would be no defense, no judicial system, no Social Security, and no health and safety regulations. None of us wants to forgo these benefits. Thus, we can see that Kudlow's argument is absurd

☑ Answer: Straw Man

University Exams





University Exams

Lesson 2: Fallacies of Relevance

Instruction: Multiple Choice

1. "Killing is wrong. So, killing against aggressors is wrong." This argument commits fallacy of:

A. Straw man

B. Appeal to pity

C. Accident

D. Appeal to force

☑ Answer: C

☰ Explanation: The fallacy of accident is committed when a general rule is applied to a specific case it was not intended to cover. In this argument, the general rule is that killing is wrong, and the specific case is killing against aggressors. The argument assumes that the rule applies to all cases of killing, without considering any possible exceptions or circumstances. The argument ignores the fact that killing in self-defense or in war may be morally justified, and thus it commits the fallacy of accident

📖 Module Reference:

- ✓ The fallacy of accident is committed when a general rule is applied to a specific case it was not intended to cover. Typically, the general rule is cited (either directly or implicitly) in the premises and then wrongly applied to the specific case mentioned in the conclusion – Module Page 183 Line 7

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2. Compared with strawman & red herring fallacies, the conclusion of missing the point fallacy is:

A. Irrelevant to the premises from which it is drawn

B. Relevant to the premises from which it is drawn

C. No such a difference among the three fallacies

D. Drawn from a new set of premises

E. None of the above

☑ Answer: A

☰ Explanation:

📖 Module Reference:

- ✓ Also, in the red herring and straw man, the conclusion, if there is one, is relevant to the premises from which it is drawn; but in missing the point, the conclusion is irrelevant to the premises from which it is drawn – Module Page 188 Line 2

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3. "I was too disappointed by Mr. X statement. He said: soldiers shouldn't accused of any crime. This is worthless, exactly Mr. X is the minister of defense." This argument commits fallacy of:

A. Bandwagon

B. Ad Hominem circumstantial

C. Snobbery

D. Accident

☑ Answer: B

☰ Explanation: An ad hominem circumstantial fallacy occurs when an arguer attempts to discredit an opponent's argument by alluding to some circumstances that affect the opponent, such as his or her interests, motives, or personal situation. The arguer hopes to show that the opponent is biased or has a hidden agenda, and therefore should not be taken seriously. In this case, the arguer dismisses Mr. X's statement about soldiers not being accused of any crime by pointing out that he is the minister of defense, implying that he has a vested interest in protecting the soldiers. However, this does not address the substance of Mr. X's argument, which may or may not have merit regardless of his position

📖 Module Reference:

- ✓ The ad hominem circumstantial … the respondent attempts to discredit the opponent's argument by alluding to certain circumstances that affect the opponent. By doing so the respondent hopes to show that the opponent is predisposed to argue the way he or she does and should therefore not be taken seriously – Module Page 180 Line 19

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