Chapter 6

Fallacies

Logical fallacy is a flaw in reasoning. Logical fallacies are like tricks and illusion of thoughts.



Let us understand.

Argument - I

Aunt says: "Tony, do not smoke because parents don't like their children smoking. Don't You care for their emotions?"

Argument - II

Uncle says: "Tony, do not smoke because cigarette contains tobacco which is injurious to health.

Whose argument, do you think is correct? why?

6.1 MEANING AND DEFINITION OF FALLACY:

We all strive to reason correctly, but we do make errors in our reasoning or reason incorrectly.

We reason incorrectly when the premises of an argument fail to support its conclusion, then the arguments of this type are called as fallacious arguments. So in general any error in reasoning is called fallacy.

In I. M. Copi's words 'Fallacious arguments are those which appear to be correct but that are proved upon examination, not to be so.' Notion of fallacy is therefore psychological in logic.

The term 'Fallacy', can be used for both deductive invalidity as well as inductive weakness.

6.2 PURPOSE OF STUDYING FALLACIES:

Study of fallacy helps us:

- 1. To realize that there are errors in our argument, to spot poor reasoning and most importantly to understand them.
- 2. Awareness of the fallacy brings closer to the truth or the situation.
- 3. Recognizing fallacies in arguments will help, to avoid committing errors in our own argument.
- 4. Lastly one can detect fallacies in others argument. So that, the person is not mislead by others.

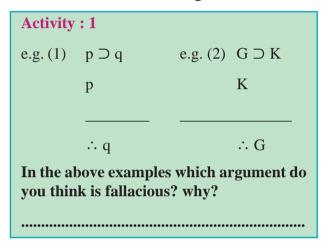
6.3 CLASSIFICATION OF FALLACIES:

Complete classification of fallacies is not possible, as innumerable fallacies can be committed. In Logic Fallacies are classified into two broad groups :

- (1) Formal
- (2) Non-Formal

(1) Formal fallacy:

The formal fallacy is related to the structure of an argument. Logic deals with various forms of arguments. Validity of a deductive argument depends on the form/structure of an argument, it is governed by certain rules. Formal fallacy is committed, when a rule of logic is violated.



(2) Non-formal fallacy:

Non-formal fallacy is related to the content of an argument. Validity of Inductive argument depends on the content or subject matter of an argument and it is called material validity. Nonformal fallacies are committed due to misleading use of language.

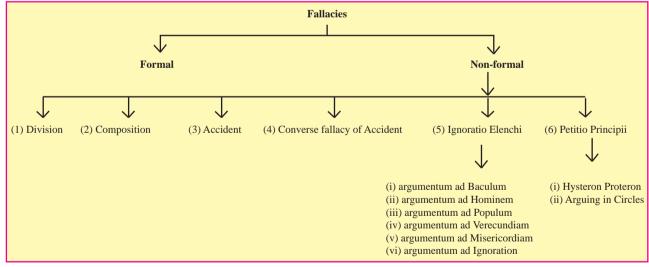
- i.e. (1) Irrelevant conclusion.
 - (2) Ambiguous use of words.
 - (3) Wrong use of collective and distributive terms.
 - (4) Wrong use of rules in exceptions.

6.4 CLASSIFICATION OF NON-FORMAL FALLACIES:

Non-formal fallacies may be further classified as:

- (1) Fallacy of Division
- (2) Fallacy of Composition
- (3) Fallacy of Accident
- (4) Converse fallacy of Accident
- (5) Fallacy of Ignoratio Elenchi [Irrelevant Conclusion]
- (6) Fallacy of Petitio Principii [Begging the Question]

Chart of Fallacies:



(1) Fallacy of Division:

In fallacy of Division one wrongly proceeds from collective use of the term to distributive use.

When all the members of a class taken together, possess certain quality then the term is to be used collectively.

E.g. The weight of mangoes in the basket is 5 kgs. Here all mangoes in the basket taken together are 5 kgs. Here the term 'weight' is used collectively.

Distributive term means, each member of a class individually has certain quality.

E.g. When we say all mangoes in this basket are sweet. Here we mean each Mango is individually sweet. Thus the term sweet is used distributively.

The term fallacy of Division arises in two ways:

(1) From class to member

For instance, It would be fallacious to argue that because the 'College cricket team is good. Hiten being the member of the college cricket team, Hiten is good player.

(2) From whole to part.

For instance, It would be fallacious to argue that because an object i.e. 'Machine' as a whole is heavy. Therefore each and every part of the machine is heavy.

Definition: The fallacy of Division is committed, when it is wrongly argued that what is true of a class is also true of its member separately, or what is true of the whole is also true of its part singly.

Examples:

(i) A bag full of rupee coins, is heavy. Therefore each and every rupee coin in it is heavy.

In this example it is wrongly argued that what is true of 'all rupee coins collectively in a bag', i.e. it is heavy, is also said to be true of each rupee coin, in that bag.

(ii) Water is a liquid. Therefore its constituents Hydrogen and Oxygen are also liquids.

In this example it is wrongly argued that what is true of 'water' as a whole i.e. it a liquid, is also said to be true of its parts i.e. constituents Hydrogen and Oxygen separately.

Activity: 2

Anita lives in a large building. So her apartment must be large.

Why do you think that the fallacy of Division is committed in the above example? Explain.

(2) Fallacy of Composition:

In the fallacy of Composition, one wrongly proceeds from distributive use of a term to its collective use. The fallacy of Composition is opposite to the fallacy of Division. The term fallacy of Composition, also arises in two ways:

(1) From member to class.

For instance: It would be fallacious to argue that because a child from the class is physically weak, therefore the class (group) of children is also physically weak.

(2) From part to whole.

For instance : It would be fallacious to argue that because each brick as the part of the building, is light in weight therefore the building as a whole is also light in weight.

Definition: Fallacy of Composition is committed, when it is wrongly argued that what is true of each member separately, is also true of the class or what is true of each part singly is also true of the whole.

Examples:

(i) Orange juice is tasty, Ice-cream is tasty and fish curry is tasty. Therefore the mixture of all the three ingredients is bound to be tasty.

In this example it is wrongly argued that what is true of each ingredient separately i.e. it is tasty, is also said to be true of the mixture, collectively prepared with it.

(ii) Each chapter of this book is small. Therefore this book is small.

In this example it is wrongly argued that what is true of each chapter as the part of the book i.e. singly it is small, is also said to be true of the whole book.

Activity: 3

Seeta, Geeta and Neeta of class XI A are intelligent. Therefore class XI A is an intelligent class.

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(3) Fallacy of Accident:

This fallacy arises due to wrong use of rules in exceptions.

There are certain moral, legal, educational or social rules or principles. Such rules are in normal circumstances desirable. But from this it does not logically follow that they should be applied even in special cases. In other words practically every rule has exceptions. It is not applicable in special, accidental or exceptional circumstance.

Definition: When it is argued that what is true as a general rule, is also true in a special case, the fallacy of Accident is committed.

Examples

(i) Regular walk is good for keeping oneself physically fit.

Therefore, a patient with fractured leg must also walk regularly.'

In this example the general rule i.e. Regular walk is good...., is applied to a special case of a patient with fractured leg. Hence the fallacy of accident is committed.

(ii) One should always speak the truth. Therefore the doctor is wrong, when he tells the terminally ill patient that there is improvement in his health and he will be fine very soon.

In this example, the general rule i.e. 'One should speak the truth' cannot be applied to a special case of a terminally ill patient. Hence the fallacy of accident is committed.

Activity: 4

It is wrong to shed blood. Therefore a surgeon should not perform an operation on a patient.

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(4) Converse fallacy of Accident:

This fallacy arises due to wrong use of rules in exceptions.

This fallacy is the converse of the fallacy of Accident. According to Cohen and Nagal there are certain truths which are "accidental truths." It is irrelevant to arrive at general principles out of accidental truths, In other words, what is true in accidental or exceptional case need not be true in general. In this fallacy an attempt is made to arrive at a general rule on the basis of a special or an exceptional case.

Definition: when it is argued that what is true in a special or exceptional case, is true as a general rule, we commit the Converse fallacy of Accident.

Examples.

(i) An ambulance is allowed to overtake other vehicles and break traffic rules. Therefore every vehicle must be allowed to break traffic rules

In this example, it is argued that what is true in a special case of ambulance i.e. it is allowed to break traffic rules is accepted as a general rule for all vehicles.

(ii) A visually challenged student is given a writer for the exam. So every student must be given writers for exams.

In this example it is argued that what is true in a special case of a visually challenged student i.e the student is given a writer for the exam is accepted as a general rule for all students.

Activity: 5

Mr. X died while performing an operation on him. So Surgeons must not be allowed to perform operations on patients

Why do you think that in the above example the Converse fallacy of Accident is committed? Explain.

.....

(5) Fallacy of Ignoratio Elenchi [Irrelevant Conclusion]

Ignoratio Elenchi is the latin expression. It is called the fallacy of "irrelevant conclusion".

In this fallacy, the conclusion is irrelevant, i.e. the premises are besides the point. So they do not yield the conclusion. The argument is put across in such a way that the listeners may be misguided to accept it as good. Ignoratio Elenchi is a group of fallacies. Let us study each fallacy in detail.

1. Argumentum ad Baculum (Appeal to threat, fear and force)

In this fallacy, there is an appeal to force or fear in order to get an argument accepted by the opponent. The appeal need not be always to physical force, but it may be in a non-physical manner, in a more minute way, in the form of mental torture, i.e. social boycott, or even threat of war. Anything which arouses fear in an

opponent, that forces the opponent to accept it. In logic our conclusion is correctly drawn only when we give good reasons for it.

Definition: The fallacy of argumentum ad Baculum is committed, when the person does not have rational argument and instead he appeals to threat, fear and force to establish his conclusion.

This fallacy is based on the principle of 'Might is right'.

Examples

(i) Teacher to the student "If you do not attend the lectures, I will fail you."

In this example the teacher threatens the student that she will fall him. This creates fear in the mind of the student, so he is forced to attend the lectures.

(ii) An industrialist to his employees: "If you join the union, I may seriously think of terminating you from the job,"

In this example an Industrialist threatens his employee that he will terminate the employee from the job, which creates fear in the mind of the employee and he is forced not to join the union.

Activity: 6

The soldier to his enemy at war: "Surrender or Die".

Why do you think that in the above example the fallacy of Argumentum ad Baculum is committed? Explain.

2. Argumentum ad Hominem [Appeal direted against the man]

It is a very ancient but very prevalent fallacy even in recent times.

Definition: The fallacy of argumentum ad Hominem is committed when a person, instead of giving correct reasons to prove ones own

argument, makes an attempt to refute an opponent's argument by a personal attack on the opponent's character, conduct, reputation [beliefs or opinions], background, or past views which are irrelevant to the situation.

The term 'Argumentum ad Hominem' literally means 'Against the man'. Modern logicians called it, the fallacy of 'tu quoque' which means 'you also'.

Mostly this fallacy is committed in a courtroom, in the field of politics and debates..

Examples

(i) "How can you talk in favour of coeducation, when you send your daughter to girls college."

In this example the person attacks the opponent's conduct i.e. sending his own daughter to girls college, instead of proving his argument with proper reasons.

(ii) "What right do you have, to tell me, to wear a helmet while riding a bicycle, when I have never seen you wearing it?"

In this example the person attacks the opponent's conduct i.e. not wearing a helmet while riding a bicycle, instead of proving his own argument with proper reasons.

Activity: 7

"How can you accuse me for copying in the exam, I had seen you copying in the exam last time."

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the a	bove e	xan	ple?	Explai	n.		

3. Argumentum ad Populum. [Emotional appeal to people]

Irving Copi calls it "an emotional appeal to people". In this type of fallacy appeal is made

to people's emotions rather than to reason, in order to establish one's own point of view.

Definition: When the premises of an argument make an appeal to people's emotions, and feelings in order to support the truth of some unrelated conclusion, the fallacy of argumentum ad Populum is committed.

Propagandists use this type of arguments as easiest way of arousing people's emotions. For this purpose they may sometimes use emotional language which is irrelevant to the content or information. e.g. Political parties using emotional language to win the votes.

Examples

(i) A particular model of mobile is the best in the market Don't you know that it has the highest sale in the market?

In this example, there is an emotional appeal to people for a particular model of mobile.

(ii) "How can you criticize Dowry system? Are you wiser than your ancestors?"

In this example there is an emotional appeal to people, to follow Dowry system.

Activity: 8

"Married Girl must wear sari. Don't you know that the great grand-mothers always did that for years?"

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4. Argumentum ad Verecundiam. [Appeal to improper authority]

We cannot always prove everything by our-self. So we have to accept the views of an authority. But very often, the authority we quote is not a proper one. **Definition:** The fallacy of argumentum ad Verecundiam is committed when an appeal is made to improper authority.

The person sometimes does not have special knowledge in the area of discussion, yet to prove one's own point of view, an improper authority is quoted.

Advertisers takes advantages of the popularity of some famous personalities for the sale of their products. When common people are made to believe and accept that a particular product is good just because famous people recommended it, this fallacy is committed.

Examples

(i) A famous film star claims, a particular hair oil is the best. So it must be good.

In this example, the argument appeals to the authority of an actor. But actor is an improper authority for deciding whether the hair oil is good.

(ii) I am sure that, this cold drink is a very good drink, as I heard the famous cricketer talk about it, in one advertisement.

In this example, the argument appeals to the authority of a cricketer. But cricketer is an improper authority for deciding whether the cold drink is good.

Activity: 9

How can you doubt it? My friend said, the film is good.

Why do you think that in the ab	ove
example the fallacy of Argumentum	ad
Verecundiam is committed? Explain.	

5. Argumentum ad Misericordiam. [Appeal to pity]

In this fallacy there is an appeal to pity or feeling of sympathy for getting a conclusion accepted. However an appeal to pity is not always logically relevant to the truth of a conclusion.

Definition: The fallacy of Argumentum ad Misericordiam is committed when someone tries to win support for an argument by making an appeal to feeling of pity or sympathy.

It is very common in court room. When the defence attorney is unable to offer good reasons for his client's defence, he may appeal to pity as a last attempt to save the client from being punished

Examples

(i) "Gentlemen of Jury, I earnestly make an appeal to you to sympathize with my client - who is a pretty young widow, with tear-stained face, mourning and holding a new born baby in her arms."

In this example the lawyer tries to win support for his client by an appeal to the feeling of pity. So that the Jury will forgive his client.

(ii) "Sir, I request you to pardon me. No doubt I am guilty of copying in the examination, but you know that my father is no more and my mother has been suffering from cancer since last two years. I being the eldest in the family, had to look after my sick mother and younger siblings. So I could not prepare for the examination."

In this example the student tries to gain support, by an appeal to the feeling of pity for himself, so that the teacher will forgive him.

Activity: 10

"Please do not dismiss me from job, I really need it. My Father is now bed-ridden. I am the only son and have to look after my old parents."

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6. Argumentum ad Ignorantiam [Appeal to ignorance]

Definition: The fallacy of argumentum ad Ignorantiam occurs, when lack of knowledge or ignorance of the opponent is taken as evidence to prove one's own point of view.

In other words it is an error that is committed, when it is argued that one's proposition is true, simply on the basis that it has not been proved as false by the opponent or the opponent's proposition is false simply because the opponent has no evidence to prove it as true.

Here ignorance of how to prove or disprove a proposition, clearly does not establish the truth or falsity of the proposition. This kind of argument is not a fallacious in the court of Law because as per the guiding principle, court assumes that person is innocent till he is proved to be guilty.

Examples

(i) Mr. Peter said, he is courageous because nobody ever told him, he is not.

In this example there is an appeal to ignorance. i.e. Just because the opponents have no evidence to prove that 'Peter is not courageous', therefore Peter's statement that 'he is courageous' is considered as true.

(ii) Nobody has so far proved that ghost exists. Therefore ghosts do not exist.

In this example there is an appeal to ignorance, i.e. Just because there is no evidence to prove that 'ghost exists, therefore ghosts do not exist is considered to be true.

Activity: 11

Nobody has so far proved that the soul is mortal. Therefore the soul is immortal.

Why do you think that in the above
fallacy of Argumentum ad Ignorantiam is
committed? Explain.

(6) Fallacy of Petitio Principii [Begging the Question]

Petitio Principii is a fallacy of proof rather than inference. Here it should be noted that the premise is not logically irrelevant to the truth of the conclusion but the premise is logically irrelevant to the purpose of proving or establishing the conclusion.

Petitio principii is popularly known as 'Begging the Question'. The expression 'begging the question' makes it clear that which is to be proved, is taken for granted.

E.g. To give charity to beggars is right because it is the duty to be charitable. Here premise contains the conclusion. So the fallacy of Petitio principii is committed.

It takes two sub-forms:

1. Hysteron Proteron:

In Hysteron Proteron, there is direct assumption. This fallacy is committed in a single step of inference by use of synonym. That means the reason given [i.e. the premise] merely repeats the statement to be proved [i.e. conclusion] but in different words, having the same meaning.

Examples

(i) This cloth is transparent Because we can see through it.

In this example, the premise i.e. we can see through the cloth repeats the conclusion i.e. the cloth is transparent, in different words having the same meaning.

(ii) The wind is invisible Because we can never see it.

In this example, the premise i.e. we can never see wind repeats the conclusion i.e. the wind is invisible, in different words having the same meaning.

Activity: 12

Mr. Raju is insane, for his behaviour is that of a mad man.

Why do you think that, in the above example the fallacy of Hysteron Proteron is committed? Explain.

2. Arguing in Circles.

In fallacy of Arguing in Circles, or Vicious Circle, the premise that is assumed is not the conclusion itself. But it is something whose proof's depends upon the conclusion.

Here the subject of the premise becomes the predicate of the conclusion and vice versa.

The logical form of this fallacy is: P is true, because Q is true.

And Q is true, because P is true.

Examples

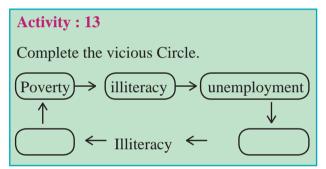
(i) Monica is famous, therefore she is in film industry.

Monica is in film industry, therefore she is famous.

In this example, the premise i.e. Monica is famous, therefore she is in film industry repeats itself as a conclusion i.e. Monica is in film industry, therefore she is famous, but in a round about manner.

(ii) Healthy mind implies healthy body, and Healthy body implies healthy mind.

In this example, the premise i.e. Healthy mind implies healthy body repeats itself as the conclusion i.e. Healthy body implies healthy mind, But in a round about manner.



Summary

- Fallacy means an error in an argument.
- Fallacies are classified into two types formal and non-formal.
- Formal fallacy is committed, when a rule of Logic is violated
- Non-formal fallacy in committed due to misleading use of language.
- I. M. copi has classified non-formal fallacies as follows:
 - (1) Fallacy of Division
 - (2) Fallacy of Composition
 - (3) Fallacy of Accident
 - (4) Converse Fallacy of Accident
 - (5) Fallacy of Ignoratio Elenchi
 - (i) Argumentum ad Baculum
 - (ii) Argumentum ad Hominem

- (iii) Argumentum ad Populum
- (iv) Argumentum ad Verecundiam
- (v) Argumentum ad Misericordiam
- (vi) Argumentum ad Ignoratiam
- (6) Fallacy of Potitio principii

[B] Arguing in Circles

- (i) Hysteron Proteron
- (ii) Arguing in Circles

Activity: 14

Give few examples of the experiences you had, where you came across some fallacies committed in the arguments.

Exercises

Q. 1	2. 1. Fill in the blanks with suitable words from those given in the brackets:		When there is an appeal tothe fallacy of argumentum ad Verecundian		
(1)	Fallacy of is committed, when it is argued that what is true as a		is committed. [A] Improper authority		
	general rule, is also true in a special case. [A] Accident	(8)	[B] Emotional feeling of people When an argument wrongly proceeds		
(2)	[B] Converse of accident fallacy is committed, when		from of term, the fallacy of Composition is committed.		
	the rule of Logic is violated. [A] Non-formal [B] Formal		[A] Collective use of term to distributive use		
(3)	Fallacy of argumentum ad, is committed when we appeal to pity.		[B] Distributive use of term to collective use		
(4)	[A] Verecundiam [B] Misericordiam Fallacy of argumentum ad, is based on the principle of 'Might is Right'.	(9)	The fallacy of argumentum ad is committed when it is argued that a proposition is true simply on the basis that it has not been proved false or that it is		
(5)	[A] Baculum [B] Populum Fallacy of is committed when		false because it has not been proved to be true.		
	it is wrongly argued that, what is true of the whole class is also true of its member.	(10)	[A] Ignoratiam [B] Hominem In the fallacy of there is direct		
	[A] Division [B] Composition		assumption.		
(6)	Fallacy of is committed when		[A] Hysteron Proteron		
	the premise repeats itself as the conclusion, in a round about manner.		[B] Accident		
	[A] Hysteron Proteron				

Q. 2. State whether the following statements are true or false:

- (1) Argumentum ad Hominem occurs when one attempts to attack on personal drawbacks and short comings of man.
- (2) In the fallacy of Petitio principii, what is to be proved is taken for granted.
- (3) Converse fallacy of Accident is committed when it is argued that what is true of a member of a group is also the of the whole group.
- (4) The modern name for the fallacy of argumentum ad Populum is 'tu quoque'.
- (5) Fallacy of argumentum ad Misericordiam is committed when we appeal to threat.
- (6) Formal fallacy is committed, when the conclusion is not relevant to the premise.
- (7) Fallacy means an error in an argument.
- (8) In the fallacy of Petitio principii the premise is logically irrelevant to the purpose of proving or establishing the conclusion.
- (9) Fallacy of Division is generally committed in the court-room, as a last attempt to save the client from being punished.
- (10) Argumentum ad Ignoratiam is not fallacious in the court of Law.

Q. 3. Match the columns:

(A) (B)

- (1) Ignoratio Elenchi (a) Emotional appeal to People
- (2) Petitio Principi (b) Appeal directed against the man
- (3) Argument Ad (c) Irrelevant Hominem Conclusion
- (4) Argument Ad (d) Begging the Populum Question

Q. 4. Give logical terms for the following:

- (1) Any error in reasoning.
- (2) Error due to misleading use of language.

- (3) Error done due to violation of any rule of logic.
- (4) Error done in the argument, where one wrongly proceeds from part to whole.
- (5) Error done in an argument, where one arrives at a general principles on the basis of accidental cases.
- (6) Latin expression for the fallacy of 'irrelevant conclusion'.
- (7) The error done in an argument, where one threatens his opponent and forces him to accept his statement as true.
- (8) The fallacy of an argument against the man.
- (9) Fallacy that is used as a last resort in the court-room to save the client from being punished by mercy petition.
- (10) The error committed in an argument for the sale of products by the celebrities.

Q. 5. Explain the following:

- (1) Fallacy of Division
- (2) Fallacy of Composition
- (3) Fallacy of Accident
- (4) Converse fallacy of Accident
- (5) Fallacy of argumentum ad Baculum
- (6) Argumentum ad Hominem
- (7) Argumentum all Verecundiam
- (8) Argumentum ad Ignoratiam
- (9) Argumentum ad populum
- (10) Petitio Principii

Q. 6. Recognize with reasons, the fallacies committed in each of the following arguments:

- (1) "If you do not vote for my candidate, then you will find it difficult to stay in this locality
- (2) The ball is blue. Therefore the atom that make it up are also blue.
- (3) How can Ravi be truthful? Because his own brother was caught for lying.

- (4) We should never treat any human being as a means. Therefore we should not hire a coolie for lifting our heavy luggage.
- (5) The novel is interesting because many people read it and the novel is read by many people because it is interesting.
- (6) It is meaningless to argue in favour of democracy, since even a famous cricketer was against it.
- (7) Employee to his Boss says "Sir I appeal you, not to dismiss me from my job. I have to support my old parents and young children. If I lose my job, my family will have to starve to death. So please have pity on me."
- (8) Mr. X is humiliating because he is degrading.
- (9) A student is allowed to appear for supplementary examination, as she was sick during terminal examination. So all the students must be allowed to appear for supplementary examination.
- (10) These documents are authentic because they are factual.
- (11) The Union has voted for strike. As a member of the Union, you too must have voted for strike.
- (12) He cannot be successful home minister. Since he could not even manage his own family affairs.
- (13) This Airline service is the best in the world. Don't you know that they have been serving people, since last one decade?
- (14) We had this law for last forty years, but nobody talked against it. So this Law is correct.
- (15) "Mam please assess my answer sheet again, there may be some error. I studied very hard for weeks and my career demands on getting a good grade. If you give me a failing grade I'm ruined! Please have pity on me."

- (16) "To defend oneself from injury is perfectly justified. Therefore a patient is justified in kicking a surgeon who is about to perform an operation on him.
- (17) A Girl to a friend says "If you do not come with me for the movie, I will not talk to you."
- (18) Soul is eternal as it never dies.
- (19) I am sure our party will win this election as the famous actor said so in his recent meeting.
- (20) Soldiers are right in killing the enemy at war. Therefore, we should not object to soldier killing people.
- (21) Each student of this class is attentive. Therefore this class on the whole is attentive.
- (22) There is no evidence to prove that there is life after death. Therefore there is no life after death.
- (23) 'Accident caused by youngster's driving', is commonly read in Newspapers. Hence no youngster should be allowed to drive.
- (24) Sodium Chloride [table salt] may be safely eaten. Therefore its constituent elements, Sodium and Chloride can also be eaten safely.
- (25) How can you believe the charge made against the CEO of the company, when the person making the charges himself is a culprit?
- (26) "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, look at this miserable man, in a wheelchair, unable to use his legs. Could such a man really be guilty of embezzlement?"
- (27) "If you do not promote the sales, then you will be dismissed from the job."
- (28) "Artists are moody. Hemant is an artist. Hence Hemant is moody."

