
UNIT 39 MORE FALLACIES AND ARGUMENTS IN ADVERTISING

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39.0 OBJECTIVES

- to understand and evaluate statements about the future.
- to introduce some other kinds of invalid argumentation, mainly strategies that avoid the issue,
- to examine the everyday discourse of the media, to see inconsistencies and fallacies in argument, and
- to sensitize the reader to the clever and manipulative use of ideas and language in advertising.

39.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit we saw the necessity of ascertaining the facts, and the precautions to take in order to have a valid generalization from facts, rather than an overgeneralization. In this unit we shall discuss some other well-known fallacies in argumentation. Our examples are drawn from everyday life – mainly from the newspapers.

Advertising is a major presence in the media, especially in television. Do advertisements indeed influence people in their choices of what to buy? We shall

not address this question here, but we shall make a beginning in seeing how advertisements are designed to work – how they try to influence us, and in particular, how they use language to do so.

We hope that you will find the discussion interesting enough to look for your own examples as you read the unit. You can maintain a file of these, with your comments, and share them with your friends, discussing them in a group. This will improve your language as well as thinking skills, and also help you to get rid of your shyness in a group, if you have that problem.

39.2 MORE OVERGENERALIZATION

39.2.1 The Thin-entering Wedge

This fallacy is a form of overgeneralization into the future. It extrapolates from the present into the future in a wild way. You can think of it in popular terms as the argument “Give them an inch and they’ll take an ell”, or “the camel’s nose under the tent”. In a popular fable ‘An Arab and a camel’ by Aesop, a camel begins by requesting to put its nose into the master’s tent, and ends up occupying the entire tent, after throwing the master out!

Most of us have seen dire predictions about the future, especially in letters to the newspapers. Readers bemoan the loss of cultural values, of respect for elders, and forecast a gloomy future for a country full of irresponsible youth. The person who commits this fallacy notices a potential problem. Instead of considering a variety of solutions for it, or instead of looking at similar problems in the present and past and the solutions to them, (s)he rushes headlong into the future until the problem balloons out of proportion.

This way to the future

The prophecies that have been made about the future of humanity are often full of gloom.

In 1968 Paul R. Ehrlich published a book, The Population Bomb, that envisioned a fifth of humanity starving to death by 1985.

In the eighth century BCE, the poet Hesiod announced that Greek civilization had no future.

On the other hand, there have been utopian prophecies that assume that technological progress will put an end to all our troubles. In 1939, the World Fair in New York featured a community called “Democracy”, or “The City of Tomorrow Morning”, as the New York Times Magazine called it. “It is no impossible dream of H.G. Wells or Jules Verne”, the article explained. “Democracy” would have convenient suburbs, ample parking and “little or no traffic congestion”. It wouldn’t need a police force, since “a city devoid of slums and poverty will breed little crime”. A city planner said: “Living in a spacious world, filled with beautiful and useful things, Man of Tomorrow will be a happy, healthy animal”.

Then again, technophobes have come back echoing the ancient Greeks’ belief that Pandora’s Box was punishment for the discovery of fire. “Last century”, says John Tierney, “the New York Times warned that electric light would damage people’s retinas; French experts predicted that railroad travel would cause passengers’ blood vessels to burst. Railroads were decried by literati like Melville and by the aristocrats, who complained that the lower classes would ‘move about needlessly’ ”.

Tierney asks: “Why do we listen to doomsayers?” His answer: “It seems to be

part of our evolutionary heritage. Our species thrived by learning to plan for the future, and to fear it. We react instantly to danger, and nothing seems as dangerous as the unknown”.

Tierney also proposes another explanation. “We’re prone to ... the pathetic fallacy, in which the poet believes that Nature is reflecting his own mood: the rain clouds are weeping for his lost love. We think the world is getting worse because our bodies are deteriorating. In 1902, when H.G. Wells was 36, he declared that ‘we are entering upon a progress that will go on, with an ever-widening and ever more confident stride, forever’. Four decades later, when he was 79 and fatally ill, he saw no hope for humanity. ‘This world is at the end of its tether’, he wrote. ‘The end of everything we call life is close at hand and cannot be evaded’.

An economist Julian N. Simon who made a historical study of these matters makes just two predictions for the future:

- Humanity’s condition will improve in just about every material way.
- Humans will continue to sit around complaining about everything getting worse.

[gathered from John Tierney, *The Optimists are Right*, SPAN, December 1996/ January 1997]

✓ Check Your Progress 1

1. What is a “pathetic fallacy”?

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2. Why is the forecast of doom seen as a pathetic fallacy by John Tierney?

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3. Read the passages given below (taken from popular magazines), and say what fallacy each passage illustrates.

(i) “Men dress lousily. So do children. Women are always more cautious about the sandals that go with the tops and belts. Even the purses match”.

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(ii) “In the future, as pressure on the nuclear family increases, someone will have to stay home. The domestic help will become expensive, so will be the increased necessity to tackle education and other problems of the new world order. Children will require and demand more attention. As the Indian economy becomes progressively rich, the women will choose to remain at home”.

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39.2.2 The Straw Man

The straw man is a dummy that you create, that represents a point of view which opposes yours. You give the impression of considering a rival point of view, but you do not really give this point of view a fair representation. You take a few stray characteristics of the opposite team, build your straw man with these, and demolish it.

Arguments between capitalists and communists, traditionalists and modernists, and other such rival groups often resort to this strategy. It is sometimes described as a class of over-generalization, because just a few characteristics of a class are taken up – usually, the weakest characteristics that you can easily demolish. These few characteristics are then presented as if they are representative and typical of the opposite point of view.

39.3 AVOIDING THE ISSUE

Much of the everyday argument from ordinary people that we see in the newspapers or television consists of opinions, beliefs and accusations rather than reasoned debate. Indeed, since classical times it has been noticed that there are certain common ways of avoiding the real issues in a debate; so these fallacies have Latin names!

39.3.1 Tu Quoque, or You too

In our everyday quarrels, we often react to an accusation by accusing the accuser of the same thing: “I’m a liar? What about you?” This is simply a way of saying “I’m wrong, but so are you”. Such a pseudo-argument does not of course stand scrutiny in a court room (a motorist cannot say, “I was drunk, but he was jaywalking!” to escape blame). But this strategy is often used in debate and discussion to avoid the real issue. We must therefore insist that the real issues be addressed, and remember that two wrongs do not make a right.

The argument that “X may not be good, but Y is no better”, is often found in letters to editors, and in political discussions. Try to find some examples of your own. Here a third person avoids an issue, or avoids choosing between two alternatives, by labeling them equally bad: “It’s a case of the pot calling the kettle black”. Even if it is true that pot and the kettle are both black, the fact that they are black remains!

You might be castigating a particular country, or a particular government, for its human rights violations. If someone responds, “Yes, but country X or government X also did the same thing”, your discussion is not going to consider why human rights violations occur, or how they can be prevented, or even if the evidence for these violations is true or false. You have simply side-stepped the issue and avoided thinking about it.

39.3.2 Ad hominem

Another way of avoiding the issue is to launch a personal attack on your opponent, diverting attention from the issue. A famous example of this fallacy is from a 19th century debate on Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection. The Church was understandably reluctant to concede that evolution was a possibility.

In a famous public debate, Bishop Wilberforce is said to have asked Huxley, a proponent of evolution, “Are you descended from a monkey on your mother’s side or your father’s?” By insulting Huxley in this way, Wilberforce sought to conceal the fact that he could not go into the scientific merits of the case.

Imagine a drama critic who complains that the playwright's name has not been announced: "How can I tell whether it's a good play unless I know who wrote it?" You will surely not take his review seriously. As an ordinary member of the public you do perhaps choose to view a movie or play on the strength of the reputation of the people who made it or wrote it; but you need to judge the movie or play on its merits.

Ad hominem is a form of character assassination. It occurs whenever we "label" someone: as a communist, a capitalist, a male chauvinist, a feminist, a person of loose morals ...

In a combination of *ad hominem* and *tu quoque*, we may not give an argument the weight it deserves because we think its source is unreliable. Suppose someone tells you all about the ill-effects of smoking. Later you catch this person having a cigarette. You may then take his arguments against smoking less seriously. This is an illogical reaction.

It is true that we do often react in this way, but that does not make it a rational reaction. We expect persons in a position of moral authority to "practise what they preach". A religious leader, or a parent, cannot tell us to "Do as I say, not as I do". But outside such situations where our emotions are involved, the source of an argument should not influence our judgment about its soundness. We might want to evaluate the argument more carefully, but we cannot reject it.

Thus while a parent who smokes or drinks may not have the moral authority to tell his children not to do so, we do not reject laboratory findings about the ill-effects of smoking or alcohol, merely because the scientists who published these findings themselves smoke and drink!

39.3.3 Appeal to Authority, etc.

A fallacy closely related to *ad hominem* is the appeal to authority (*ad verecundiam*). The authority we appeal to may be a person or an institution (for example, an expert, an academy, a government document, a religious text ...). It may even be "conventional propriety", which is a way of saying: "Everyone does this, so it must be right", or "What will people think/ say if ...?" It could also be the argument: "We've always done it this way." If we think in any of these ways, we have given up our right to think for ourselves and judge for ourselves the merits of a situation.

Just as we often find it desirable to "go with the crowd", we find it frightening to go against the crowd. This brings us to the next two fallacies, appeal to fear or *ad baculum*, and appeal to the sentiments of the crowd, or *ad populum*.

✓ Check Your Progress 2

4. Identify the kind of argument used in the statements underlined below:

i) There is no question that country X possesses weapons of mass destruction. There are UN documents from the past decade on this.

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ii) Suppose there is a debate whether a person born outside a country can become President of that country. Party A says they are foreigners and cannot hold high office. Party B responds by naming illustrious persons in the country's recent history who have held public office but were not born in this country.

- iii) Suppose in response to the argument in (ii), a spokesperson of Party A says that 'Party B has lost its mental balance' in comparing their candidate to these illustrious persons.

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- iv) 'The CM strongly denounced X's statement that women do not have a say in voting, and said that X's was a feudal party that did not respect women. They wanted to keep women within the four walls of their house.'

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39.4 THE LOGIC OF ADVERTISEMENTS

Advertisements work by appealing to our sentiments or emotions rather than to reason. They also employ a clever use of language.

39.4.1 Appeal to Novelty

One of the most common “arguments” in an advertisement is that a product is new, or has undergone some change to make it new. The change may be just in a name, or in a logo (the way the name is written), or in the packaging. If there is indeed some innovation in the product, the advertisement is sure to mention this. More often, it just asserts that the product is new. It draws your attention to a change in the package, or the logo. As I write this, at least two products have changed their logos; a third draws attention to a change by personifying change, with the slogan “change is here, change is good”; and a fourth advertises a change in its logo, from a mono colour to a colourful one, with the suggestion that the walls of respectability have given way to an open, friendly company. Here the change is purely one of the image of the company.

An advertisement for a refrigerator begins with the slogan:

“My new [brand name] refrigerator with the [name of a] technology.”

Notice the word new to modify a known brand name. Similarly, an advertisement for a well-known brand of soap shows pictures of this soap, on which the name of the soap appears, with the line “For once, you can trust your skin to a new soap.” The advertisement here simultaneously gives us the comfort of the old and the novelty of the new product. Again, a well-known brand of skin lotion begins the advertisement copy with the words “Introducing the new international formulation of [brand name] body lotion ...”

Why is the appeal to novelty such a favourite ploy of advertisers? Perhaps it speaks to our desire to be up-to-date or ‘mod’, as also our fear of becoming outdated. It lets us think of ourselves as flexible and willing to try out new things. We also seem to believe that ‘new’ necessarily means better, or improved.

39.4.2 Appeal to Desires

Advertisements also appeal to wealth, status, power, modernity (=newness), and the

desire to belong to these groups. The words they use to convey these ideas are typical and fairly easy to identify. They appeal to sexiness and cuteness (babies, children, puppies, kittens and cuddly toys) as well.

Advertisers routinely use superlative words like ‘the best, the biggest, the largest, the most successful’. They deliberately use words which are ambiguous or vague, with associations to all the desired qualities described above, such as ‘the hottest (suggesting sexiness),’ and ‘international, world class, today’s’, or ‘of today’, suggesting modernity and success without going into the details or the facts. This is known as “equivocation”: a way of being deliberately unclear, in order to mislead people.

Advertisers try to describe their product using colourful adjectives. The British linguist David Crystal has an amusing anecdote about this. Read about it below.

Advertisers will go to almost any length to get a good slogan for their product, as linguistics expert David Crystal can confirm:

Someone representing a shoe company rang me up and asked if I could supply them with some words that would be good for selling shoes. “Adjectives?” I asked. “Yes”, said a voice, a bit uncertainly, — and then it asked, “How much do you charge for adjectives?” Well I thought it was a joke, one of my mates from work, perhaps, so I said, “One pound fifty a dozen”, and added, “I do a good line in nouns and adverbs too”. There was a pause. “I’ll have two dozen of each”, said the voice.

A couple of days later through the post came an order from a well-known shoe retailer for two dozen adjectives, three dozen adverbs, and so on – Ten pounds and eighty plus tax, postage and packing. I did the best I could and looked up some highly descriptive words which would do for talking about shoes, and sent them off. I never did find out if they were satisfied with the products, but they paid very promptly.

– David Crystal, courtesy the [Reader’s Digest](#)

One popular strategy of advertising is the endorsement, or the statement by a well-known, popular person that he or she uses the product, or recommends it. This is both an appeal to authority and an appeal to popularity: the person who endorses a product has some authority in some area, but is also popular (a purely technical expert does not have ‘star value’!)

The endorsement may be combined with an analogy or comparison: Person X eats/ drinks/ drives this product; if you do so, you too will be as elegant or stylish as (s)he is. Or the product itself is claimed to be as elegant or stylish as (s)he is.

Advertisements can also appeal to fear. Many insurance advertisements fall into this category. Advertisements for health insurance, accident insurance, fire and theft insurance, all suggest that disaster may strike any moment, and it is up to you to prepare for it. Life insurance advertisements, however, usually avoid referring to your mortality. They stress, rather, the benefits of a retired life that is free from financial worry.

✓ Check Your Progress 3

5. Identify the argument or words used in these advertisements to persuade you to buy the product:

- i) Take the hottest world models to your bedroom. The New Royale Bedroom Range. ... The world class range of bedroom furniture is here...

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ii) Wear air. Airy, breathable, youthful, relaxed, comfortable ... Refinement blends with functionality in the new basics Linen Trouser Line.

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iii) 100% brilliance. 25% less. India's largest diamond jewellery company.

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iv) Anna Kournikova's choice. The [brand name] combines beauty with heritage ... only tennis star Anna Kournikova can match performance with glamour so well.

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6. Suppose you are David Crystal. Make a list of a dozen your own 'highly descriptive words which would do for talking about shoes'. You can use adjectives, adverbs and nouns.

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7. What do the following advertisements appeal to?

i) [Brand name] is crafted from 18 carat gold, crowned with sapphire crystal and comes with a life time guarantee. [photograph of product] ... Look as much as you like. (That's about all most people can afford to do.)

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ii) When [brand name] diamond jewellery enters your home, Laxmi and prosperity follow.

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39.5 POST HOC

This is a Latin term, whose full form is *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. It means “After this, therefore because of this”.

Many cultures have the story of the cock who crows at sunrise, and thinks that the sun rises because he does so. A character in a play, a cock called Chanticleer, is guilty of this fallacy. In my own language, we have a story of an old woman who owns a cock, who leaves the village after quarrelling with the villagers, threatening them that the sun will never again rise in the village after her departure.

Two events that regularly occur one after another may or may not be causally connected. This is easy to see in the case of the cock crow and sunrise. In some other cases, it may not be easy to determine. This is especially so in court cases that sue for damages. We read earlier of twins separated at birth, who have now found each other, and are suing the hospital for “moral harm”. What is the extent of the harm wrought by the hospital’s mistake, and how can a reasonable price be put on it? Such questions occupy the courts. Essentially, they have to decide whether some current problem is because of an earlier event.

This is not so difficult in the case of victims of a fire, a flood, or an accident: their physical injuries must be treated, and the loss of their belongings compensated. The question becomes more complex when more subtle connections are made between one event and another. A person receives a head injury in an accident; this is treated, and the hospitalization and medical expenses are paid for. But the person then finds it difficult to find a job, because (s)he cannot remember things very well, and cannot think quickly of the answers, at interviews or examinations. Should (s)he be compensated for the resulting change in lifestyle?

Industrial accidents and the liability of companies towards their workers is an ill-researched or documented area in a developing country, where people are only too glad to get a job. But it is in the public interest for us to be aware of the hazards of certain kinds of employment, or certain practices (the disposal of waste, for example). If not, there may be workers whose profession is making them fall ill in some way, but whose medical expenses are not being taken care of. In a kind of reverse *post hoc*, their employers may deny that the workplace had anything to do with their injuries.

In all these cases we have to carefully determine what causes have which effects. It might interest you to know that while smoking is now banned in all public places because of “passive smoking”, or the unintentional inhaling of cigarette smoke by nonsmokers, in the 1950s a debate raged whether or not smoking led to lung cancer! The tobacco companies and the health lobby fought this issue out at length, and today we have accepted a link between smoking and cancer. More recently, there have been isolated reports linking prolonged cell phone use to brain tumours; but the reports always urge that the findings must be “treated with caution”.

39.5.1 Post hoc in Superstitions and Advertisements

Popular superstitions are instances of the *post hoc* fallacy. So is the use of lucky charms, dates, and so on. We start out for an important appointment, and someone asks, “Where are you going?” It so happens that the appointment does not materialize. We are now convinced in the wisdom of the superstition “Don’t ask a person where (s)he is going just as she starts out”. We win a game, or pass a test, and notice that on that day we were wearing a favourite pendant, bracelet, or pair of shoes. We take care to wear this item again the next time we play a game or go for an examination, as if this item of apparel was responsible for our success.

'Left' and 'right' have played a leading role in such superstitions. In English we say "I must have got out of bed on the wrong side this morning" if we are bad tempered all that day, as if the event of getting up on a certain side of the bed could cause our irritability. In our culture we do all auspicious things with the right hand, the right foot, and even at the right time as decided by looking at the stars! None of these are rational or logical beliefs. They give us comfort, confidence and hope in stressful situations, and that is all. These psychological factors may, however, be indirectly responsible for our success, and so reinforce our belief in a causal connection between our favourite shirt and success at job interviews!

Advertisements use the logic of *post hoc* very often. A man uses a certain deodorant spray, and the girls swoon over him. The implication is that if you use the same spray, the same thing will happen to you. A girl loses a man because her hair is not silky, or there are pimples on her face; that comes the remedy in the form of a shampoo or a cream, and the next scene shows the girl happily engaged. The suggestion is that if you use that shampoo or cream, you too will soon be happily engaged. These suggestions somehow seem to appeal to our emotions (to "wishful thinking"), even if we know that logically, it is not possible for the world's problems to be solved in this way. The advertisers capitalize on human longing, on our strong wish for good things to happen to us, and seduce us with beautiful images and words. We all want to be admired, to be the life and soul of the party, to be engaged, or to have beautiful teeth!

There are three situations in which we are most likely to fall into the *post hoc* fallacy.

- A. Something happens, and soon after that (or simultaneously) something else happens, with considerable frequency or regularity. It begins to look like the first event causes the second. (Remember the example of the cock crowing at sunrise?)
- B. More commonly, event A may affect event B, as part of a complex process that includes other causes. Cucumbers may be one item in a complicated process that brings on a pain in the stomach.
- C. Events A and B move together in a time scale. Which event is cause, and which is effect? Or are they both due to a larger, general cause? Or is there no connection at all?

✓ **Check Your Progress 4**

8. Express clearly the argument in the following advertisements.

i. "[Brand name]" is the secret of my energy.

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ii. [Child shakes hands with "tough" cricketers; they wring their hands in pain] "What do you eat? I eat ——!"

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iii. [Photograph of famous and beautiful film star] [Name of film star] is wearing the lipstick [brand xxx].

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9. Here are a variety of bad arguments, including the types discussed in the earlier unit. Can you identify the fallacies?

i) A letter to the editor is critical of the industrial workers' union demanding a pay raise. If we give it to them, he says, then the other workers' unions will want a raise. Soon others will join the clamour, and the result will be a rise in inflation, with the result that the extra money you get will buy even less in the future than it does now. How will this spiral end?

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ii) The decision to make mathematics an optional subject at the tenth class examination, writes a reader of a newspaper, shows that children nowadays want success handed to them on a platter. They have become soft and unwilling to work, and will grow up to be lazy and gutless.

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iii) Country X accuses some citizens of Country Y of spying, expelling them. The next day, Country Y expels an equal number of citizens of Country X, with the same accusation.

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iv) A woman breaks a mirror. Later that day there is a theft in the house. Everyone agrees that the broken mirror has brought bad luck.

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v) There is lightening, followed by thunder. So lightening causes thunder.

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10. As a child, I saw leaves move in the breeze. I knew that we fanned ourselves to create a breeze. So I assumed that the leaves were creating the breeze. What fallacy was I committing?

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39.6 LET US SUM UP

1. The fallacy of the thin-entering wedge is a form of overgeneralization into the future. It extrapolates from the present into the future in a wild way.
2. Since classical times it has been noticed that there are certain common ways of avoiding the real issues in a debate.
3. We often react to an accusation by accusing the accuser of the same thing (*tu quoque*, or “you too”), but two wrongs do not make a right.
4. Another form of this fallacy is when a third person avoids an issue, or avoids choosing between two alternatives, by labeling them equally bad: “It’s a case of the pot calling the kettle black”. This simply side-steps the issue and avoids thinking about it.
5. Another way of avoiding the issue is to launch a personal attack on your opponent, diverting attention from the issue. *Ad hominem* is a form of character assassination. It occurs whenever we “label” someone: as a communist, a capitalist, a male chauvinist, a feminist, a person of loose morals ...
6. In a combination of *ad hominem* and *tu quoque*, we may refuse to give an argument the weight it deserves because we think the source of the argument is unreliable. We may want to evaluate the argument more carefully in such a case, but we cannot reject it.
7. A fallacy closely related to *ad hominem* is the appeal to authority (*ad verecundiam*). The authority may be a person or an institution (for example, an expert, an academy, a government document, a religious text ...). It may even be “conventional propriety”: “Everyone does this, so it must be right”, or “What will people think/ say if ...?” or the argument: “We’ve always done it this way”.
8. Just as we find it desirable to “go with the crowd”, we find it frightening to go against the crowd. This brings us to the next two fallacies, appeal to fear or *ad baculum*, and appeal to the sentiments of the crowd, or *ad populum*.
9. Advertisements work by appealing to our sentiments or emotions rather than to reason. They also employ a clever use of language.
10. One of the most common “arguments” in an advertisement is that a product is new, or has undergone some change to make it new.
11. Advertisements also appeal to wealth, status, power, modernity (=newness), and the desire to belong to these groups. They appeal to sexiness and cuteness (babies, children, puppies, kittens and cuddly toys) as well.
12. Advertisers routinely use superlative words like ‘the best, the biggest, the largest, the most successful’. They deliberately use words which are ambiguous or vague, with associations to all the desired qualities described above, such as ‘the hottest (suggesting sexiness)’, and ‘international, world class, today’s’, or ‘of today’, suggesting modernity and success without going into the details or the facts. This is known as “equivocation”: a way of being deliberately unclear, in order to mislead people.
13. Advertisers try to describe their product using colourful adjectives.

14. One popular strategy of advertising is the endorsement, the statement by a well-known, popular person that he or she uses the product, or recommends it. This is both an appeal to authority and an appeal to popularity.
15. The endorsement may be combined with an analogy or comparison: Person X eats/ drinks/ drives this product; if you do so, you too will be as elegant or stylish as (s)he is. Or the product itself is claimed to be as elegant or stylish as (s)he is.
16. Advertisements can also appear to fear.
17. The Latin term *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* means "After this, therefore because of this".
18. However, two events that occur one after another may or may not be causally connected.
19. Popular superstitions are instances of the *post hoc* fallacy. So is the use of lucky charms, dates, and so on.
20. Advertisements use the logic of *post hoc* very often.
21. There are three situations in which we are most likely to fall into the *post hoc* fallacy:
 - A. Something happens, and soon after that (or simultaneously) something else happens, with considerable frequency or regularity. It begins to look like the first event causes the second. (Remember the example of the cock crowing at sunrise?)
 - B. More commonly, event A may affect event B, as part of a complex process that includes other causes. Cucumbers may be one item in a complicated process that brings on a pain in the stomach.
 - C. Events A and B move together in a time scale. Which event is cause, and which is effect? Or are they both due to a larger, general cause? Or is there no connection at all?

39.7 FURTHER READING

John Tierney, *The Optimists are Right*, SPAN, December 1996/ January 1997.

39.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. The pathetic fallacy is a poetic device in which nature is believed to reflect the mood of the human hero.
2. Tierney proposes that because our own bodies are deteriorating, we come to believe that the world is degenerating. This is a form of pathetic fallacy. The example he cites is that of two opposite prophecies by H.G. Wells. When Wells was young (36 years old), he believed in unending progress. By the time he was 79 years old, he saw no hope left for humanity.
3. (i) Overgeneralization.

- (ii) The thin-entering wedge, or overgeneralization into the future.

Check Your Progress 2

4. i.) Appeal to authority. The authority appealed to here is the United Nations.
- ii) This appeal to precedent, or ‘it has been done before’, is really an appeal to conventional propriety, and so a form of appeal to authority. Notice that the issue itself – foreign birth and public office – has not been addressed or illuminated in any way.
- iii) This is clearly a ‘personal’ attack, *ad hominem*. It does not address either the issue or the comparison, but it attacks the other party.
- iv) *Ad hominem* again, and labelling. The other party has been called feudal – an instance of a negative term; and this has been illustrated by an image of “the four walls of a house” within which they keep their women – a baseless attack on the other party. The issue of women and the vote has not been addressed.

Check Your Progress 3

5. i) The word new suggests novelty. Notice the equivocation in the sentence “Take the hottest world models to your bedroom”. What is being sold is furniture, but the image being evoked is of desirable women. This equivocation has guided the choice of bedroom furniture (rather than dining room or sitting room furniture) for the advertisement. Finally, notice the words “world class”.
- ii) Again the word new is used. Notice the string of adjectives: airy, breathable, youthful, relaxed, comfortable ... and the nouns refinement, functionality, suggesting the best of both worlds (elegance and comfort). Best of all, the advertising copy begins with a slogan that sounds catchy because of its internal rhyme (wear, air), and suggests lightness and comfort.
- iii) The fact that it is the largest diamond company is, strictly speaking, irrelevant. Its effect is to suggest that you are getting the best things at a discount (whereas you might expect slightly damaged goods to be sold at a discount). This argument is highlighted by the figures “100% brilliance. 25% less”.

Also, the advertisement “slashes” prices rather than “reduce” or “cut” them – the word sounds better (it rhymes well with prices), and it evokes a sense of action and movement, of spontaneity and an adventure.

- iv) This is both an endorsement and an analogy (it compares the product to the tennis star).
6. Please make your own list.
7. i) This advertising copy appeals to wealth and status, and therefore to exclusivity. Very few people will be among those who own this product – you will be one of a select few.
- ii) This appeals to a popular belief, and thus trades on an equivocation. There is a belief that buying gold etc. at some festival is a way of inviting Laxmi (the goddess of wealth) into the home.

The equivocation is that the gold etc., and the money you spend to get them, themselves symbolize Laxmi or prosperity. It is not logically clear how more prosperity will follow.

Check Your Progress 4

8.
 - i. I eat or drink this product, and so I am energetic.
 - ii. I eat this product, so I am stronger than even these strong cricketers!
 - iii. She's wearing that lipstick, so she looks beautiful. You wear that lipstick, you'll look beautiful too.
9.
 - i) This letter writer has got into a panic about the future – the thin-entering wedge fallacy. (S)he nowhere addresses the issue whether the workers' demand is justified or not (when did they last get an increase? How do their wages compare with others'?). There is only a hysterical prediction that everyone will want an increase, and the consequences will be disastrous.
 - ii) Overgeneralization, with a hint of the thin-entering wedge. The issue is not addressed: why is there a proposal to make mathematics optional at the school-leaving stage?
 - iii) *Tu quoque*, or you too – I may be wrong, but so are you; resulting in a tit-for-tat action. The charge of spying is not addressed at all.
 - iv) Post hoc – after this, so because of this.
 - v) Post hoc again – both are effects of a third, common cause!
10. A form of *post hoc*, assigning cause and effect to the wrong entities (leaves, breeze), because of a wrong analogy (leaves, a fan).