

Entrust Biblical Masculinity Lesson 15 Masculinity & the Mind Part 2 5/25/23

A Few Logical Fallacies

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:13)

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ (Col 2:8)

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong (1 Cor 16:13)

1. The Red Herring Fallacy

a. Definition:

It brings an irrelevant point into a discussion, sometimes for the purpose of distraction.

b. History:

Allegedly, the term “red herring” originates from the world of fox hunting in England. Hunters were concerned that their hunting dogs would not be distracted from a fox scent by other strong scents. They would train their dogs to smell the fox and chase it. But, there are lots of other smells in the forest besides foxes. And dogs can get distracted (e.g. We might imagine, “Oh, what’s that smell, a chipmunk, a squirrel, I’ll follow that instead...”). Thus, hunters would take a red herring, which was a very smelly fish, and wipe it on the ground over the fox trail. With the fox trail tainted with a potential distraction, hunters would bring in the dogs, and the dogs would smell the red herring. The idea was to keep them on the fox scent.

c. Examples:

i. Dad: “Hello, son, daughter: did you load and unload the dishwasher?”

Teenager: “Well, dad, you know, yesterday I swept the floor and cleaned my room.”

Dad: "That's great, thank you for doing that. But did you unload the dishwasher today?"

- ii. Not-yet-believer: "So, do you believe that this guy Jesus actually came back from the dead?"

You: "Yes, he did rise from the dead."

NYB: "That's just weird and besides, Christianity has a morally tainted history, like the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, and such."

- It may be unusual for someone to rise from the dead and true that some people who say they believe in Jesus have tainted the moral history in professing Christendom. But that has zero bearing on the veracity of Christ's resurrection. It is a distraction from the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. It is a red herring argument and an invalid point against the resurrection.

2. The Ad Hominem Fallacy

a. Definition:

Latin for "to the man"

A tactic in argument which attacks the person involved in the argument instead of addressing the issue. When someone attacks the person making the point instead of addressing the point.

b. Examples:

- i. Angus Atheist: "You know, the Bible says that Jesus the carpenter is going to fly back to Earth on the clouds one day, for everyone to see. Do you think that's true?"

Steadfast Steve: "It absolutely is true. What a great day that will be."

Angus: "That's just beyond silly. You've lost your mind."

- Angus may have temporarily relieved himself of having to deal with the certainty of Christ's return by reviling Steve,

but he has in no way refuted the claim of Christ's bodily return. Instead, he has merely made himself look incompetent by committing this fallacy.

- ii. Tired, faithful Dad: "Ok kids, time to get up and get ready for church."

Junior: "Ugh, why do we have to go, it's boring, let's just stay home."

TFD: "Remember, we are to do all things without grumbling or complaining. And, our good God is worthy of our worship."

Junior: "Well, you're a sinner, too, dad, so you're not one to talk."

- Despite Junior's theological astuteness correctly identifying TFD as a sinner, his argument in no way refutes the claim that every single attitude and action is to be absent of grumbling and complaining in God's universe.

- iii. Faithful, mature, loving Christian friend: "Look, we all need the death of Jesus for our sins. No one is better than anyone else. I am certainly deserving of hell. But, you have been in a pattern of speaking uncharitably about people; not believing the best; answering a matter before you hear, and you need to stop and ask people's forgiveness."

Glass Jaw Joe: "What do you mean? I trusted you as a friend, as someone to confide in, and share my heart with; and things I'm struggling with. How unloving of you. Besides, you're not really one to talk. I've heard you gossip before."

FMLCF: "I probably have sinned like that in the past. But that doesn't change the fact that you are in a pattern and you need to repent and stop."

- iv. Matthew 12:22-24 Then a demon-possessed man *who was* blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. ²³ All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

- Instead of objectively addressing the evidence as to whether or not Jesus could be the Son of David, the Messiah, they attack his character by suggesting that he is a servant of Satan.

3. The Genetic Fallacy

a. Definition:

To reject an idea or argument because of its origin; its beginning.

Sometimes the genetic fallacy is similar to the *modern fallacy*, the idea that a claim is superior because of its proximity to the present. C.S. Lewis referred to forms of this fallacy as “chronological snobbery.”

b. Examples:

- i. The idea that homosexuality is wrong can't be true because that argument came from the Bible during some ultra-conservative priestly class in B.C. days.
 - To justify the practice of homosexuality on the grounds of the distance in time and cultural-political persuasion of someone (presumably) through whom the word of God came in no way furthers the argument that homosexuality is morally permissible.
- ii. Truth-suppressor Trey: “The world could not have been made by some God in the sky in 6 days. That idea came from a book which knew nothing of modern science.”

You: “Genesis was given to us in a time when people did not likely possess the understanding of God's creation as we do today. But that in no way disproves the fact that an intelligent Creator did make all things in 6 days.”

- iii. John 1:45-46 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

- Genetic fallacy. It assumes that nothing good can come from Nazareth. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, therefore, he isn't the Messiah.

4. The Sentiment/Experiential Fallacy

a. Definition

When appeal to sentimentality, emotion, or experience is used to further, or reject, a claim as opposed to factual and objective reasoning.

b. Examples:

- i. Not-yet-believer friend: "So, you are saying that my grandfather, who was a decent guy, but was a Buddhist, died and is in hell now?"

Believer: "Look, this is God's word, not mine. I don't know what your dear grandfather believed. But here we are, still alive, and we have the opportunity to receive the great love of God by putting faith in Christ to receive forgiveness and eternal life."

NYB: "How dare you say that. I will never believe in Christ."

- ii. Friend: "I can't bring myself to believe in cessationism. I have too many friends, who are great people, that are charismatic."
- iii. Friend: "I see what you are saying about cessationism from the text, but I have seen some crazy things. Besides, if I look out the window and see a magenta elephant flying, you can't tell me that I did not see a magenta elephant flying."

You: "I hear what you're saying. But, we have to be careful of our epistemology. Is it our experience or Scripture that has the highest say in what we know to be true? And on a lighter note, if the Bible were to say, 'There is no such thing as magenta flying elephants,' then no matter what we see, they do not exist."

5. The Appeal to Fear Fallacy

a. Definition:

When someone attempts to persuade and further their argument by instilling fear rather than explaining the logical or moral veracity and necessity of the point.

The appeal to fear fallacy often is a type of propaganda (the attempt to persuade with an appeal to fear and/or without having one's audience carefully evaluate the claim objectively). Throughout history, this fallacy has been frequently used.

b. The Mechanics of the Appeal to Fear:

Often, when people become afraid, they are easier to control and/or persuade fallaciously. If individuals fear a certain outcome (whether factual or perceived) they will relinquish personal rights and necessary, righteous civic laws.

When a population is convinced that something bad will happen to them, often they can be subsequently persuaded to do whatever it takes to avoid that bad thing, even if it involves significant ethical violations. Using mass psychosis, a governing body can persuade a population that individuals with a certain ideology, ethnicity, or religion pose an imminent threat. (e.g. opposition to Mao's regime; Hitler's regime persuading people to fear Jews in Germany leading up to the Holocaust; leftist officials in the USA speaking of those who declined to wear masks and receive vaccines during the covid experiment; leftism's suggestion to individuals pretending to be the gender that they are not that the right is attempting genocide upon them).

➤ There are good reasons and bad reasons to be afraid:

i. Good

"Flee the wrath to come" (Fear of God's judgment and wrath is a good kind of fear, that should make us trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior).

Proverbs 14:16 A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless. ("cautious" has the idea of "fear," a good kind; afraid of consequences if I do evil, e.g. get hurt, sin against God, make my family sad, etc.)

1. Grizzly bears sometimes attack people in the Greater Yellowstone area. It's wise to carry a firearm and bear spray.

ii. Bad

1. I'm scared of what people will think about me if I tell them that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave and they need to believe in him. So, I won't tell them.

c. Examples:

- i. "If you talk about Jesus with people who don't worship him, you're going to isolate yourself really quickly."
- ii. "If you don't wear a mask or get vaccinated, you could cause another person's death."
- iii. Many people in town will get upset if we say that a boy, pretending to be a girl, can't use the girl's locker room. So, we shouldn't say that.

6. The Straw Man Fallacy

a. Definition

To misrepresent your opponent's argument with the result that it is easier to defeat.

A six foot tall "straw man" is easier to take down than a real six foot tall man.

b. Examples:

- i. Dad: "Son, I think you have been playing too many video games lately."

Son: "Oh, so you think I should just throw all my games in the garbage, never play one game again in my life, and just sit in my room and stare at the wall all day?"

- ii. Ron DeSantis Administration¹: "Classroom instruction by school personnel or third parties on sexual orientation or gender identity

¹ <https://www.newsmax.com/michaeldorstewitz/ron-desantis-lgbtq-liberals-detractors/2022/03/30/id/1063575/>

may not occur in kindergarten through grade 3 or in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards.”

Teaching kindergarten-aged kids that "they can be whatever they want to be" is "inappropriate" for children. "It's not something that's appropriate for any place, but especially not in Florida."

Leftists: This is a Don't Say Gay agenda. The bill erases LGBTQ identity, history, and culture — as well as LGBTQ students themselves.²

7. Bulverism

a. Definition

When someone avoids showing how and why an opponent's argument is objectively and factually wrong, and instead assumes it is wrong, followed by a form of psycho-analysis of why it is wrong.

C.S. Lewis (coined the term “Bulverism”): “In the course of the last 15 years I have found this vice so common that I have had to invent a name for it. I call it Bulversim. Some day I am going to write the biography of its imaginary inventor, Ezekiel Bulver, whose destiny was determined at the age of five when he heard his mother says to his father - who had been maintaining that two sides of a triangle were together greater than a third - ‘Oh you say that because you are a man.’ At that moment, Ezekiel Bulver assures us, ‘There flashed across my opening mind the great truth that refutation is no necessary part of argument. Assume that your opponent is wrong, and explain his error, and the world will be at your feet. Attempt to prove that he is wrong or (worse still) try to find out whether he is wrong or right, and the national dynamism of our age will thrust you to the wall.’”

b. Examples

- i. "All white people are racist. You just don't see this b/c you are white."

Robin DiAngelo: “It is not possible for your parents to have taught you not to be racist, or for your parents to have been free of racism

² <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/28/1089221657/dont-say-gay-florida-desantis>

themselves. This is not possible because racism is a social system embedded in our culture and its institutions.”³

- ii. "You can't understand this because you were not hugged as a child."
- iii. "You are unable to see the legitimacy and positives of a non-Christian culture because you have been brainwashed with the Bible."

8. Equivocation

a. Definition

When someone changes the meaning of a word in the middle of an argument.

b. Examples

- i. Benjamin Franklin: We must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly, we will all hang separately (when he signed the Declaration of Ind).
- ii. "The Declaration of Independence says that all men are created equal. But today, we do not see equality. Many people in our country make 50 times more money than other people. They live in 8000 sq ft houses, while some live in apartments. Some have 5 cars while others have one. So then, nobody could say that things are equal in our country. It's not true. Therefore, we must vote for this progressive agenda to recapture equality, as our Constitution asserts. We must level the playing field and allow others to share in the high paying jobs. And, people who make the most money should pay a higher percentage of taxes."
 - This argument has changed the Constitution's definition of "equal" to mean "equity."

³ Robin DiAngelo, *What Does it Mean to be White*, 265.