conflicting pronouncements it hardly follows that $p \wedge \neg p$ is in fact true. The same consequence follows by elementary laws of probability from taking "X (a generally veracious but imperfect source) maintains p, therefore p is highly probable" as a correct inference.[3] Thus Rescher has shown that for an essentially subject-based (for two sources X and Y, or greater than two) appeal to authority, the type of inference can be neither deductive nor inductive. In essence, these disproofs reflect the conception that for multiple authorities that are imperfect and may be expected to have conflicting pronouncements, deductive and inductive models of inference are "too perfect". Hamblin's and Salmon's conceptions of the ad verecundiam are too idealized to adequately represent the practice of appeals to imperfect authorities whose pronouncements may clash. But confronted by contradiction we must not give up --even though deductive or inductive logics give no further guidance--but press on to resolve the contradiction by means of plausibility theory.

Now that we have eliminated the deductive and inductive models, and identified plausible inference as a preferable model for the type of argument exemplified by the ad verecundiam, it would seem the way is open to an analysis of this fallacy. And so indeed it may be, but this is not a project we shall attempt here. Suffice it to say for the moment that as Rescher conceives it plausible inference is not subject-matter-sensitive, so at very least plausibility theory will have to be conjoined to a theory of the subject-matter content of propositions[4] in order to be adequate to the full ad verecundiam. These refinements aside however, we are at least in the position now of being able to identify one noteworthily insidious form of the ad verecundiam.

The fallacy we allude to occurs where an appeal to authority is construed so strongly, or such a lack of specification of its type of argument has transpired, that the argument is taken to have (a) deductive, or (b) inductive correctness. Yet if the appeal is ment to be taken--as it should be generally-- to a less than perfectly veracious authority, then its construal as (a) or (b) is fallacious. The specific fallacy here lies not in the appeal to authority as such, but in the spurious escalation of the appeal towards a claim to a source of truth that is more perfect or infallible than a plausible argument has any logical right to be. In short, this fallacy is to misidentify the type of argument.

This particular error is of course not the only way in which an appeal to authority can go wrong, and elsewhere[1] we have suggested that ad verecundiam is an umbrella concept for several specific pitfalls of argument from authorities. But this particular species of the ad verecundiam is an important one, we think, in teaching students how to confront and deal with the fallacies, because it underscores the need to take into consideration identification of the type of argument as a necessary skill of informal logic. The first step in attempting to adjudicate any allegation that a fallacy has been committed is to ask the question "What (exactly) is the argument?" Answering this question involves more than simply specifying a set of propositions--as in the approach of formal logic--it includes, among other tasks, specification of the type of argument that has been advanced.

Notes

[1] See our article "Fallaciousness Without Invalidity?" Philosophy and Rhetoric, 9, 1976, 52-54, and "Formal Logic and the Logic of Argument" to be presented at the 6th International Congress of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science in Hannover, Germany, August, 1979.

[2] See our article "Argumentum Ad Verecundiam," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 7, 1974, 135-153.

[3] The proof, parallel to the one above, is given by Rescher (1976, p. 3).

[4] For such a theory, the reader should look to Douglas N. Walton 'Philosophical Basis of Relatedness Logic,' Philosophical Studies, to appear.

References

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Nicholas Rescher, Plausible Reasoning, Assen/Amsterdam, Van Gorcum, 1976.

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discussion notes

A NOTE ON THE "SURPRISE TEST" PUZZLE

Harry A. Nielsen (University of Windsor)

A schoolteacher announces to her class that there will be a surprise test during the following week. She specifies that by a "surprise test" she means one which no one could reasonably predict while walking to school. Immediately, one of her brighter students claims that she has contradicted herself. He offers this argument: The surprise test could take place on Friday, for if there had been no test up until Friday, then from that fact and the knowledge that there will be a test any student could

predict while walking to school that he was going to be given the test on Friday. So the test must take place between Monday and Thursday. But the same argument works for Thursday. That is, on Thursday morning, any student could deduce from the facts that there can be no surprise test on Friday, and that there will be a test, and as it is Thursday the correct prediction is that the test will be given that day. Clearly the argument can be extended to show that the test cannot be given on Wednesday, Tuesday or Monday. The conclusion is that the test cannot be given at all.

The teacher heard this objection out, and then gave the test on the following Tuesday, surprising, in the required sense, everyone.

The puzzle here is to see what has gone wrong with the argument. Clearly the teacher can give the surprise test. How is it the case, then, that an apparently impeccable argument can produce the conclusion that no surprise test is possible?

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It is odd to confront a piece of reasoning that is valid only on some particular Thursday evening or Friday morning, but this very oddity suggests a key to the puzzle: time. The bright student in the story says, "If Thursday went by, and still no test, it couldn't be a surprise on Friday, so we can scratch Friday." --Sorry, but Friday has this about it, that you can't scratch it for real until Thursday. That is, you can't scratch it for real by imagining that Thursday's class has ended and thus ruling Friday out. The reasoning in the puzzle derives its appearance of force from our forgetting that, for us humans, the whole time between the start of Monday's class and the end of Thursday's has to be lived through before a student is in a position to downgrade the teacher's logic. It is within that sequence of days that the teacher can bring off her surprise test.

The time-range in which she can spring the test extends from the start of Monday's class to near the end of Thursday's. As Thursday's class passes its halfway mark, the student does not know if she will give the test in the minutes remaining. Suppose she does; then the student will have no grievance, for the teacher came through with the test at a time he could not predict for certain on his way to school. But what can the student say if she doesn't give the test on Thursday? "You let too much time go by-- now the element of surprise is gone." This is hardly a logical lapse on the teacher's part, though it may show a bit of absent-mindedness. The main point, however, is that her student is not in a position to make even that guarded judgment until the sands of Thursday's class run out.

With these considerations in mind, I wonder if what we have here could be called an existential paradox, in as much as the puzzle can take hold of the student only if he forgets a certain temporal feature of his human existence, namely that he cannot reason himself forward to the end of the week, and then work backwards through time, but has to exist through the intervening days one by one and wait to see what each day brings.

conference reports

A PANEL ON INFORMAL LOGIC

This Report was submitted by Professor Samuel Fohr of the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford.

A Panel on Informal Logic was presented at the Behrend Campus of Penn State University in Erie, Pa. at the Spring meeting of the Tri-State Philosophical Association on April 21, 1979. The Panel was organized and chaired by William Rapaport of the State University of New York, College of Fredonia. The other participants were Samuel Fohr of the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, James Liotta of Lake Erie College, and Nelson Pole of Cleveland State University.

Samuel Fohr pointed out that informal logic courses could help people to arrive at more true beliefs and fewer false beliefs. But the value of such courses could be seriously diminished by how they were taught and the books which were used. Philosophers have not been as rigorous in their treatment of non-symbolic logic as they have been in their treatment of symbolic logic. Many writers of logic books have been either sloppy or incorrect in their definitions of basic terms such as "valid," "sound," "deductive argument," and "inductive argument." Any way of distinguishing between deductive and inductive arguments which is not based on the intentions of the person putting forward the argument is faulty. The word "fallacy" is used very loosely by many philosophers. Strictly speaking, a fallacy is an error in inference or in drawing a conclusion from some premises. Yet philosophers have tended to identify assertions they take to be false as fallacies. One refers to the fallacy of equating determinism with fatalism, another to the fallacy of taking the rightness or wrongness of actions to be related to the motives for which they are done. Writers of logic books have gone far beyond this in identifying things as fallacies. Among other things the following have been identified in logic books as fallacies: questionable claim (practically every claim is), emotionally charged language, suppressed evidence, dog-