

The Fate of Fallacies

M. Dufour (Sorbonne-Nouvelle)





Introduction

Two naive questions:

- What is a fallacy ?
- How many (kinds of) fallacies are there ?





What is a fallacy ?

- The traditional (Ancient !) view (the sophistic view)

« An argument that looks better than it really is » (H. Hansen, SEP)
(... open to deliberate deceptive strategies ... aiming at an expected *mistake*.)

- A less traditional view (*the anthropological view*)

« A fallacy is a *mistake* in reasoning, a mistake which occurs with some *frequency* in real arguments and which is characteristically *deceptive* » (T. Govier, 1987)

Other views....



How many fallacies are there ?

It depends ...

- From one (LH Powers) to ... hundreds? (Internet)
- A common middle way : 10 – 30

The fluctuating field of fallacies ...

- The weight of tradition (Aristotle)
- New fallacies ... (Who decides that they are fallacies ?)
- Undiscovered (types of) fallacies (Cf: « Probabilistic » fallacies)
- Forgotten fallacies (Accent, form of the expression...)



Aristotle's first list of paralogisms

Paralogisms in dictione	Paralogisms extra dictionem
1. Homonymy	7. Accident
2. Amphiboly	8. Secundum quid
3. Form of the expression	9. Ignoratio elenchi
4. Composition	10. Consequent
5. Separation	11. Petitio principii
6. Accent	12. Non causa pro causa
	13. Multiple question

Changes (form of the expression, non causa...) and additions (exaggeration, argument from sign) in the *Rhetoric*....

Port-Royal Logic

- A (The?) first major change in « logic » and in the traditional account of fallacies ...

- A textbook : « antilogic » ...and engaged in many controversies ...

1659 (A. Arnauld)

1662 (A. Arnauld and P. Nicole)

1664

1675

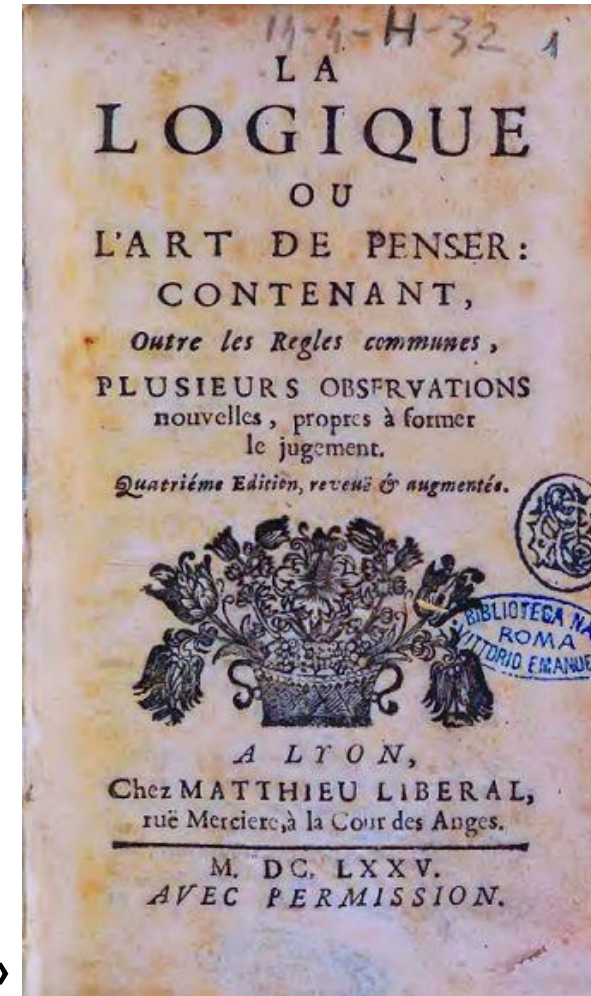
...

1683

A very successful book (more than 40 editions)

«The art of thinking »

«On ideas, on judgment, on reasoning, on method»



**SORBONNE
NOUVELLE**
PARIS 3

Membre fondateur Sorbonne Paris Cité

Port-Royal Logic

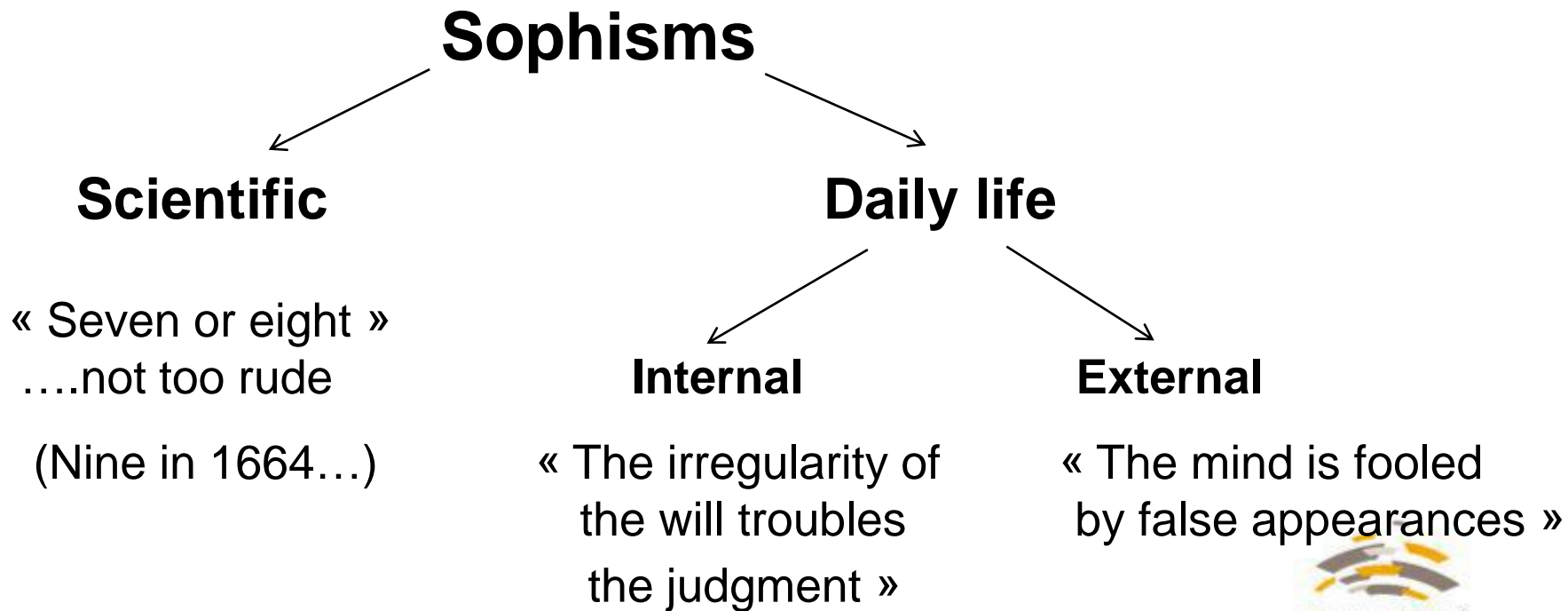




Port-Royal's classification

« Different ways of reasoning ill » (*NB: 2 chapters*)

« Paralogism » = « sophism » (~~« Fallace »~~)



The scientific sophisms

1. *Ignoratio elenchi* (9)
2. *Petitio* (11)
3. *Non causa* (12)
4. + Imperfect enumeration
5. Accident (7)
6. Composition - division... (4 - 5)
7. *Secundum quid* (8)
8. Equivocation (1... 2? 3? 5? (“*Man thinks...*”) + *undistributed middle*)
9. + Incomplete induction

«Too rude»: Form of the expression (3), Consequent (10), multiple question (13) ...



Daily life sophisms

Sophisms of self-love, of interest, and of passion.

From the confusion of truth and utility...

Daily life sophisms

For oneself ...

1. Direct self-love

- *“Cultural” relativism ... “I am of such an order; therefore, I must believe that such a privilege is right.”*

2. Changing passions

- *“I love him; therefore, he is the cleverest man in the world: I hate him; therefore, he is nobody”*

3. Self confidence *“Since I am right, you are wrong”*

4. A variation... *“If this were so, I should not be a clever man; now, I am a clever man; therefore, it is not so.”*

5. Mutual accusations of hairsplitting, nitpicking, quibbling



Daily life sophisms

Against others ...

6. Jealousy

“Someone else said such a thing; it is, therefore, false. I did not write that book; it is, therefore, a bad one.”

7. Spirit of dispute

Montaigne: *“We become accustomed, unconsciously, to find reasons for everything, and to place ourselves above reason by never yielding to it, which leads us by degrees to hold nothing as certain, and to confound truth with error, in regarding both as equally probable. »*

8. The opposite tendency: to grant everything (*The courtier fallacy...*)

9. To support one's view at any rate

Then *“we use any kind of arguments, good and bad, in order that there may be some to suit everyone”*.



Daily life sophisms

False reasonings which arise from objects themselves.

From obscure objects...

(This does not prevent a (bad) influence of the will)

Daily life sophisms

1. Superficial observation (strongest impression)

e.g: More mistakes in a discourse make it false, more truths make it true »

2. False brightness

e.g: « grand and pompous eloquence »

3. *Ad hominem* (?)

“A man of learning is found to be of the same opinion with a heretic, in a matter of criticism, independent of religious controversies: A malicious adversary concludes that he is favorable to heretics”

4. False (hasty) inductions

« There are loose and light women, therefore... »

5. To judge of advices by the event

« He is unsuccessful, therefore he is wrong »

Daily life sophisms

6...7..8 (Insufficient) authority and (outward) manner

The most frequent...

« the majority of men are determined to believe one opinion rather than another, not by any solid and essential reasons which might lead them to know the truth, but by certain exterior and foreign marks which are more consonant to, or which they judge to be more consonant to truth, than to falsehood.»

*The authority of the Church helps the simplest of the faithful men ...
Heretics have very bad manners... (ad baculum ?)..and no signs (e.g
miracles)*

But for less important things ...

Daily life sophisms

6...7..8 (Insufficient) authority and (outward) manner

The number of witnesses... (ad populum?)

“as an author of our time has wisely remarked, in difficult things, which each must discover for himself, it is more likely that a single person will discover the truth than that many will. Thus the following is not a valid inference : this opinion is held by the majority of philosophers ; it is, therefore, the truest. »

“ men do not like to make distinctions. Discrimination perplexes them; they will have all or nothing. If they trust to a man in one thing, they will trust to him in everything ; if they do not in one, they will not in any ; they love short, plain, and easy ways.”

Daily life sophisms

6...7..8 (Insufficient) authority and (outward) manner

Unnecessary warrants ... (used up-down and bottom-up):

- *Age, (irrelevant) experience*
- *« Piety, wisdom, moderation »*
- *Wealth*
- *Noble birth, social rank...*

« we must judge of the manner by the manner, and the matter by the matter, and not the matter by the manner, nor the manner by the matter. »

“ when we seek to move the minds of people, it is a small thing that we have right on our side ; and it is a great evil to have only right, and not to have also that which is necessary for making it relished. “

Conclusion

1. *Are the new fallacies* « arguments that look better than they really are » or « common mistakes » ?

I suggest that Port-Royal Logic was the first step towards the new view that fallacies are « common mistakes in reasoning » ...

2. *Some fit in new rhetorical concerns (sermons, education, worldly discussions...)*

... away from (but compatible with) the Ancient and scholastic disputational view.



Dziękuję !

