

Everything You Believe Is Wrong

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THE FALLACIES WE CHERISH

WILLIAM M. BRIGGS

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*To my Number Two Son, John Henry (Harry), who always
loves a good argument*

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Chapter 1

Bad Thinking

A GOOD BEGINNING

Nice To Meet You

Welcome to the book that proves everything you believe is wrong. Well, not *every* thing. Only the most important things. If you are in the majority, then a great deal of what you hold true about the world and of life is false.

Let's be careful with the title. It's not what you *know* that is wrong, but what you *believe*.

This is because you can only *know* what is true, you can never know what is false—but you can *believe* anything.

By *majority* I do not necessarily imply a numerical body count. I mean the bulk of those who hold power and issue the opinions we know we ought to agree with, even when we don't. The majority includes county- to federal-level bureaucrats and government officials, nearly every individual in the media and politics, the students and professors at all but a handful of universities, those ascendant in business and the professions, those who run almost every “non-governmental”

and professional organization, and nearly all intellectuals. In short, everybody important. Our elite. Our Experts. Our rulers.

In the USA, the majority includes those calling themselves Democrats or Republicans, liberals or conservatives, even in many cases religious and non-religious. In other areas of the Western world, the labels differ, but the attitudes and beliefs shared by the majority are much the same.

The majority is steeped in modernity, in materialism, in Equality, Diversity, woke-ism, “critical” theories of various sorts, in weird ideas like nominalism, in scientism, in the here-and-now, and in the love of self and money. And in the hatred of the minority; i.e., those without power.

Some, well used to hearing the start of these kinds of debates, will say the division is between Democrats and Republicans, or liberals and conservatives. Yet traditional political parties and cultural distinctions have nothing to do with our Great Divide. Below I will argue the true fracture is between *debased* and *based*, terms I will define shortly.

In the States, we accept each major party claims to represent roughly half the adult population. The parties bicker without ceasing, and it’s clear the disputants believe their arguments are of the utmost consequence. These battles are real enough, but they are internecine trivial disputes over the wrong questions, all premised on largely incorrect assumptions. The true debate should instead be over the fundamental principles that both parties accept and don’t think about, principles which are wrong. Our discussion is about those principles.

If you are well in with in any profession, or are ascending to a leadership position of any kind in our culture, if you are a product of the “higher educational system”, or took seriously the “lower” education you received, you surely believe some whoppers. All the big wrong ideas you hold near and dear

will be exposed here. You can therefore think of this book as a dewhopperification of your mind. A cognitive cleanse. A thought tidier.

Or a very bitter pill.

Here's Where We Agree

Before we come to that, let us first examine the kinds of beliefs not as prone to error, or that produce mistakes not of interest to us.

Each of us know many truths. You surely know which bed is yours, you know that the moon is a satellite of the earth, that parsley looks nothing like sirloin steak, and that four is more than two. These are mundane, highly useful facts, about which you can say you know something and in which you can believe.

We will not speak of such humble truths. Nor will we investigate the typical uncertainty inherent in prosaic political propositions. Like who will win the next election, or what tax rate on the rich is best, or what is the ideal number of agents to post at a border, or even if global cooling (now called global warming, or even climate change) will doom us all. This book does not advance nor advocate any specific policy for any political matter.

This brings us to the depth of our investigation. We can't know the answer to every important question with absolute certainty, and in some matters we must settle for less than certitude. Our craving for certainty, though, often leads to over-certainty. Over-certainty is important, but specific imprecision in scientific and other theories that involve public matters will not be commented on here (directly). Uncertainty in the unknown is a fascinating subject. If that subject is of keen interest, you can read the award-eligible international seller *Uncertainty*.

In order to be conclusive, in the fullest meaning of that word, each Chapter below merits a book of its own. Yet this is too much for us. Only the barest bones of the based position can and will be given. Sufficient detail will be presented, however, so that you can investigate each subject more fully outside this book.

Truths You Won't Like

What *will* we examine? Things like this list of propositions the majority does *not* believe, but which are true:

Science cannot answer every question put to it; not now, and not eventually, either. It is not always right to correct a wrong. Women cannot do whatever they like with their own bodies. Men neither. There is no right or wrong side of history. Science is no more self-correcting than any other human endeavor. There is no wisdom in crowds. The source of a proposition has no bearing on the truth of that proposition, even if the proposition is spoken by a "Nazi." There are differences between the races, and indeed all human groups.

A consensus among elite academics does not prove the belief of the elite academics is true. That you are offended is irrelevant to whether a proposition is true or false. Hypocrites are sometimes the best judges. If animals have rights, they have responsibilities, too. Equality is false and undesirable. Diversity is our weakness. Equity is destructive.

Here are more:

There are no such thing as gays. There are no such thing as transsexuals, either. Defining yourself *as* your sexual desire is nonsensical. Voting does not make the majority position right and the minority position wrong. Voting is a leading cause of discord. Democracy is rarely to be desired. The commonness of a behavior is not proof the behavior is moral. It

is impossible not to be judgmental, or to not discriminate, or even to not try to impose one's beliefs.

That (or if) certain apes copulate freely is no reason that men should copulate freely. Screaming "Bigot!" is never an argument. Miracles happen. You cannot choose to believe you do not have free will. That because our top minds cannot think of another reason for some phenomenon (like free will) does not prove there is no reason. God exists.

These are only some of the ideas explored in this book. The majority, and that means likely you, are wrong about all of them. This is no idle claim. It will be proved chapter by chapter. In order to do that, we'll need to use arguments.

We begin with what differentiates good and bad ones. A rigorous investigation of the nature of arguments is left to the Appendix, which can be skipped. But just like leaving off cheese on a pizza, you would regret it.

I admit below that the arguments of this book are, at best, of limited value, to be cherished only by the remnant honestly seeking Truth. This book can also jar loose from the majority the very few who are able to still recognize Reality for what it is. Beyond that, there's not much arguments can do.

All fallacies are bolded when first introduced. Each Chapter is self-contained, and they do not have to be read in any order, though it's well to start with the **So's Yer Old Man Fallacy** to avoid making it (as you will) as you read the book. You should also at least scan the rest of this chapter so that you and I agree on terms and methods. Few things are more embarrassing than the **Equivocation Fallacy**, a danger for those who pass over what's below.

THE BASIS OF BASED

I Am Not A Conservative

The word *conservative* might have suggested itself as a way to describe Yours Truly as you read. This is wrong. I am most anxious to correct this false impression. I am not a conservative: I am *based*. You ought to be, too.

Some of you might know that the recent neologism *based* was formed by shaving the first two letters from *debased*, to form a new word meaning the opposite of debased, thus completing the pair of a formerly unpaired word (as in *gruntled* from *disgruntled*).

Based is everything debased is not. I want you to be based. The purpose of this book is to guide you in that direction, if not convert you.

Debased vs. Based

Here's a quick, imperfect run-down of what based is. Majority readers will find their hackles rising as they go through this list. Stick with it. You and I will have a chance to argue about each item in the chapters to come. So don't close the book yet, because you'll want to see why I think you're wrong.

Non-procreative sexual activities are debased. Procreation is based. Sexual orientation is debased. Biology is based. Body positivity is debased. Beauty is based. Hyper-processed and industrialized foods are debased. Meat and wine are based. Individualism is debased. Obedience to legitimate authority is based. Drugs are debased. Discipline is based.

Diversity and unchecked immigration is debased. Family and a shared culture is based. "Progress" is debased. Custom and tradition are based. Modern textbooks are debased. Old books are based.

Screaming “Racism!” is debased. Embracing race is based. Equality is debased. Difference is based. Cowardice and effeminacy is debased. Bravery, masculinity, and femininity are based. Unthinking atheism is debased. Worship of God is based. Ignorance and denial of the Nature of things is debased. Understanding the limits implied by Nature is based.

Oligarchy is debased. Liberty is based. Woke is debased. Aware is based.

There are many shades and rich nuances to all these, few are absolute comparisons, and quibbles can be had with all. But I hope you take the point, or at least the flavor. We haven’t reached the stage of arguments yet.

Dead Labels

The *terms* progressive, liberal, Democrat, Republican, libertarian, centrist, Big Con, conservative, neoconmen and the like are, and even to a large extent the terms right and left, are all now debased. This does *not* imply all those applying these labels to themselves are debased. What it means is that these tags are dead, they carry no force; they are in no way imbued with the spirit of based or debased.

ARGUMENTS

Logical Fights

To become based, we need to win souls. In part, and only in small part, this will require argument.

Arguments won’t win the culture war, but they are not unimportant. We are always happy to discover any argument which supports, or purports to support, a position we favor. Why not? It’s nice to have our desires met, and our intellectual longings are just as great, or even greater, than our

bodily needs. So pleased are we to find corroboration, any corroboration, however weak, for a favored idea that we readily embrace it even when it is fallacious.

That isn't always so bad. Many flawed arguments are attractive. Everybody makes mistakes, and the Lord is merciful. Owing up to once believing a fallacy is forgivable when there is true repentance. It's the uncorrected errors that sink us in deep kimchi. What saps the mind is when we go on believing even after our support has been exposed as fallacious. This, too, is a typical human failing.

Worse, there does not appear to be a reliable solution for this innate intellectual incorrigibility. Every possible corrective action has been tried, from gentle admonishment to outright punishment. Nothing sticks, not for long. Fallacies thrust deep roots into our discourse, and it is only by the long passage of time, sometimes lifetimes, that once-popular fallacies are removed from the public sphere—usually to be replaced by new ones.

We can rail about this, and try correctives like replacing bad arguments with good ones, as we try in this book, but it's mostly in vain. Cardinal and convert John Henry Newman, now a Saint, knew about the futility of logical demonstration. "Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion."

There is no chance, then, no chance at all that the blubbery purple-haired harpies screeching about white supremacy, the soy-wrecked toothpick-armed *ackshually* sayers, those in the grip of theory, or those whose livings depend on pushing error will be converted by anything I can say.

So why bother? Because it pleases me to solve these little puzzles, and exposure to these arguments will do good for the based remnant, which I hoping will soon include you, to know that their objections to what's happening out their window

are well justified. Anyway, we might even catch a few folks who are wavering between Truth and Falsehood, who want to escape the debased muck.

The best we can do is ameliorate our condition, knowing that even our finest efforts will have but little effect. I thus expect that this book will do no more than provide minor palliative patches to our most frequent flawed arguments.

We have already lost the war over the minds of the majority, even though we will in this book, Chapter by Chapter, win every battle. This is the sad fate of many armies who knew they had to fight impossible battles, but whose honor and sense of duty forbade them to withdraw. We cannot run away from this fight.

What Fallacies Are

Now that that's out of the way, let's get to work.

Every bad or invalid or unsound argument contains a fallacy or mistake in thinking. Nobody knows the complete list of ways thought can go wrong, and it has even been surmised such a list is endless. History supports this contention. There is ample reason to believe the human race is congenitally insane. The late-great philosopher David Stove (whom we shall hear from again) in his essay "What is wrong with our thoughts", proposed a nosology of human thought, a science and categorization of deliberative derangements, though it is clear from his many examples that a complete list will be a long time coming, if it ever arrives.

Even if the follies of cognition are infinite, some mistakes are more common than others. Every age has its own favorite forays into fiction, driven by fashion, fad, and fantasy, all of which are enforced by the culture's self-appointed Watchers. Our Watchers, the majority, are employed by universities, the bureaucracy, and the media-entertainment complex. It is

true that some of the treasures under the care of Watchers are genuine gold, but the great and growing bulk of their cache is intellectual pyrite.

The balance of truth versus error shifts in time, yet the current age is more eager than average to ferret away any shiny object it finds and call it precious. It never seems to matter much, and it certainly does not to us, what lies under the Watchers' gaze. The public almost always grants authority and deference to these masters.

Well, and what choice does the public have? Most of us haven't the ability to think things out for ourselves. We need guidance, and it is only right to bow to true superiors. The problem comes when a soul steps out of line and moves in the direction the Watchers do not like, which is these days is toward the Truth. Would-be apostates meet stiff resistance. Fallacies therefore have tremendous inertia.

Some mental misconstructions are permanent fixtures. Items in this class are by custom given rich Latin names and are, or were, taught somewhere in the "educational system." They're taught badly, it must be surmised, because of the egregious ways people invoke the Latin (typically as magical incantations). In our age, the number of folks fallaciously crying *Ad hominem!* can't be counted.

At least for the sake of history, the Latin tags should be learnt by those seeking advanced knowledge. But because that language is receding rapidly into the distance, most of the tags no longer resonate and, as we shall see in more detail, are often misapplied. I have therefore chosen more evocative and memorable nicknames, at least for speakers of English, of the most popular and important fallacies of our day. Since this list is indexed on the current mood, it will have to be updated at the point at which mankind moves to new, or other old and long-forgotten, sophistries.

COMMON MISTAKES

Cerebral Stretches

Let's do some warm-up exercises to limber us up and put us in the mood.

In the scale of human argument, it is so that there are very few instances where we can start with indubitably true premises and move to necessarily true conclusions. We have to look to metaphysics, logic, mathematics, and even theology for the perfection we seek but never or rarely find in ordinary discourse. We'll here leave much of this perfection alone; it is too rarefied for us. Though the Appendix gives a précis on the subject, which is worth a moment of your time. Worth two good moments, rather.

If we don't want to tackle the toughest themes, neither do we want to swat at gnats. The examples in this book will therefore not be drawn from the netherworld of thought of the sort found on social media, coffee houses, water coolers and the like. We'll stick with arguments that pass among the well-credentialed Watchers of our time as being worthy.

In the Appendix, I examine a caution that must be here emphasized: because an argument for a proposition or conclusion has been shown fallacious, this does *not* prove that *all* arguments for that conclusion are fallacious. It is merely that the argument in question must be jettisoned. But also keep in mind that if the fallacious argument was *all* a proposition had going for it, yet the conclusion is still held as true after abandoning the argument, the sole justification for it to be true becomes simple desire, a dangerous and terrifying mistake. The argument for the conclusion then becomes, as we'll see, the **Meta Fallacy**.

In each Chapter there is at least one example of a fallacy. I try as much as possible to keep these broad or fictional.

Real-life examples are transitory, and nobody likes to read yesterday's news. I'd hate anybody to think I'm picking on them personally—even if they have it coming. Nevertheless, some examples gleaned from the news were too juicy for me to pass up. Timeliness is not essential for us, so even if the examples given seem stale, their lack of importance is only apparent. The logic behind the take-down lasts forever.

Also keep in mind the anchoring effect (which is not unlike the one in economics). The real-life examples I give are about particular people and subjects, even if fictional. The people and subjects themselves are usually not the main interest. The arguments they use are. But it's hard to keep our minds off the people and subjects and on the fallacies when the people and subjects are themselves fascinating. The more specific the example, the more it is likely the reader will think it does not apply to him. Thus, though I use plenty of actual words by real people, I make up as much as I can. All stories are inspired by real events, though, and readers will I hope recognize similar situations. It is your duty to do so.

There are a few fallacies that ride above or are attached to the others mentioned in the book. Their import is small or large depending on the context. They must still be recognized, even though we do not need a whole chapter for each. I next outline these.

Horribly Common Mistakes

The **Controversial Fallacy** is a version of **Poisoning The Well**. A reporter (it is almost always a reporter) will say, "The Congressman holds the controversial opinion that two men cannot be married to one another", implying by the use of *controversial* that the Congressman's opinion on this or some other matter is false. False the matter may be, but it is not proved false by noting that it is in dispute.

Using the word *controversial* is just one in a long list of ways reporters (and others) signal their virtue—or, rather, vice. The reporter wants to call the Congressman’s belief false, but he knows the rules say he should not interject himself into the story. He does it anyway, subtly, by using the word “controversial.” If he is called on his fallacy, the weasel will escape with equivocation. He will claim there is a real controversy, and that he was only really reporting on this controversy. But of course he is lying: he used the word to flag his disagreement and to show his office mates he knows which way to think.

On the other hand, it *is* true in some cases the controversy and not the argument is the story, but when it is, sentences like the reporter’s are superfluous.

The **Fallacy of Omission** is hard to spot, because it isn’t there. This is when relevant, probative, and pertinent information or evidence related to a proposition is known but isn’t given. Nobody can know all things, and even (genuine) experts in subjects slip up. I do not mean honest mistakes like this. I mean purposeful omission. A prosecutor has evidence which will exculpate the defendant, but he hides it so that he gets a conviction. This is so routine in law and politics that we might also call this **The Prosecutor’s Fallacy**.

This fallacy is mandated as the official editorial position at every major media outlet when reporting on opposition. Good news about the opposition shall not pass! The fallacy is rife. Politicians and lawyers especially, but no less the media, do not want the truth *per se*; they want to win. If you are on the side of Light, you should want to win. And politics is different than calm argumentation. The point is the Fallacy of Omission is used to generate propaganda, and propaganda works. I repeat that: *propaganda works*.

The counter-argument is thus to say that not all things can be said about a proposition in every story. This is so.

But evidence that casts great suspicion or directly contradicts or even refutes the proposition at hand, if hid, is always cheating. Always.

As I write, it is popular among a segment of the population to consider ex-President Trump an idiot, and, simultaneously, was an all-controlling evil genius dictator. Evidence is adduced to show the idiocy; for example, that he misspelled a word.

This and other similar data are collected, and the judgment is given. Yet all evidence to the contrary is ignored. Like he headed a company worth billions, a status which all but precludes lack of intelligence, at least to some degree. The difficulty may be with the word *intelligent*. It is often tacitly conflated with or married to *virtuous*, a terrible habit. Thus, the President's intelligence is denied because affirming it is equivalent (to them) of asserting his virtue, which they are loathe to admit, or vehemently deny. We need only assert the truth "Mao was intelligent" to refute this error.

Accepting The Wrong Thing

The **Conditional Fallacy** is perhaps the commonest error, but it is difficult to grasp. It happens when a local truth is confused with a universal truth. The difference between these is explained in the Appendix.

Briefly, a local truth is a conclusion deduced from a set of premises or assumptions that are in some way false, or are not necessarily or universally true. Given "Murdering men is morally good, and George is a man", we can deduce "Murdering George is morally good." The false premise is obvious—but they aren't always easy to spot.

A universal or necessary truth is a conclusion deduced from a set of premises or assumptions which are themselves necessary truths. Given " $7 + x = 4$ ", we deduce " $x = -3$."

Notice (as explained in the Appendix), the first premise carries an enormous bag of tacit premises, *including knowing the definitions of the words and symbols used*. These tacit premises are often forgotten, or confused.

Now, the Conditional Fallacy is committed in practice because most of us are far less intelligent than we'd like to be. It is related to the Fallacy of Omission.

Is abortion wrong? The Conditional Fallacy is often found in arguments answering this question, such as in the slogan, "A woman's right to choose." That's the premise given as proof for the proposition "Abortion is morally permissible." But the premise is incomplete. Choose what? Well, the choice whether or not to kill the life inside the mother. Asserting this "right" is therefore circular. Whether or not other arguments exist for or against abortion is *irrelevant*. Good arguments for abortion, if any exist, do not and cannot make this fallacy into a non-fallacy.

The **Non-Fallacy Fallacy** may also be called the **Stubbornness Fallacy** or the **I Can't Hear You Fallacy**. It happens when you make a decent point or offer a valid argument and your opponent only pretends to have listened or read it. He acts as if he's discovered an obvious flaw, a mistake not worth his effort to refute. Your argument is brushed away and your opponent moves on.

Bullies like this one. You hear this in interviews with politicians and famous personages. The newsman has just asked a coherent question (it does happen) which if answered truthfully will damn the politician. So the politician sidesteps it. This is so routine I'm embarrassed to even include it because everybody can see through this ploy. The only reason I mention it is exasperation. Why do the newsmen never follow up until they get an answer to their question? Lawyers always do. "Yes or no, Senator...Yes or no, Senator..." Exhaustion and the easy acceptance of lies by our elites is the

only explanation I can think of. The British, God bless them, are particularly adept at this fallacy.

The related **It's Been Refuted So You Can Ignore It Fallacy** will be used in answer to all of the arguments in this book by lazy debased reviewers or critics. They will say "The argument he used has been refuted a hundred times. Don't bother with it."

Oh yeah, big guy? If it's so easy to refute, then go ahead and refute it. We'll wait right here for you. This is close to the **Bullshitting Fallacy**, where the critic hopes you'll take his word for it, but where he does not want you to test him.

Means & Extremes

The **Little Big Fallacy** is difficult. Here's an example. I say "Men are stronger than women on average", which is true. You, fresh from the latest superhero movie, say "No! Some women are stronger than some men, which implies women and men are equal!" Propaganda works.

The fallacy also works in the other direction. I say "Boys are at the top of mathematical ability". You say, "The average scores of boys and girls are the same; therefore, boys are girls are equal." Accepting the scores are equal does not disprove the observation more boys than girls score best.

Concise definition of the Little Big Fallacy: If you argue the average, your opponent declares an exception; where you argue the exception, your opponent points to the average. In each case he does so to imply the opposite is true.

More examples: you say "Most men who becomes homosexual were introduced to the lifestyle while young by older men". Your opponent says, "You can't say that. Some men say they have always felt gay", thus implying all who adopt homosexuality were born that way, ignoring the evidence that a great many men underwent a form of initiation. Or you

say “Some homosexuals engage in ‘bug-chasing’, where they purposely seek out HIV infection”, your opponent will say, “You hater, you’re trying to paint all homosexuals with that brush”, thus implying you claimed all homosexuals were bug chasers, which is a lie.

Bug chasing is, alas, a real phenomenon.

That Argument Can Put An Eye Out!

Here’s an even more controversial argument, chosen *because* of its controversy, to make a crucial point. Deep breath first, then. And then again after. Blowing up without considering the argument is the **Blowing Up Fallacy**.

You say, “Most Jews in the USA are progressives, and progressives hold false and harmful beliefs.” The reaction to this will likely start with accusations of “anti-Semitism”, which might even be true, but which do not disprove the proposition. Supposing the name calling to have failed, your opponent might invoke the Little Big Fallacy and say, “You can’t paint all Jews with the same brush, which is anti-Semitic.” But you only painted a number *less* than all, *not* all.

Notice very carefully the point is not whether this proposition is true or false. I choose this example deliberately because it highlights the crucial **Harm Fallacy** or **Consequence Fallacy**. Your opponent hears you support a controversial proposition, and if he thinks no one can overhear, he may grant you the argument—he agrees with you—but he will say that it should not be spoken aloud because it *could* lead to harm if enough people believe what you both acknowledge as true.

This opinion about harm caused by the truth being known may itself become true. Assume it would. The temptation will then be to cast doubt on the proposition because of that potential for harm. When this maneuver is done, it results

in a pure fallacy. The proposition stands regardless of how people act on it.

If the speaker of the proposition instead chooses to keep his mouth shut because he too fears the harm, there is no fallacy. “Noble lies”, however, are fallacies. Silence may be more or less prudential depending on a host of exterior (to the proposition) matters, none of which are relevant to the truth or falsity of the proposition. We see this same thing crop up later in discussing differences between the races.

The next, and related, mistake is the **Implication Fallacy**, a.k.a. **Keep Yer Mouth Shut Fallacy** a.k.a. the **Hate Fact Fallacy**, in which a truth is uttered but where your hostile opponent not only pressures you to keep quiet but uses the *desire* that the hate fact not be true to argue it is *not* true, in the same way putting a telescope to a blind eye allows you to say there is no signal from the Admiral to withdraw. For instances of this fallacy, see most official bannings from social media platforms and “cancel culture” in general. The desire that hate facts not exist leads to the second biggest fallacy of them all (the biggest we meet last in the book).

This is the **Meta Fallacy**. Though it’s not the commonest fallacy, is the most devastating of all in daily use. This fallacy occurs when an argument upon which a man has been relying in support of a proposition is shown to be fallacious, yet the man still regards the proposition true *because* the argument is fallacious. This sounds insane, and it is. The Meta Fallacy is related, in a backward way, to the Controversial Fallacy. The Meta Fallacy has its own Chapter, but its powers of destruction means it cannot have enough emphasis.

Look To The End

There is a technical chapter in the Appendix, mentioned above. You really should read it. Do so now. There's no hurry.

