

# The Logical secrets of an argument: some techniques to use and some traps to avoid

(Part II)

## Usual traps and mistakes in logical arguments:

ad hominem	Attacking people, not their arguments. (Look how ugly he is, ... therefore, he cannot be right!).
Post hoc ergo propter hoc	If one thing comes after another, then the first is seen as the cause of the second... (not necessarily, it is just later ... a sequence or succession of events does not mean causality or generation...)
Cum hoc ergo propter hoc	If two things happen in the same time it does not mean they are related in any significant way...
Tu quoque	If somebody did it before me, it does not mean I have the right to do it as well (precedence does not mean excellence... tradition is not by default a good thing...).
ad ignorantiam	I take it to be true, because nobody proved it to be wrong...
ad silentio	I take it to be true, because nobody said something contrary to it...

**ad novitatem**

To believe that if something is new, is also better... or superior.

**ad populum**  
**(ad numerum, consensus**  
**gentium)**

To believe that if many do accept something, this must necessarily be good, and correct.

**Appeal to mercy** – if you love me, or care for me, or value what I have done for you, you should accept what I am saying

**Using threat to convince ...** – if you don't believe me and accept me, then there will be consequences, because I have other means to make you accept it...

**Circular arguments** – moving in circles, repeating the premise in the conclusion, instead of reaching a new conclusion. Example: these earth strata are very old, these fossils are very old for they have been found in very old strata of earth... but how do we know that the strata of earth are very old? They are old because some very old fossils have been found in them...

**„Straw man” - argument** – I oversimplify something or someone, and present it as something or someone that needs to be rejected, and then reject it.

**„golden man” – argument** - Or, on the contrary, I oversimplify and praise a person and argue that he / she is so good, so that people should act in a certain way – when they shouldn't...

1 Samuel 16.15-17.23,

Now Absalom and all the Israelites came to Jerusalem; Ahithophel was with him.

When Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?"

Hushai said to Absalom, "No; but the one whom the LORD and this people and all the Israelites have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain.

**(“Golden man” – undeserved praise...  
encouraging false confidence)**

Moreover, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? Just as I have served your father, so I will serve you.

**(ad novitatem, if new, is also better –  
encouraging pride and self-confidence)**

Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give us your counsel; what shall we do?"

Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, the ones he has left to look after the house; and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened."

So they pitched a tent for Absalom upon the roof; and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the oracle of God; so all the counsel of Ahithophel was esteemed, both by David and by Absalom.

**Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will set out and pursue David tonight.**

**(good advise: strike the iron, while is hot...,  
use the quickly the present opportunity)**

**I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged, and throw him into a panic; and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king, and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace.”**

**(good argument: destroy the leader, the flock will go away...)**

The advice pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

Then Absalom said, “Call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear too what he has to say.”

When Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, “This is what Ahithophel has said; shall we do as he advises? If not, you tell us.”

Then Hushai said to Absalom, “This time the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good.”

**Hushai continued, “You know that your father and his men are warriors, and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Besides, your father is expert in war; he will not spend the night with the troops.**

**(bad argument: “golden man” is superior...  
inducing fear...)**

**Even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits, or in some other place. And when some of our troops fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.’**

**Then even the valiant warrior, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear; for all Israel knows that your father is a warrior, and that those who are with him are valiant warriors.**

**But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beer-sheba, like the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person.**

**(ad populum, if many then is better...)**



**encouraging pride)**

**So we shall come upon him in whatever place he may be found, and we shall light on him as the dew falls on the ground; and he will not survive, nor will any of those with him.**

**If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it into the valley, until not even a pebble is to be found there.”**

Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.” For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring ruin on Absalom.

Then Hushai said to the priests Zadok and Abiathar, “Thus and so did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and so I have counseled.

Therefore send quickly and tell David, ‘Do not lodge tonight at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means cross over; otherwise the king and all the people who are with him will be swallowed up.’”

Jonathan and Ahimaaz were waiting at En-rogel; a servant girl used to go and tell them, and they would go and tell King David; for they could not risk being seen entering the city.

But a boy saw them, and told Absalom; so both of them went away quickly, and came to the house of a man at Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard; and they went down into it.

The man’s wife took a covering, stretched it over the well’s mouth, and spread out grain on it; and nothing was known of it.

When Absalom’s servants came to the woman at the house, they said, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?” The woman said to them, “They have crossed over the brook<sup>1</sup> of water.” And when they had searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>1</sup>Meaning of Heb uncertain

After they had gone, the men came up out of the well, and went and told King David. They said to David, “Go and cross the water quickly; for thus and so has Ahithophel counseled against you.”

So David and all the people who were with him set out and crossed the Jordan; by daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

***When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order, and hanged himself; he died and was buried in the tomb of his father.***