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Ad Hominem (Abusive)

argumentum ad hominem

(also known as: personal abuse, personal attacks, abusive fallacy, damning the source, name calling, refutation by caricature, against the person, against the man)

Description: Attacking the person making the argument, rather than the argument itself, when the attack on the person is completely irrelevant to the argument the person is making.

Logical Form:

Person 1 is claiming Y.
Person 1 is a moron.
Therefore, Y is not true.

Example #1:

My opponent suggests that lowering taxes will be a good idea -- this is coming from a woman who eats a pint of Ben and Jerry's each night!

Explanation: The fact that the woman loves her ice cream, has nothing to do with the lowering of taxes, and therefore, is irrelevant to the argument. Ad hominem attacks are usually made out of desperation when one cannot find a decent counter argument.

Example #2:

Tony wants us to believe that the origin of life was an "accident". Tony is a godless SOB who has spent more time in jail than in church, so the only information we should consider from him is the best way to make license plates.

Amazing Familiarity

Ambiguity Fallacy

Anonymous Authority

Anthropomorphism

The Fallacies: Appeal To <

The Fallacies: Ar-Co <

The Fallacies: Co-Ex <

The Fallacies: Fa-Hy <

The Fallacies: Id-Mu <

The Fallacies: Na-Ri <

The Fallacies: Sc-Wi <

Explanation: Tony may be a godless SOB. Perhaps he did spend more time in the joint than in church, but all this is irrelevant to his argument or truth of his claim as to the origin of life.

Exception: When the attack on the person is relevant to the argument, it is not a fallacy. In our first example, if the issue being debated was the elimination of taxes only on Ben and Jerry's ice cream, then pointing out her eating habits would be strong evidence of a conflict of interest.

Tip: When others verbally attack you, take it as a compliment to the quality of your argument. It is usually a sign of desperation on their part.

References:

Walton, D. (1998). *Ad hominem arguments*. University of Alabama Press.

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Krista Neckles

Thursday, March 14, 2019 - 03:31:14 PM

Hello Sir,
Is the following passage from the logic textbook an ad hominem circumstantial AND ad hominem abusive, or just one of them:
"Senator Chris Murphy's arguments for the protection of wilderness areas should be ignored. Murphy is just another one of those tree-hugging liberals who supports such legislation only to please the environmental nuts in his home state of Connecticut".
Thank You Sir.

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1 reply

0 votes



Bo Bennett, PhD

Friday, March 15, 2019 - 06:08:37 AM

Could be both

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0 votes



D Heighton

Monday, March 11, 2019 - 03:49:38 AM

How do you judge a statement that goes: "Oh and just one more question for you and your infinite wisdom, ..."?
Is this a type of Ad-Hominem fallacy?

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1 reply

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Monday, March 11, 2019 - 06:27:40 AM

This might be best described as "poisoning the well" if other people are part of the exchange,



Bo Bennett,
PhD

otherwise, just good ol' fashioned sarcasm.

[login to reply](#)

0 votes



Catherine
Hauer

Wednesday, January 30, 2019 - 05:18:13 PM

Thank you not only for providing such clear definitions of so many fallacies but also for providing such useful examples for each!

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0 replies

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Gus del
Valle

Friday, January 04, 2019 - 05:46:24 AM

Definition of an Ad Hominem argument: A form of discourse normally engaged in by Donald Trump.

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0 replies

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Beverly
McCaffrey

Saturday, October 28, 2017 - 11:10:52 AM

What does Argumentum Ad Ignorantium mean?

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1 reply

0 votes



Bo Bennett,
PhD

Saturday, October 28, 2017 - 11:19:36 AM

Argument from Ignorance:

<https://www.logicallyfallacious.com/tools/lp/Bo/LogicalFallacies/56/Argument-from-Ignorance>

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