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Complex Question Fallacy

plurium interrogationum

(also known as: many questions fallacy, fallacy of presupposition, loaded question, trick question, false question)

Description: A question that has a presupposition built in, which implies something but protects the one asking the question from accusations of false claims. It is a form of misleading discourse, and it is a fallacy when the audience does not detect the assumed information implicit in the question and accepts it as a fact.

Example #1:

How many times per day do you beat your wife?

Explanation: Even if the response is an emphatic, "none!" the damage has been done. If you are hearing this question, you are more likely to accept the possibility that the person who was asked this question is a wife-beater, which is fallacious reasoning on your part.

Example #2:

How many school shootings should we tolerate before we change the gun laws?

Explanation: The presupposition is that changing the gun laws will decrease the number of school shootings. This may be the case, but it is a claim that is implied in the statement and hidden by a more complex question. Reactively, when one hears a question such as this, one's mind

Denying the Correlative

Disjunction Fallacy

Distinction Without a Difference

Double Standard

Ecological Fallacy

Etymological Fallacy

Equivocation

Exclusive Premises

Existential Fallacy

Extended Analogy

The Fallacies: Fa-Hy <

The Fallacies: Id-Mu <

The Fallacies: Na-Ri <

The Fallacies: Sc-Wi <

will attempt to search for an answer to the question—which is actually a distraction from rejecting the implicit claim being made. It is quite brilliant but still fallacious.

Exception: It is not a fallacy if the implied information in the question is known to be an accepted fact.

How long can one survive without water?

Here, it is presumed that we need water to survive, which very few would deny that fact.

References:

Menssen, S., & Sullivan, T. D. (2007). *The Agnostic Inquirer: Revelation from a Philosophical Standpoint*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

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Krista Neckles

Monday, March 04, 2019 - 09:30:13 PM

Hello Sir,

Is this an example of the fallacy: "Why is it so difficult for you to reach a decision?".

Why or why not?

Thank You Sir.

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1 reply

0 votes



Bo Bennett, PhD

Tuesday, March 05, 2019 - 06:56:55 AM

Yes, if it **has not** been established or understood that it is difficult for the person to reach a decision. No, if it **has** been established or understood that it is difficult for the person to reach a decision.

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