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Two Wrongs Make a Right

Description: When a person attempts to justify an action against another person because the other person did take or would take the same action against him or her.

Logical Forms:

*Person 1 did X to person 2.
Therefore, person 2 is justified to do X to person 1.*

*Person 1 believes that person 2 would do X to person 1.
Therefore, person 1 is justified to do X to person 2.*

Example #1:

*Jimmy stole Tommy’s lunch in the past.
Therefore, it is acceptable for Tommy to steal Jimmy’s lunch today.*

Explanation: It was wrong for Jimmy to steal Tommy’s lunch, but it is not good reasoning to claim that Tommy stealing Jimmy’s lunch would make the situation right. What we are left with, are two kids who steal, with no better understanding of why they shouldn’t steal.

Example #2:

It looks like the waiter forgot to charge us for the expensive bottle of champagne. Let’s just leave -- after all, if he overcharged us, I doubt he would chase us down to give us our money back that we overpaid.

Explanation: Here the reasoning is a bit more fallacious because we are making an assumption of what the waiter might do. Even if that were true, two ripoffs don’t make the situation right.

Spin Doctoring
Spotlight Fallacy
Statement of Conversion
Stereotyping (the fallacy)
Stolen Concept Fallacy
Strawman Fallacy
Style Over Substance
Subjectivist Fallacy
Subverted Support
Sunk-Cost Fallacy
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Survivorship Fallacy
Texas Sharpshooter Fallacy
Tokenism
Traitorous Critic Fallacy
Two Wrongs Make a Right
Type-Token Fallacy
Unfalsifiability
Unwarranted Contrast
Use-Mention Error
Weak Analogy
Willed Ignorance
Wishful Thinking

Exception: There can be much debate on what exactly is “justified retribution” or “justified preventative measures”.

References:

This a logical fallacy frequently used on the Internet. No academic sources could be found.

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William Harpine,
Ph.D.

Friday, August 24, 2018 - 12:29:59 PM

First, thanks for the excellent website. Second, there is a very good academic source for this fallacy, in Howard Kahane's Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric.

<https://www.logicallyfallacious.com/tools/lp/Bo/LogicalFallacies/177/Two-Wrongs-Make-a-Right>

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1 reply

0 votes



William Harpine,
Ph.D.

Friday, August 24, 2018 - 12:30:37 PM

Here's a link to Kahane, Logic & Contemporary Rhetoric, which does discuss this fallacy.

https://www.amazon.com/Logic-Contemporary-Rhetoric-Reason-Everyday/dp/1133942288#reader_1133942288

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0 votes



Adrian

Thursday, March 16, 2017 - 10:58:27 PM

How does one overcome this fallacy, in a debate?

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1 reply

0 votes



Bo Bennett,
PhD

Friday, March 17, 2017 - 06:44:28 AM

Just simply ask the question, "does that make it right?"

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0 votes



krystine
gayle

Tuesday, August 16, 2016 - 01:10:59 AM

another example please :)

[login to reply](#)

3 replies

0 votes



Bo Bennett,
PhD

Tuesday, August 16, 2016 - 06:12:51 AM

My sister called me a stupid idiot, therefore it is okay for me to call her a dumb moron.

[login to reply](#)

0 votes



krystine
gayle

Saturday, August 20, 2016 - 01:53:32 AM

@Bo Bennett, PhD: example and explanation of your example please help meee

[login to reply](#)

-1 votes

Saturday, August 20, 2016 - 06:18:56 AM



Bo Bennett,
PhD

@krystine gayle: My sister calling me a "stupid idiot" is wrong. Me calling my sister a "dumb moron" is wrong. Just because she wronged me, does not make it rationally justifiable that I wrong her. Two wrongs do not make a right.

[login to reply](#)

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