

Wendi M. Brooks

Reasoning and Critical Thinking

Professor Smillov

22 April, 2004

Ad Hominem

Ad Hominem literally means, when translated from the Latin, "against the man" or "against the person". So basically it boils down to, someone disregards an argument based on the person making the argument or presenting the argument. This is fallacious because an argument shouldn't be judged because of a bias someone might have against a certain person that is making it. For example:

John: "I believe that abortion is morally wrong."

Jake: "Of course you would say that, you're a priest."

John: "What about the arguments I gave to support my position?"

Jake: "Those don't count. Like I said, you're a priest, so you have to say that abortion is wrong. Further, you are just a lackey to the Pope, so I can't believe what you say."

In this example we see that Jake is disregarding everything John says based on the mere fact that he happens to be a priest. If he weren't a priest and gave the same back up information saying abortion is morally wrong, Jake might have been more open to the what John was saying.

This is a very common fallacy. People need to understand that the character, circumstances, and actions

of a certain person do not hold any bearing to the truth and falsity of the argument itself. If I, as a young Christian woman, were giving reasons why I feel abortion is wrong, people could easily decide not to listen to me because of my religious background, but really my reasons for believing the way I do, aren't because of my religion. But if someone didn't know that, they could easily be disregard my opinions, even though they are only based on the fact that murder is wrong by law, as well as in my religion.

This fallacy needs to be avoided. It can be avoided by making people understand that you can't bias your opinions because of your feelings for the person making the argument. If someone has a good point, and I don't particularly like the person making the argument, I am not going to disregard what they are saying just because they aren't my friend.