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Nonsense: Red Herrings, Straw Men And Sacred Cows: How We Abuse Logic In Our Everyday Language



Synopsis

Nonsense is the best compilation and study of verbal logical fallacies available anywhere. It is a handbook of the myriad ways we go about being illogical—how we deceive others and ourselves, how we think and argue in ways that are disorderly, disorganized, or irrelevant. Nonsense is also a short course in nonmathematical logical thinking, especially important for students of philosophy and economics. A book of remarkable scholarship, Nonsense is unexpectedly relaxed, informal, and accessible.

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Customer Reviews

Want to differentiate between the heavy emotional language you hear, the logic used, and the various errors in logic? Want to know what that false argument is called? Want to find a book that does not look, feel, and read like a textbook, but can easily be read/perused at your convenience? This little paperback book (174 pages) is one of the best resource for exposing the various arguments and false logic that we humans sometimes use. The prose flows very easily, groups related fallacies together, and the author offers plenty of real-life examples. The first 3 content chapters discuss Emotional Language, its use and misuse. Then there is a chapter on Logical Fallacies. Then the author talks about Irrelevance, Confusion, Oversimplification, Evasion, Erroneous Comparison and Contrast, Arguments, Semantics, and Syllogism. "I just know that that doesn't make any sense, but I'm not sure why" begins the author in the first chapter "Everyday Nonsense." The end of the book has a summary listing of all the fallacies and nonsense terms, a Bibliography, and a useful Index. The author, Robert John Gula (1941-1989) was educated at Colby

College and Harvard University. He taught a course on logic (among other subjects) at a very elite private American high school.

I was reminded of this book last week while watching "Good Night and Good Luck" - wondering if the material may have been inspired by the events of that era. I took a Robert Gula's class on logic, fallacies, and rhetoric in high school. It was one of the most valuable courses I ever took! He published this book a few years later in hardcover. I think it had very limited distribution, but purchased a copy at the source shortly after it was published. The book is an easy read, and a great summary of the ways in which media and so-called leaders mislead and manipulate their audiences. I won't try to summarize it - just look at the table of contents and the sample chapter on the publisher's website. This should be a required course in high-school, but since that isn't likely to happen, I highly recommend this to anyone over the age of 12. Buy a copy for your parents and one for your teens!

A very good introduction to fallacies and effective reasoning. It's short, clear, and well organized. An excellent handbook for use in high schools and junior colleges. By the way, this book can be downloaded (in Adobe Acrobat PDF format) for free from the Axios Institute's website. But you still might want a paperback copy for your library shelves.

What Strunk & White did for grammar with their Elements of Style, Gula does for verbal logic. Nonsense is straight forward and easy to understand. No longer will you fall prey to verbal logical fallacies used by politicians, advertisers, news reports, and others who may try to persuade you with their nonsense.

I used to debate in college and recollect many a common place logical fallacy; although, in the course of the last year I have found myself going online more and more in order to reread the various forms in which "nonsense" takes in the public square. This caused me to pick up three non-textbook works on the subject last week. Even though the late Mr. Gula's book has a non-scholarly title it is very erudite endeavor. He dissects every form of diversion, confusion of cause and effect, oversimplification, ambiguity, and erroneous comparisons and contrasts in these pages. Specific terms are placed in bold print and allow readers to adjust and intensify their concentration accordingly. Further, he makes use of everyday, non-mathematical language which can be easily understood by laymen. I found it an enjoyable read and this is one of those rare works

I will use as a reference. It was written in 1979 and some of the examples, as so many of them are political, are rather dated but one still has no difficulty grasping their meaning. I wish more people were familiar with logic...it would make the world a far better place.

I've been looking for a book like this for 25 years. This book explains all the illogical, irrelevant and manipulative ways people use in discussions and arguments. Ignoring and twisting the facts around won't be easy for people in dealings with me after a little practice from the knowledge here. Soon I'll be able to welcome arguing logically with salesmen and friends instead of being abashed in dealing with their nonsense.

The late Robert J. Gula was an expert not only on logical fallacies, but in describing them in clear, understandable language. In little more than 170 pages, Gula describes and illustrates more than 170 logical fallacies. In an era where everything has been reduced to spin and absolutely no one can be implicitly trusted to tell the truth, being able to recognize logical fallacies is imperative to being accurately informed. Gula wrote this for use in secondary schools and colleges. His writing can be described as perfectly pitched. It is clear and despite the complexity of the subject, almost simplistic in its structure. That doesn't mean Gula was talking down to his audience: it means simply that his writing is uncluttered and to the point. The book was written in the 1970s and some of the examples not only seem dated, but innocent as well. Compared to the lies we are told on a daily basis, the 1970s were almost an oasis of honesty. Well, at least a little more honest than today. In the last several chapters, Gulas takes aim at specific issues, such as the nature of argument, syllogisms and semantics. He also provides a great summary of "fallacies and nonsense", which just for fun you might want to keep handy while you watch television "news" or read the "news" in some of the leading daily newspapers and magazines. As a matter of fact, it was trying to remember all the logical fallacies while reading a particular newspaper that caused me to buy this book. I needed a refresher course. Jerry

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