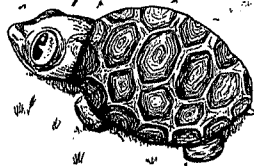




IF YOU LET A BULLY COME IN
YOUR FRONT YARD, HE WILL BE
ON YOUR PORCH THE NEXT DAY
AND THE DAY AFTER
THAT HE WILL EAT YOUR BABIES!



THAT ESCALATED
QUICKLY.

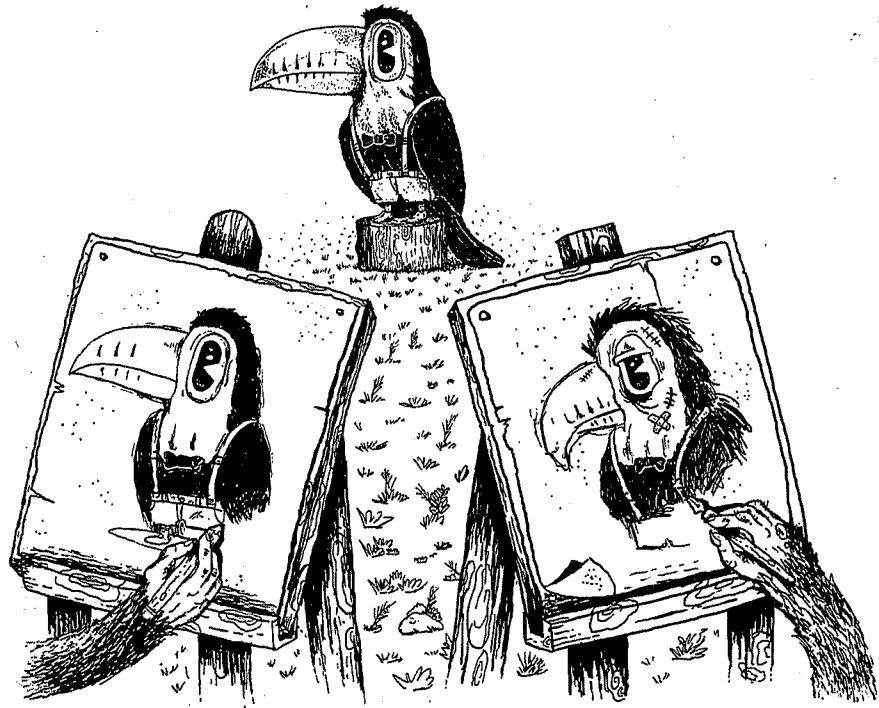


SLIPPERY SLOPE

A *slippery slope* argument attempts to discredit a proposition by arguing that its acceptance will undoubtedly lead to a sequence of events, one or more of which are undesirable.⁸ Although the sequence of events may be *possible*—each transition occurring with some probability—this type of argument assumes that every transition is *inevitable*—while providing no evidence in support of that. This fallacy plays on the fears of an audience and is related to a number of other fallacies, such as the *appeal to fear*, the *false dilemma*, and the *argument from consequences*.

For example, “We shouldn’t allow people uncontrolled access to the internet. The next thing you know they will be frequenting pornographic websites, and soon enough, our entire moral fabric will disintegrate and we will be reduced to animals.” As is glaringly clear, no evidence is given, other than unfounded conjecture, that internet access implies the disintegration of a society’s moral fabric. Moreover, the argument presupposes certain things about people’s behavior within the society.

⁸ The slippery slope fallacy described here is of a causal type.



THE ENERGETIC, MUSCULAR, AND COLORFUL TOUCAN WAS COMPLETELY MISREPRESENTED BY ONE OF THE ARTISTS. LATER ON, HE SHOWED THE AUDIENCE HIS PAINTING AND CRITICIZED HOW DULL AND LIFELESS THE TOUCAN HAD LOOKED.

STRAW MAN

To “put up a straw man” is to intentionally caricature a person’s argument with the aim of attacking the caricature rather than the actual argument. Misrepresenting, misquoting, misconstruing, and oversimplifying an opponent’s position are all means by which one can commit this fallacy. The straw man argument is usually more absurd than the actual argument, making it an easier target to attack. It may also lure the other person toward defending the more ridiculous argument rather than their original one.

For example, a skeptic of Darwinism might say, “My opponent is trying to convince you that we evolved from chimpanzees who were swinging from trees, a truly ludicrous claim.” This is a misrepresentation of what evolutionary biology actually claims, which is that humans and chimpanzees shared a common ancestor millions of years ago. Misrepresenting the idea is much easier than refuting the evidence for it.