More Common Fallacies

In addition to those already seen, there are logical fallacies that aren’t connected to particular patterns of reason.

In fact, they’re a disconnect from reason.
Non Sequitur

*Literally means “does not follow”
*Makes huge logical leaps without following all the steps

“I recently heard that since the liberation of Iraq, there’s been dog and even camel fighting. Bring back the Taliban!”
Red Herring

*A literal reference to poachers who dragged fish behind them to confuse pursuing hounds
*Attempts to distract people from the issue

Political Candidate: “That’s a good point, Bill, but I think the REAL question is . . . “
Reductio ad Absurdum

*Means “reducing to the absurd”
*Attempts to refute merely by ridiculing an argument or a speaker

Bill Maher on a Supreme Court nominee:
“The mere fact that she called President Bush ‘the most brilliant man I’ve ever known’ should disqualify her!””
Reductio ad Absurdum

- Used with other logical skills, it can be a useful aspect of style - especially as touche’

Parliamentarian Lord Disraeli was slandered by an opponent who said: “Sir, you will either die by syphilis or on the gallows.” Disraeli replied: “That depends upon whether I embrace your mistress or your principles.”
Transfer Fallacies

Transfer Fallacy of Composition - What is true of the part must be true of the whole.

“Man, my new Mustang has the greatest engine. It’s the best car in the world!”

Transfer Fallacy of Division - What is true of the whole must be true of the parts.

“Of all Americans, a majority favor a woman’s right to choose. It must be true of Alabama, too.”
Careful!

*Transfer fallacies are tricky, as they resemble other fallacies.
*Composition is very like hasty generalization

*The difference is the unity of the class discussed, i.e., composition is a subclass of an existing class, rather than an individual thing counted toward a new classification.
Careful!

*Division is very like sweeping generalization
*The difference again is the unity of class and subclass.
*Sweeping generalization applies something usually true to an individual case as if it were always true.
*Division “transfers” the general qualities of the whole, ignoring unique aspects of the sub-class
In Sum

*Non Sequitur “Does not follow”
*Red Herring “Yes but . . . look over there!”
*Reduce to Absurdity (reductio ad absurdum)
  Even a good joke doesn’t replace evidence.
*Transfer Fallacy of Composition
  The part for the whole
*Transfer Fallacy of Division
  The whole for the part