

7.4. Pragmatics and Logic

“I’m gonna die if you touch me one more time.
Well, I guess that I’m gonna die no matter what.”

– They Might Be Giants, **I’ve Got a Match**

Group A. In each of the following example, the argument meets our technical definition of a **valid argument** (one with **no validity counterexamples**); but we wouldn’t intuitively say that the conclusion “follows from” the premise(s).

1. Any argument whose **conclusion is a tautology** is valid (however irrelevant the premises are to that conclusion).

1. Squirrels are mammals.

∴ Either your house is on fire or it’s not.

2. Any argument with a **contradictory premise** is valid (however irrelevant that premise is to the conclusion).¹

1. Zebras both exist and don’t exist.

∴ Your house is on fire.

3. If an argument is valid, **adding premises** (however irrelevant) **can’t make it invalid**.

1. We’re having either truffles or grog.

2. We’re not having truffles.

∴ We’re having grog.

1. We’re having either truffles or grog.

2. We’re not having truffles.

3. Squirrels are mammals.

∴ We’re having grog.

¹ More generally: if the premises of the argument are inconsistent, then the argument is valid (however irrelevant the premises are to the conclusion). For example, the argument “P, ~P ∴ X” is valid.

4. Any sentence **follows validly from itself**.

1. Surfing should be in the Olympics.

∴ Surfing should be in the Olympics.

Group B. In each of the following examples, a sentence is uttered which is **true** in that situation, but still **deceptive** or **misleading**.

1. **Jack:** Are you going to the surfing competition?

Suki: If the day spa is busy that day I won't go.

(But in fact Suki's made up her mind not to go, regardless of whether the spa is busy.)

2. **Letitia:** How are you doing in Business Logic?

Trixie: I'm getting either a B or a C.

(But in fact Trixie knows she's getting a C.)

3. **Rex:** Where are those leftover Philadelphia rolls?

Neko: Someone must have eaten them.

(Where in fact Neko ate them.)

4. **Dr. Slim:** At least one member of the board of directors was convicted.

(When, as he knows, all the members were convicted.)