
Questioning as we learn: An introduction to critical thinking

Material for Higher Education students in Sierra Leone by INASP, UK



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Unit 4 - Snippet 109

Fallacies - Ad hominem

This fallacy is also called ‘argument against the person’. This fallacy means attacking the person who supports a cause or holds a view rather than the cause or the idea itself.

One of the most infamous examples is the denunciation of the theory of relativity which was developed by physicist and Nobel Prize laureate Albert Einstein in the first half of the 20th century. Other physicists in Nazi Germany, who were supporters of the German dictator Adolf Hitler and his racist ideology against Jews and other population groups, rejected Einstein’s theory because of his Jewish family background. Philipp Lenard, physicist and Nobel Prize laureate himself, argued against Einstein’s work, as true discoveries in the natural sciences could only be achieved by the “Aryan race” and Einstein’s work could therefore only be “Jewish fraud”.

(Sandra Sieraad (no year). 'Famous scholars from Kiel: Philipp Eduard Anton Lenard', <http://www.uni-kiel.de/grosse-forscher/index.php?nid=lenard&lang=e>, accessed 25 January 2018)