In the previous chapter, I tried to show that not all *ad baculum* arguments are fallacious. I want to develop this claim more concretely in the present chapter. As was the case in its predecessor, the present chapter lays heavy emphasis on the distinction between strategic and alethic (truth-oriented) rationality, and is a further exploration of what we have been calling non-cooperation arguments, made so by the intrinsic factor of threat.

1. **Arguments From the Stick**

*Ad baculum* arguments are those which pivot on appeals to threat or dire consequence. Though not called such, *ad baculum* arguments seem to have been first recognized by the Port Royal logicians, as witness Arnauld and Nicole [Arnauld, 1964, p. 289]. As we saw in the preceding chapter, modern writers have not done very well with the *ad baculum*. Carney and Scheer characterize it as the error — a special case of the *ad populum* fallacy — of inferring or concluding the truth of a claim on the basis of an appeal to force, for it is the “fear of force [which] cause[s] acceptance of a conclusion” [Carney and Scheer, 1980, p. 390]. The same words are found in Copi and Cohen. “The argument *ad baculum* [... is] the appeal to force to cause the acceptance of a conclusion....” Here too the fallacy is thought to be the mistake of concluding the truth of some claim on the basis of a threat. Most authors regret *ad baculum* fallacies as “the abandonment of reason” [Copi and Cohen, 1990, p. 105].

In these writings, and elsewhere, it is plain that *ad baculum* fallacies are thought to be fallacies twice over. For the arguer who knowingly promotes his addressee’s fear of force, the fallacy can be seen as a case of trickery or deception, an attempt to dupe the other party into reasoning
erroneously. For the addressee, who succumbs to the arguer’s trick, the
fallacy is delusional in character; the addressee is tripped by his anxiety
into thinking that his acceptance of the truth of the claim in question is
well-justified. In each case the fallacy is thought to be dialectical.

Though they are right to notice dialectical aspects, such accounts are
troublesome. They seem not to be believed by their own sponsors. How
can “so obvious a fallacy” trick anybody [Copi and Cohen, 1990, p. 105]? It is also doubtful that anything answering to the present notion would
qualify as an argument [Woods and Walton, 1976].

Solider analyses of the *ad baculum* are possible, and they require that
six types of case be attended to.

2. **Case One**
   1 (Proposition) *P* or I'll punch your nose.
   2 :. *P* is true.

   Case one puts considerable pressure on the idea that the *ad baculum*
fallacy is a deceptive argument since, for one thing, (1) is transparently
irrelevant to the truth of (2). Also strained is the suggestion that case
one presents an argument at all. Suffice it to say that if we did allow
that case one did present an argument, the *ad baculum* fallacy would
be a fallacy of relevance. A more straightforward judgement is that the
idea of the *argumentum ad baculum* is undefined for instances of case
one.

3. **Case Two**
   1 Believe *P* or I'll punch your nose.
   2 :. Believe *P*.

   Here we meet with a significant departure. The *ad baculum* is now
seen as a prudential argument, an argument not to the effect that a
certain fact obtains or that a certain state of affairs is so, but to the
effect rather that a certain course of action would be prudent to pursue.
The essentially dialectical character of the *ad baculum* is also discernible
in case two, for we imagine that the maker of the argument directs it
to an interlocuter who is counselled to do something the prudence of
which consists in averting the damage of the arguer's threat. Still, case
two involves a serious error. Since belief is not a creature of the will, it
cannot be summoned up voluntarily. The arguer of case two makes the
mistake of bidding the addressee to do the impossible.

4. **Case Three**
   1 Accept *P* or I'll punch your nose.