

# Logic in the Home—Activity Guide Three

---

*A Colloquium for Parents*

## Try This!

This time around try taking a newspaper article or editorial and ‘translating’ it into formal logical statements. So for example, if the author states something like:

“Many political beliefs among the religious right stem from their unsubstantiated religious beliefs about which they never think critically”

(You’ve never seen that one before have you!), working a bit loosely, you can translate that into the following:

1. Some political beliefs held by people who have religious beliefs not dictated by modern secularism **are** beliefs that are based on their religious beliefs
2. All religious beliefs **are** unsubstantiated and non-critically held beliefs
3. Some political beliefs held by people who have religious beliefs not dictated by modern secularism **are** beliefs that are based on beliefs that are unsubstantiated and non-critically held.

The unspoken conclusion toward which this argument, or those like it, usually proceeds is something like this: “All beliefs that are unsubstantiated and non-critically held or that are based on such beliefs are beliefs that should not count in the public square.”

Once you have an argument in this form you can begin to look at how it is strong and weak. The form of this argument is valid, as stated here, but the premises have some faults. If I were to formulate a rebuttal, I would definitely attack 2, asking for a clear statement of what the author means by “unsubstantiated and non-critical”. People often pick out religious beliefs as being “unscientific,” but then go on to hold a mammoth number of premises for “nonscientific” reasons (we all do, it’s normal). What is really indicated by all of that is that “scientific” criteria don’t apply to everything (As Aristotle

notes repeatedly, it is silly to look for more accuracy than any given field of enquiry provides). In any case, you get the idea.

Note the use of two quantifiers (All and Some) and the occurrence of two different basic types of statement (Affirmations and Negations). The combination of these two sets of two gives rise to the four possible logical statements: All S is P; No S is P; Some S is P; and Some S is not P.

**So, go find an argument and try it out!**

**Questions?**

Send me an email at [the.rolling.acres.school@gmail.com](mailto:the.rolling.acres.school@gmail.com)

- Be sure to include your name and the name of the colloquium in the subject line of the email, please.