

## FAULTY PREDICATION\*

In a sentence with mixed meaning, the subject is said to *be* or *do* something it cannot logically *be* or *do*. Such a mixture is sometimes called **faulty predication** because the predicate (what comes after the subject, usually) conflicts with the subject.

### Illogical equation with 'be'

When a form of the verb 'be' connects the **subject** and a word describing the subject (a **complement**), the subject and complement must be logically related:

Faulty            A **compromise** between the city and the country would be *the ideal place* to live.

Revised          A **community** that offers the best qualities of both city and country would be *the ideal place* to live.

### 'Is when,' 'is where'

A definition requires nouns on *both* sides of 'be.' *Definition clauses* beginning with 'when' or 'where' are common in speech but should be avoided in writing:

Faulty            An **examination** is *when you are tested on what you know*.

Revised          An **examination** is a *test* of what you know.

### 'The reason is because'

The commonly heard construction 'the reason is because' is redundant and illogical since 'because' means 'for the reason that':

Faulty            The **reason** the temple requests donations *is because* the school needs to expand.

Revised          The **reason** the temple requests donations *is that the school needs to expand*.

Revised          The **temple** requests donations *because* the school needs to expand.

### Other mixed meanings

Mismatched subjects and predicates are not confined to sentences with 'be':

Faulty            The **use** of emission controls was created to reduce air pollution.

Revised          Emission **controls** were created to reduce air pollution.

\* Adapted from Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron, *The Little, Brown Handbook*, 10<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007, 376-377.