EXERCISES, QUESTIONS, AND ACTIVITIES


My Answers

Exercises

Identify the fallacies in the following passages.

1. “If Satan existed then bad things would happen in the world. Bad things do happen in the world. Therefore, Satan exists.”

   Premature Confirmation

2. “I suggest that you rethink your opposition to the art display – that is, unless you want to be known as closed-minded, born-again Neanderthal.”

   Appeal to Force

3. “Philosophers try to convince us that we should try to be as rational as possible. Who are they kidding? They’re just human beings too, aren’t they? I’ll sure bet that they aren’t rational all the time!”

   Tu Quoque

4. “Of course God answers prayers! After all, sometimes the answer may be “no” or “wait awhile” so you can’t prove he doesn’t answer them.”

   Appeal to Ignorance

5. “You should adhere to Dr. Olson’s latest diet. After all, poor nutrition compromises your immune system so it’s important to eat well.”

   Diversion

6. “Every Siamese cat I’ve met has been temperamental and so they all are.”

   Hasty Generalization

7. “Almost everybody in town approves of hunting. It must be okay.”

   Fallacious Appeal to Majority

8. “Jake likes hunting because his family has always hunted. Knowing this, who can take is position seriously?”

   Ad Hominem
9. “If God exists (and if what we ask for is in accordance with His will), then all prayers would be answered. Not all prayers are answered. God doesn’t exist.”

   Premature Disconfirmation

10. “College students pay for their classes much like customers pay for a product. Obviously, one of the first goals of a company is to make a product that pleases the customers. Thus, one of the first goals of a professor should be to run a class that pleases the students.”

   False Analogy

11. “The human body is amazingly well-designed. Creation by God would explain this. Therefore, God created the human body.”

   Premature Confirmation

12. “People without intimate relationships with another people, tend to be lonely and unhappy. That’s why everyone should get married.”

   Diversion

13. “It’s obvious that God doesn’t exist! After all, nobody can prove that he does.”

   Appeal to Ignorance

14. “So you oppose the formation of a union. I suppose you think we should all work for a pittance insufficient to support our families. You’re probably in favor of child labor, too.”

   Straw Man

15. “Ellen believes in ghosts. That’s fine. But for me, they don’t exist.”

   Misplaced Relativism

16. “Most people in the United States are competent on computers. Of 2500 people surveyed, all but 5 described themselves as highly computer literate and exhibited sophisticated computer skills.”

   Hasty Generalization

17. “Many people claim to have had experienced God. In fact, such experiences are genuine experiences of God because all of them are vivid and clear and because any experience of God would be just that.”
Premature Confirmation

18. "Well of course the doctor thinks that you should go in for more tests! He gets paid for those tests!"

Vested Interest

19. “Be an atheist if you want to. For me, though, God exists.”

Misplaced Relativism

20. “If moral values are subjective then we’ll find a large variation in moral codes from culture to culture. We do find a large variation in moral codes from culture to culture. Therefore, moral values are subjective.”

Premature Confirmation

21. “If Albert committed the murder (and if he wasn’t wearing gloves, and if he didn’t wipe mantle-piece afterwards, etc., etc.), then his finger-prints would be on the mantle-piece. His finger-prints weren’t on the mantle-piece. Albert didn’t commit the crime.”

Premature Disconfirmation

22. “My mother has a lot of nerve criticizing me for marrying a man I only knew for three months. She married someone she only knew for three weeks!”

Tu Quoque

23. “Pregnancies increase shortly after massive blackouts. Clearly blackouts make people pregnant!”

Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc

24. “How could you doubt that angels exist? A recent poll has shown that 75% of Americans believe in angels.”

Fallacious Appeal to Majority

25. “If I were you, I’d rethink your criticisms of this class before I need to turn in final grades. Just some friendly advice.”

Appeal to Force

26. “Allowing parents to use vouchers that enable their children to attend private instead of public schools would improve the quality of education. After all, vouchers his would promote competition, and competition is what makes businesses excel.”
False Analogy

27. “How can you be persuaded by Professor Jeffries’ arguments against censorship? Don’t you know that he cheats on his wife and indulges in illegal drugs? He’s an absolute creep!”

Ad Hominem

28. “I don’t think that we should have laws against private handgun ownership. After all, a famous actor opposes such legislation, and that’s good enough for me.”

Fallacious Appeal to Authority

29. “Nietzsche’s philosophy is intellectually bankrupt. Don’t you know that he suffered from syphilis?”

Ad Hominem

30. “Don’t believe Ellen when she argues that there’s intelligent life on other planets. She only started to think that way from watching Star Trek.”

Genetic Fallacy

31. “Shortly after the new factory arrived, the rate of birth defects started to increase. That company must be producing something toxic.”

Post Hoc Ergo Proper Hoc

32. I believe that God exists. After all, you can’t prove that he doesn’t.”

Appeal to Ignorance

33. “Apparently, our honorable governor would rather see unemployed people out on the street than receiving state aid. But can anyone believe that this is a reasonable position? Does increasing the homeless population really make a society better off?”

Straw Man

34. “Do you mean to tell me that you’re convinced by Dr. Johnson’s argument for tenure? She’s a professor herself! Of course she’s in favor of it!”

Vested Interest

35. “It’s just a crime that those nude drawings were removed from the courtyard of the art building. I mean, think about the hours that those students put into those drawings!
And if that weren’t enough, artists put something of themselves in their artwork. Just think of how terrible those students must have felt to have their artwork rejected like that. It must have been like having a part of themselves rejected, too! Just spat upon, called immoral and rejected! How would you like that?”

**Appeal to Emotion**

36. “Children whose parents read to them as infants and toddlers tend to do better in school than children whose parents didn’t read to them during those formative years. Can there be any doubt that reading to your children will improve their chances of academic success?”

**Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc**

37. “If religious experiences were actual experiences of a divine reality then they would have a profound effect on people. In fact, religious experiences do have a profound effect on people. Therefore, religious experiences are actual experiences of a divine reality.”

**Premature Confirmation**

38. “How can you believe that some people have had religious experiences of God? Just think of all the atrocities that have been committed thanks to such alleged contact with God! Wars have been waged, people have been tortured and killed, cultures have been eradicated, all because someone thought that God appeared or spoke to him!”

**Appeal to Emotion**