INFORMAL FALLACY EXERCISES

I. Identify the fallacy of relevance in the following passages. Explain your answer. (Sometimes more than one fallacy is involved.)

1. You can’t believe what Professor MarsHead says about the importance of higher salaries for teachers. As a teacher himself, he would naturally be in favor of increasing teachers’ pay.

2. I am sure that their ambassador will be reasonable about the matter. After all, man is a rational animal.

3. The wives of successful men wear expensive clothing. So the best way for a woman to help her husband become a success is to buy expensive clothing.

4. Anytus: “Socrates, I think that you are too ready to speak evil of men; and, if you will take my advice, I would recommend you to be careful. perhaps there is no city in which it is not easier to do men harm than to do them good, and this is certainly the case at Athens, as I believe you know. – Plato

5. Our team is the outstanding team in the conference, because it has the best players and the best coach. We know it has the best players and the best coach because it will win the conference title. And it will win the conference title because it deserves to win, for it is the outstanding team in the conference.

6. Mr. Scrooge, my husband certainly deserves a raise in pay. I can hardly manage to feed the children on what you have been paying him. And our youngest child, Tiny Tim, needs an operation if he is ever to walk without crutches.
7. Our tests have shown that the drug in question has no medicinal value whatever, certainly none for the ailments it is claimed to cure. We conclude, therefore, that it cannot be sold successfully and will be a commercial failure.

8. During the war enemy espionage rings were exposed by tapping the telephone wires of suspects. Therefore the authorities should have the telephone wires of all suspicious persons tapped.

9. It matters very little now what the King of England either says or does; he hath wickedly broken through every moral and human obligation, trampled nature and conscience beneath his feet, and by a steady and constitutional spirit of insolence and cruelty procured for himself universal hatred. – Thomas Paine

10. No breath of scandal has ever touched the Senator. Therefore he must be incorruptibly honest.

11. In that melancholy book *The Future of an Illusion*, Dr. Freud himself one of the last great theorists of the European capitalist class, has stated with simple clarity the impossibility of religious belief for the educated man of today. – John Strachey

12. The Inquisition must have been justified and beneficial, if whole people invoked and defended it, if men of the loftiest souls founded and created it severally and impartially, and its very adversaries applied it on their own account, pyre answering to pyre. – Benedetto Croce

13. It is too my turn to pitch today. After all, it’s my ball!

14. Why do I know more than other people? Why, in general, am I so clever. I have never pondered over questions that are not really questions. I have never wasted by strength. – Friedrich Nietzsche
15. Of course socialism is desirable. Look at the facts. At one time all utilities were privately owned, now more and more of them are owned by the government. The social security laws embody many of the principles that socialists have always maintained. We are well on our way to socialism, and its complete triumph is inevitable.

16. That new student says that I am his favorite professor. And he must be telling the truth, because no student would lie to his favorite professor.

17. “But I observe,” says Cleanthes, “with regard to you, Philo, and all speculative sceptics, that your doctrine and practice are as much at variance in the most abstruse points of theory as in the conduct of common life.” – David Hume

18. The Golden Rule is basic to every system of ethics ever devised, and everyone accepts it in some form or other. It is, therefore, an undeniably sound moral principle.

19. No mathematician has ever been able to prove the Riemann Hypothesis, so it must be false.

20. But can you doubt that air has weight when you have the clear testimony of Aristotle affirming that all the elements have weight including air, and excepting only fire – Galileo

21. Are you in favor of increased governmental service and higher taxes?

22. Of course there is a Santa Claus. But he doesn’t bring any presents to children who do not believe in him.

23. The alarmists have not succeeded in proving that radioactive fallout is dangerously harmful to human life. Therefore it is perfectly safe to continue our program of testing nuclear weapons.
24. Driver: I realize that I may have been going a little too fast, Officer. I’ve had tickets before, and if you give me one now it will cost me over one hundred dollars. And if I have to pay a hundred dollar fine I won’t be able to afford to have my wife operated on—and she’s been sick a long time and needs that operation desperately!

25. Our nation is a democracy and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. We believe in equality of opportunity for everyone, so our colleges should admit every applicant.

26. Neitzsche was personally more philosophical than his philosophy. His talk about power, harshness, and superb immortality was the hobby of a harmless young scholar and constitutional invalid. – George Santayana

27. My doctor has some nerve telling me to lose weight. After all, he weighs more than I do.

28. In his work an attorney is free to consult law books. And a physician often looks up cases in her medical texts. Everyone should be allowed a similar freedom of reference. So students should be permitted to use their textbooks during exams.

29. While General Grant was winning battles in the West, President Lincoln received many complaints about Grant’s being a drunkard. When a delegation told him one day that Grant was hopelessly addicted to whiskey, the President is said to have replied: “I wish General Grant would send a barrel of his whiskey to each of my other generals!”

30. The story is told about Wendell Phillips, the abolitionist. One day he found himself on the same train with a group of Southern clergymen. When the Southerners learned of Phillips’ presence, they decided to have some fun at his expense. One of them approached and asked “Are you Wendell Phillips?”
   “Yes, sir,” came the reply.
   “Are you the great abolitionist?”
“I am not great, but I am an abolitionist.”

“Are you not the one who makes speeches in Boston and New York against slavery?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Why don’t you go to Kentucky and make your speeches there?”

Phillips looked at his questioner for a moment and then asked, “Are you a clergyman?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Are you trying to save souls from hell?”

“Yes.”

“Well—why don’t you go there?”