

Fallacies of Ambiguity Exercises

1. There can't be laws without a law-giver. But nature operates according to strict laws, like the law of gravity. So there must be a law-giver above nature, namely God.

2. Criminal actions are illegal, and all murder trials are criminal actions, thus all murder trials are illegal.

(Example borrowed from I. Copi.)

3. The sign said "fine for parking here", and since it was fine, I parked there.

4. All child-murderers are inhuman, thus, no child-murderer is human.

5. A plane is a carpenter's tool, and the Boeing 737 is a plane, hence the Boeing 737 is a carpenter's tool.

6. Conventional bombs did more damage in W.W. II than nuclear bombs. Thus, a conventional bomb is more dangerous than a

nuclear bomb. (From I. Copi).

7. Because the brain, which is made up entirely of neural cells, is capable of consciousness, it follows that each neural cell in the brain must be capable of consciousness.

8. Germany is a militant country. Thus, each German citizen is militant.

9. The newspaper headline said, "Police set to stop illegal drinking at midnight." I had no idea that the police here were a bunch of drunks?

10. Nothing is better than God. A hot dog is better than nothing. Thus, a hot dog is better than God.

11. Mystic to Hot Dog Vendor: Make me one with everything.

12. Maria is the shortest player on the volleyball team. All the members of the volleyball team are women. Thus, Maria is a short woman.

13. The tour guide said that standing in Greenwich Village, the Empire State building could easily be seen. I didn't know the Empire State building was in Greenwich Village.

14. Sodium and chlorine, the atomic components of salt, are both deadly poisons. Thus, salt must be a deadly poison.

15. A car consumes less gasoline than a truck. Thus, less gasoline is consumed by cars in the United States than by trucks.

16. Every sentence in this paragraph is well-written, Thus, the paragraph is well-written.

17. Every member of the country club is over 65 years old. Thus, the country club must be over 65 years old.

18. Motives and desires exert forces on people causing them to choose one thing over another. But force is a physical quantity, governed by the laws of physics. Thus, human choices are governed by the laws of physics.

19. Every slice of this pie is wedge-shaped. Thus, the entire pie must be wedge-shaped.

20. We want our children to be normal, not abnormal. Now, the normal child doesn't start reading until the age of seven. So we don't want our children to read before they're seven.

21. Sampras and Agassi are the two best tennis players on the planet. Clearly, they would make the best tennis doubles team on the planet.

22. The U.S. Congress is incompetent. Therefore, Congressman Gephardt is incompetent.

23. Bill said he was interviewing for a job driving heavy equipment in the supervisor's office. It seems clear then that the supervisor must have one big office.

24. All humans are mortal. Therefore, at some point, no humans will exist anywhere in the universe.

25. Mankato is 68% Protestant. Jill is a Mankatoan. Thus, she is 68% Protestant.

26. Diamonds are rarely found in the United States. Thus, if you're in the U.S., be extra careful not to lose your diamond jewelry.

27. Joe: The author of my Intro. to Philosophy text warns his readers about many philosophical errors in his text. Bob: Odd. Maybe the author was desperate to get a book into print in order to gain tenure.