1. How do some Christians use Colossians 2:8 to support their belief that faith does not need to be defended on philosophical grounds? What is wrong with this interpretation?

The verse speaks of “hollow and deceptive philosophy,” but it goes on to describe a dangerous philosophy as one that “depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

2. What led former atheist C.E.M. Joad to embrace the Christian view of the universe?

Joad turned to Christianity because he felt that this religious view of the universe covered more of the facts of experience than any other worldview.

3. What does “faith precedes reason” mean? How does Edward T. Ramsdell explain this idea?

All methods of knowing ultimately rely on certain assumptions. Edward T. Ramsdell writes, “The natural man is no less certainly a man of faith than the spiritual, but his faith is in the ultimacy of something other than the Word of God. The spiritual man is no less certainly a man of reason than the natural, but his reason, like that of every man, functions within the perspective of his faith.”

4. What is Christianity’s basis for special revelation?

Special revelation is based on history, the law of the evidence, and the science of archaeology.

5. What is the Christian view of the relationship between the natural and the supernatural? How does this view differ from that of the naturalist?

According to Christianity, matter is not the whole of reality; there is also the supernatural. Moreover, matter is temporal and will ultimately pass away. The material universe was purposely created out of the mind of the living Logos (John 1:1–4), and all the cosmos, existing independently of God, relies on God for its very existence and explanation. In other words, the Christian explanation for nature (the world of matter) is that the supernatural created the natural.

According to the naturalist, matter is all that exists; there is no supernatural.
6. Which system of philosophy influenced Islamic philosophers? What kind of problem does this create for the Islamic view of God?

The early Islamic philosophers were heavily influenced by the Greek philosophers. This led to a contradiction in their view of God: following Aristotle, some Muslims came to believe that the material world was eternal, yet they also affirmed that matter existed because God brought it into being.

7. Which argument did Muslims develop for the existence of God?

Early Muslim philosophers developed the Kalam Cosmological Argument, which reasons that since every event has a cause, the beginning of the universe (an event), must also have some underlying cause. Therefore, since the universe exists, it must have come into being; and since it came into being, the universe is not eternal.

8. Are Muslims naturalists or supernaturalists? Why? Do Muslims believe in life after death?

Islam affirms the existence of entities beyond the natural world. Their affirmation of the existence of God illustrates that Muslims are not naturalists. Beyond their theology, Muslims also uphold the existence of the human soul, as well as the existence of angels and jinn. Islam affirms supernaturalism over and against naturalism—not all things may be known through human senses, nor may we limit the field of existence to what our senses perceive.

Fundamental to Islam is the belief in final judgment, implying a belief in life after death. Not only do Muslims affirm life after death and a day of final judgment, they also affirm the bodily resurrection of the dead (though they deny that Jesus died and was resurrected).

9. Do Muslims believe in miracles? Does the fact that Muhammad did not perform any miracles cause a problem for Muslims?

Orthodox Islamic philosophy affirms the occurrence of miracles and the existence of supernatural beings. The Qur’an records Muhammad performing no miracles in support of his claim to be a prophet. This is a problem because Muhammad claimed to be the greatest prophet of all. Jesus performed numerous miracles to support His claims. As Blaise Pascal said, “Any man can do what Mahomet has done; for he performed no miracles . . . No man can do what Christ has done.”


Muslims view these verses as foretelling Muhammad’s coming, rather than prophesying Jesus Christ. Deuteronomy 18:15–18
• **Like Moses**—Peter proclaims that Jesus is the prophet Moses foretold.
• **From among the Israelites**—Matthew 21:11 states, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee” and Acts 3:19–23 likewise is referencing Deuteronomy when it reads, “raise up a prophet like me from among your own people.”
• **Put His words in His mouth**—John 7:16; John 8:28; and John 12:49 all speak to the fact that God gave Jesus “the words to speak.”
• **He will proclaim to the Israelites everything God commands Him**—John 7:16; John 8:28; and John 12:49 all speak to the fact that Jesus used God’s words to teach the Israelites.

Muslims claim that Jesus did not proclaim the law, but Jesus did speak to the Law. This is seen most clearly in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:17–20. We also see Jesus giving new laws to his people in John 14:34, as well as “the law of Christ” in Galatians 6:2 and 1 Corinthians 9:21.

**John 14:16**

• **Another counselor**—Muslims claim that the Holy Spirit cannot be the future Comforter because he was already present helping and guiding Jesus. Muslims further claim that “paracletos” has been corrupted and it should read “periclytos,” which is an almost literal translation of *Muhammad* or *Ahmad*. But there is absolutely no manuscript evidence to support this claim. Of the over 5,000 manuscripts now available, not one uses the word *periclytos*. So, the charge of textual corruption is without historical or textual support.

Further, while Muslims assert that the identification of the Counselor with the Holy Spirit is a misinterpretation, in the very context of John 14:16 Jesus draws just this identification: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). Although Muslims claim that this statement was made up by later Christians, such a claim would need at least some evidence.

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**PHILOSOPHY 2.3**

11. What is the essence of naturalism?

The essence of naturalism is that whatever exists can be explained by natural causes. Thus, in a Humanist’s mind, the supernatural cannot exist.

12. How did Roy Wood Sellars regard the Christian worldview? In his opinion, what has rendered Christianity obsolete?

According to Sellers, Christianity’s supernaturalistic framework has been disproved by the growth of knowledge about nature through the naturalistic sciences.
13. What is the cosmology of the Secular Humanist?

According to the Secular Humanist, matter has always existed (had no beginning and will have no end), even though it is ever-changing.

14. For the naturalist, what is the ultimate means of perception?

Science

15. How does the naturalist’s monistic view of the mind and body differ from the Christian’s dualistic view? What are two troubling implications of a naturalistic answer to the “mind-body” question?

For the naturalist, mind is merely the product of matter and evolution. For the Christian, the mind existed before matter and brought matter into existence. Christianity views the mind dualistically—as both physical (the brain) and spiritual (the soul).

First, a monistic view of the mind implies that mankind is not immortal and that there is nothing supernatural in our makeup that survives death (no life after death). Second, this viewpoint implies that we should not put confidence in the reasoning powers of a brain produced by evolution, since a “better mutation of mind could occur any day.”

16. How does Lenin describe matter?

According to Lenin, matter is primarily nature and sensations. Thoughts and consciousness are merely the highest products of matter. Lenin viewed all of reality as philosophically naturalistic—that people, plants, animals, stars, etc. are merely matter.

17. What is the Marxist view of truth and knowledge (epistemology)?

According to Marxism, truth is ultimately discovered through science, a virtually infallible source of knowledge. Nothing can be considered “knowledge” until it has been scientifically tested and proven. Therefore, supernatural revelation will never produce truth.

18. What is the Marxist dialectic and how does it work?

The Marxist dialectic is the view that life is a constantly evolving process resulting from the clash of opposing forces:
Every established idea (thesis) is eventually opposed by another idea (antithesis).
Eventually, an entirely new entity will emerge from this opposition (synthesis), which renders both thesis and antithesis obsolete.
This synthesis eventually becomes a thesis that is opposed by an antithesis . . . and so forth without end.

The result of this philosophical view is that reality is constantly changing—nothing is ever certain.

19. What is the Marxist metaphysical belief?

Marxists do not believe in God or anything supernatural in the universe. They proclaim that the material universe is all that exists, that it has always existed, and that it always will.

20. How does Marxism address the mind-body question? What is the problem with their explanation?

According to Marxism, thoughts are nothing more than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into the forms of thought.
Marxism claims that consciousness is just a subjective reflection of objective reality in order to avoid labeling consciousness as supernatural. Yet this claim only results in bringing its own origins into question.

21. Are Cosmic Humanists in agreement with the tenets of naturalism?

Cosmic Humanists reject naturalism and materialistic philosophies because such explanations ignore the all-pervasive supernatural.

22. What is the Cosmic Humanist view of philosophy?

Cosmic Humanists hold to a philosophy of non-naturalism (that there is nothing natural) and therefore view all of reality as spiritual.

23. How do Cosmic Humanists understand truth? Where does the Cosmic Humanist look to find truth?

According to Cosmic Humanism, we create our own truth according to the principle “if it feels like truth to you, it is.” Thus, for the Cosmic Humanist all knowledge exists subjectively within ourselves and by connecting with our inner spiritual being we can tap into this knowledge.
24. Why do different Cosmic Humanist thinkers express different interpretations of reality?

Cosmic Humanists differ about reality because each Cosmic Humanist ultimately arrives at his or her own truth.

25. According to Cosmic Humanism, what is the only substance that actually exists?

According to Cosmic Humanism, all is spiritual and all is connected. There are no dual substances or multiple entities. Rather, everything is part of one divine, non-natural substance.

26. Why is the statement “God so loved the world” nonsensical to a Postmodernist?

For Postmodernists, since there is no universal Truth (capital “T”), there are only “truths” (small “t”) that are particular to a society or group of people and limited to individual perception. There is no true “grand story,” only the subjective stories of communities. Therefore, Postmodernists reject the notion of metanarratives as nonsensical. Since Christianity is a metanarrative (an explanation of reality), Postmodernists regard its “absolute” claims, such as “God so loved the world” as impossible.

27. What is literary deconstruction? What does this theory mean for the Bible?

Deconstruction involves reading a text to ferret out its hidden or multiple meanings (polysemy). From a framework of deconstruction, a reader’s interpretation of a text is more important than the text itself or the meaning its author is attempting to communicate. In the end, the subjectivity of the reader ultimately determines meaning, not the author. For example, a reader may feel that a particular text is racist, even if the author never intended to convey such a stance. If deconstruction is true, then the Bible can no longer convey truth. Scripture would have no more authority to speak about ultimate truths and reality than a comic book.

28. What is the “correspondence theory” of truth? Why do Postmodernists reject this theory?

The “correspondence theory” of truth states that a proposition is true only if it corresponds to reality. Postmodernists claim that this kind of Truth is impossible to achieve because there is no “way things are” (a theory known as anti-realism). Therefore, there is no objective reality for propositions to correspond to, only personal, small “t” truths and their resulting constructions of reality. Our words only correspond to other words and, in the end, create our understanding of reality. Since words only signify other words, then words can never be used in the pursuit of Truth.
29. What is the primary idea behind “word play?”

Postmodernists insist that all human beings are conditioned by their culture, language, experiences, and situation in life—no one is able to “break through” his or her culture or language to engage reality objectively. Therefore, when we contend that the assertion “water wets” is true, we are merely parroting what we have been taught by our community—the rules of our language. If a community did not agree with this assertion, then the phrase would no longer be true for that community.

30. What four points does Kevin J. Vanhoozer use to summarize Postmodern philosophy?

- Knowledge—Postmodernism limits knowledge to local narratives.
- Reason—Postmodernism rejects the notion of universal rationality; reason is always situated within particular narratives, traditions, institutions, and practices.
- Metanarratives—Postmodernism rejects unifying, totalizing, and universal schemes in favor of new emphases on difference, plurality, fragmentation, and complexity.
- Human beings—Postmodernism rejects the notion that the person is an autonomous individual with a rational consciousness that transcends his or her particular place in culture, language, history, and gendered body.

“Understanding Postmodernism”

Video Questions

1. How can we historically divide the pre-modern, modern, and postmodern periods? How did each period view truth?

Roughly speaking, the Western world can be divided into three different time frames:

Pre-modernism (< to 1600) had a strong belief in the supernatural—God, the divine, gods, miracles, etc. Authority and knowledge rested with those in power, like the clergy and the monarchy. Truth, while found in both our faculties and experience, was predominantly discovered through revelation.

Modernism (1600 to 1960) was much more skeptical of the supernatural. Authority and knowledge rested with the educated—scholars, scientists, etc. Human knowledge was believed to be the source of progress and the means to a better understanding of reality. Truth, while found in both revelation and experience, was predominantly uncovered through human faculties (i.e. reason and the five senses).

Postmodernism (1900 to ?) is skeptical of absolute claims to knowledge, truth, and reality, believing that in the past such claims led to war and oppression (e.g. Marxism, Islam, Christianity, Crusades, World Wars 1 and 2, Vietnam, and the Cold War). Postmodern thinkers do not believe true progress can be realized. Truth, while found in both revelation and human faculties, is predominantly attained through human experience and community.
2. **What four elements define the philosophy of Postmodernism?**

Postmodernism rejects the notion of essentialism—the belief that things have intrinsic defining qualities. For example, according to essentialism, a human being is inherently a person regardless of his or her attributes. For a Postmodernist, there is no such thing as a human being per se. A human being becomes a person because society labels him or her a person.

It follows that if there is no truth or essence to things, there is no one metanarrative. Such “universal explanations” are believed to be oppressive. According to postmodernists, those in positions of power holding to one worldview will inevitably force that worldview on others.

In the end, truth for the Postmodernist is based on the common beliefs of one’s “interpretative community.” Truth and reality become matters of cultural interpretation rather than independent entities.

Postmodernists also reject traditional logic, insisting that logic is merely one community’s version of truth, allowing all methodologies and interpretations relating to truth to be valid.

3. **In what five ways is Postmodernism a contradiction?**

First, Postmodernism asserts that there is universally no truth. However, this statement is presented as universally true. Second, Postmodernism asserts that all interpretations are valid, yet they insist that everyone believe their interpretation about interpretations. Third, Postmodernism authoritatively announces that authoritative announcements are invalid. Fourth, Postmodernism is a metanarrative that rejects the existence of metanarratives as a whole. Fifth, Postmodernism claims that morality, like everything else, is a social construct. Thus, we should not force our moral beliefs on others, an assertion which itself assumes a universal morality.

4. **On what areas do Christianity and Postmodernism disagree?**

First, Postmodernism asserts that there is no truth (and thus no way the world actually is), but Christianity asserts that there is truth and the world is a certain way. For example, Christians believe that sin exists regardless of community agreement. Christianity is also a metanarrative (grand story). According to Christianity, everything came from God, mankind turned from God and caused creation to fall, yet it will one day be restored.

Second, Postmodernism believes that an objective historical account is nonexistent, since history is merely the perspective of a particular community (usually the most powerful one). Thus, there are as many different histories as there are historical perspectives. Christianity, on the other hand, believes there is an actual history of the world, that God entered that history, and that there is evidence to support this claim.

Third, Postmodernism believes that morality, like truth, is relative to community and interpretation. Christianity, however, believes in universal moral standards that are mandatory for all communities and cultures.

Fourth, Postmodernism asserts that no one can decipher any text because words have no inherent meaning. They insist that we create the meaning of a text as we read it. This meaning is shaped by
our culture and life experiences and is inescapable. Christians, on the other hand, believe that there is a right and wrong interpretation to Scripture and that we can get past our cultures and experiences to discern the Word of God.

5. What do Christianity and Postmodernism have in common?

First, both Christianity and Postmodernism agree that modernism has gone too far. According to modernism, truth is discovered primarily through the reason and the five senses. However, there are truths that can neither be touched nor reasoned, e.g. issues of morality or the notion of love.

Second, both Christians and Postmodernists agree that community is a vitally important aspect of life. It is through community that we learn, grow, and discover what it means to be selfless.

**Critical Thinking**

**Essay Questions**

1. The end of a thing is its perfection; death is the end of life; therefore, death is the perfection of life.

**Equivocation**—The equivocation is on the word “end.” In the first instance, end means the completion of a purpose—when we have a goal, we “work to that end,” or toward the completion of our goal. The second use of “end” is the cessation of something’s existence—when something or someone ceases to be. For instance, at the conclusion of many old movies, they would display the words “The End.” It didn’t mean that the movie had achieved its ultimate purpose; it simply meant that the movie had come to a stop.

2. Marijuana can’t be all that bad. Everyone knows about barroom brawls, but marijuana makes people peaceful.

**Red Herring**—This statement is a red herring because it diverts the listener’s attention to a positive, but irrelevant issue. In this case, the argument against the use of marijuana is based on its abusive nature, rather than its peace-invoking side effects. Whether or not it results in peacefulness does not answer the question of whether or not it is abusive. To concentrate on this aspect is to avoid the real issue.

3. Women are so sentimental. My mother and sisters always cry at the movies; my father and I never do.

**Hasty Generalization**—The generalization is that all women are sentimental. The problem with making this generalization, however, is that the evidence used to come to this conclusion is far too minimal. If there are billions of women in existence, describing them all based on the actions of only two or three is hasty.
4. The Senator is incorruptibly honest; no one has ever uncovered a scandal involving him.

**Appeal to Ignorance**—The fact that the Senator has never experienced scandal is not ironclad evidence that he is honest. Although no one has ever uncovered a scandal implicating the Senator, it does not automatically follow that no scandal actually exists. It could be that the Senator is incredibly effective at covering his tracks. Since no one knows of any scandal, his innocence is probable, but this does not mean that the conclusion of honesty is above suspicion.

5. The so-called theories of Einstein are merely the ravings of a mind polluted with liberal, democratic nonsense, which is utterly unacceptable to German men of science.

**Ad Hominem**—Einstein’s theories must be assessed according to their own merit. The rightness or wrongness of an idea does not depend on the character of the person who proposed it, whether a madman or a respected scientific scholar. Its validity must stand independently.

6. Exercise keeps everyone healthy. Therefore, if Tim would just run more, it might help his heart condition.

**Sweeping Generalization**—One cannot argue that, just because a principle is predominantly appropriate, it is therefore always appropriate. Ignoring exceptions can sometimes be fatal. We must treat general rules as just that—general.

7. Those who favor gun control also favor disarming the police and disbanding the National Guard.

**Straw Man**—Most of those who are pro-gun control are not in favor of disarming the police or getting rid of the National Guard. It may be that a few in this camp take their ideas to a further extreme than most. However, one cannot misrepresent the stand of the majority simply to make one’s refutation more plausible.
8. **Death should be held of no account, for it brings but two alternatives: either it utterly annihilates the person and his soul, or it transports the spirit or soul to some place where it will live forever. What then should a good man fear if death would bring only nothingness or eternal life. — Cicero**

**Faulty Dilemma**—Cicero is saying that there are only two alternatives for the consequences of death: either utter annihilation of the person or eternal life for the person’s soul/spirit. There are, however, more alternatives. There is the belief that we are nothing but physical beings who will simply cease breathing and become food for worms. Or, most Evangelical Christians believe that those who reject God will suffer in his absence for eternity. An additional option is that these same rebellious ones will suffer for a period of time before God brings them forever into his presence. Finally, there are many people in the world who hold to reincarnation, the belief that when we die we will be reborn into new bodies or forms of life. Therefore, offering only two alternatives oversimplifies the issue and forces a choice between a spuriously limited set of options.

9. **I’m on probation, sir. If I don’t get a good grade in this course, I won’t be able to stay in school. Please, could you let me have at least a C?**

**Appeal to Pity**—The system of letter grades was devised to reflect academic merit. This student, however, is not making an appeal based on his or her academic merit, but on his or her desire to stay in school. The basis of the appeal is a factor unrelated to the purpose of the letter grade.

10. **I join 2 presidents, 27 senators, and 83 representatives in describing this woman as a liar.**

**Appeal to Majority**—The veracity of this woman’s testimony should not be based upon how many people think that she is or is not lying. Rather, her words should be judged on whether or not they correspond with the facts of the case.

11. **Of course the Bible is true. It says that it is true.**

**Begging the Question**—This statement sets up a vicious circle:

A: The Bible is true.
B: How do you know the Bible is true?
A: I know it’s true because it says it’s true.
B: How do you know that its self-proclaimed truthfulness is true?
A: Because the Bible is true.
B: How do you know the Bible is true?

And so on and so on, with no resolvable end in sight. The reason this argument begs the question is that it does not go outside of itself for proof of its truthfulness. The initial argument merely uses itself to prove itself.
12. It’s the old time religion and it’s good enough for me.

**Appeal to Tradition**—Buddhism was founded over 2,500 years ago, thus making it older than Christianity. If the age of a religion is the standard by which we deem it correct, then our allegiance should lie with Buddhism before Christianity. In fact, pagan animism is even older than Buddhism, so why not subscribe to it? The length of time that a religion has been in existence is not a reliable measure of its validity.

13. In defense of suicide, David Hume said, “It would be no crime in me to divert the Nile or Danube from its course, were I able to effect such purposes. Where is then the crime of turning a few ounces of blood from their natural channel?”

**False Analogy**—This analogy fails because the consequences of rerouting a river are not necessarily fatal. Rerouting one’s blood outside the bloodstream is, by contrast, inherently fatal. Thus, the two circumstances do not share the necessary common ground in order to make this analogy work.

14. Why do you want to throw your money away like that?

**Complex Question**—This question is complex because it misses a crucial step by making an unwarranted assumption. The questioner is assuming that the other person wants to throw their money away. This is probably not a valid belief. In order to remedy this faulty approach, the inquirer should ask, “Do you want to throw your money away?” If the person being questioned answers “Yes,” then, at this point, our question is valid. If the person answers “No,” as most people would respond, then the conversation could continue as the inquirer questions why the other person would be involved in the proposed venture.

15. I think his daughter’s marriage must have worried him dreadfully, because his hair began to turn white after the wedding.

**False Cause**—There could be a great many reasons why this gentleman’s hair began to turn white. The timing of his daughter’s marriage may be mere coincidence or just one factor among many that are responsible for the result. Without further evidence, a concrete inference cannot be drawn.

16. I fail to see why hunting should be considered cruel when it gives me tremendous pleasure.

**Red Herring**—If it is cruel to hunt animals, and it is wrong to be cruel, the pleasure that hunting provides has no legitimate weight on the issue. The dual issue is whether or not hunting is cruel and whether or not being cruel to animals is immoral.

17. You are either a conservative or a liberal.

**Faulty Dilemma**—What about the moderates? Since most people fall somewhere between
conservative and liberal, offering only these two options creates a deceptive survey. The question is problematic because it forces the person being interviewed to make an unrealistic choice.

18. Pro-lifers believe that a fetus should be protected because it is a “potential” human. Today I will prove that a “potential” human is not a human and therefore should not be protected.

Straw Man—This statement is a misrepresentation of the pro-life position. Most pro-lifers do not state that the fetus is a potential human, but rather that it is a human, period. Therefore, if a person were to argue against the pro-life stance by citing reasons that we should believe that the fetus is not a potential human, they would be arguing against a position that has no substantial support in the pro-life camp.

19. There must be intelligent life in outer space, because no one has been able to prove that there isn’t.

Appeal to Ignorance—No one has been able to prove that there isn’t intelligent life in outer space. Likewise, no one has been able to prove that there is intelligent life in outer space. The lack of evidence does not grant one the warrant to form conclusive judgments. The lack of evidence provides for possibilities, not conclusions.

20. All Christians hate homosexuals—at least all the ones I know do.

Hasty Generalization—The word “all” must be used very carefully when making a broad statement like this. Even though a small sampling of Christians might have a certain attitude, this does not mean that every other believer in the world reflects this same mentality.

21. You’re wrong because you are an intolerant, closed-minded, right-wing fundamentalist.

Ad Hominem—Is it possible for a closed-minded, right-wing fundamentalist to be correct about anything? If so, then the unqualified statement “you’re wrong because” is not a valid reason to discard the fundamentalist’s idea. His or her idea must be evaluated on its own strength or weakness, not on the political or religious stature of its speaker.

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

Appeal to Majority—If all cultures assumed some form of pantheism, would that make pantheism correct? Of course not. The fact that every system includes the Golden Rule should not be a determining factor for its soundness.

**Equivocation**—Here, the term of confusion is the word “fine.” In the first use, it refers to a monetary penalty for the described action. In the second instance, “fine” means “it’s all right” to partake in the described action.

24. These rules were written 100 years ago and we have always followed them. Therefore, there is no need to change them.

**Appeal to Tradition**—Close to 3,000 years ago, the Israelites were commanded to build parapets around their roofs in order to avoid bloodguilt (Deuteronomy 22:8). It would be counterintuitive, however, to enforce this law today because our roofs no longer endure the high amount of traffic that Israelite homes did. Tradition is an inappropriate standard by which to measure the appropriateness of certain laws.

25. Of course I am right. I am always right.

**Begging the Question**—This statement leads one into endless self-verification:

A: I am right.
B: How do you know that you are right?
A: Well, I’m always right.
B: How do you know that you’re always right?
A: Because I’m always right about everything, which would mean that I’m right about always being right.

This argument assumes the truth of the case in point in order to provide justification for itself. In other words, the initial thesis is used as proof of its own validity. To reveal the unhelpfulness of the argument, we can phrase it this way: Why am I right? Because I’m right.

26. Everyone has a right to own property. Just because Jon has been declared insane doesn’t mean that you can take his weapon away.

**Sweeping Generalization**—In a general principle, there are sometimes unspoken assumptions that cannot be overlooked. In this example, the principle of the universal right to property ownership is based on the fundamental capacity of the prospective owner for proper stewardship of that property.

27. If we outlaw abortion, countless women will die during back alley abortions.

**Appeal to Pity**—The basic issue underlying abortion concerns whether or not the fetus is a human being. If it were, aborting him or her would be murder. So, bringing up back alley abortions completely misses the point. If pro-lifers are correct about the humanity of every fetus, then this argument is basically saying that we should provide sanitary places for women to commit murder. This statement diverts attention away from the central issues of personhood and murder toward
sanitation and black market abortions.

28. **Are you still a heavy drinker?**

**Complex Question**—In order for this question to avoid being fallacious, it must be true that the person in question was, at some point, a heavy drinker. This type of question forces the subject to admit to guilt that may or may not apply.

29. **Employees are like nails. Just as nails must be hit in the head in order to make them work, so must employees.**

**False Analogy**—What are the similarities and differences between human beings and nails, and are the similarities significant enough to deem this analogy valid? Within this analogy, the proposed common ground is found in the word “work.” When a nail works, it is driven through material that needs to be held together. When employees work, they are accomplishing any number of tasks assigned to them by their employer. Are these two uses of work the same? If we consider that the work of an employee is not to be driven through wood in order to fasten it to some other physical object, then we can safely conclude that the two uses of the word work” should be understood differently. Likewise, when a nail works, it is not typing a paper, evaluating stock market activities, milking a cow, flying a commercial airliner, or punching the buttons on a cash register. Therefore, the analogy fails to make the desired connection.

30. **Immediately after walking under a ladder, my leg fell off. I haven’t hobbled under a ladder since.**

**False Cause**—A common fault of many superstitious people is identifying causes where there are none to be found. Coincidence is often interpreted as causal rather than incidental. In this example, more information is needed about the subject’s unexpected amputation before we can decidedly conclude that the sub-ladder stroll is to blame.