

**Flaw**

1. Diseases have always plagued the earth's living organisms. Scientists believe that huge numbers of plant and animal diseases have developed and been eradicated naturally over time. This ongoing emergence and disappearance of diseases is ignored by those who blame the widespread incidence of cancer entirely upon man's alteration of naturally occurring substances to, for instance, produce bigger and better food sources. For example, some claim that the use of hormones to increase meat production heightens the risk of cancer in people who eat meat. People who hold this view need to accept the fact that even if cancer was not such a prevalent disease, another disease would have arisen naturally to take its place.

Which one of the following identifies a flaw in the passage's reasoning?

- (A) The writer wrongly assumes that the use of hormones in meat production never has an effect upon people who eat meat.
- (B) The writer ignores the fact that scientists are developing cures for some types of cancer.
- (C) The writer does not consider the fact that a number of diseases have not yet been discovered.
- (D) While the writer identifies a group that believes cancer is caused by man's interference with natural forms of food production, he does not identify or recognize scientists who disagree with this contention.
- (E) The author does not acknowledge that man's alteration of naturally occurring substances might trigger the emergence of new diseases.

2. Donna: For the most part, medical researchers agree that someone who regularly consumes large amounts of alcohol will probably have serious health problems.

Steve: Heavy drinking does not adversely impact one's health. My great uncle drank heavily for years and seemed in perfect health. In fact, he lived to be 87 years old.

Which one of the following is a major flaw in Steve's argument?

- (A) Steve's argument uses only one example to attempt to refute a probable, not a foregone, result.
- (B) Steve cites an example that medical researchers did not study.
- (C) Steve's argument implies that there can be no correlation between heavy drinking and poor health.
- (D) Steve's argument fails to acknowledge the possibility that his great uncle may not have been in good health after all.
- (E) Steve doesn't indicate how long ago his great uncle lived so that different medical treatments can be taken into account.

3. The football coach at a Midwestern College noticed that some of his players were frequently late to morning football practices and seemed somewhat lethargic after they did arrive. He directed his assistant coach to look into the matter. The assistant coach reported back that most of the late and less active players belonged to fraternities on campus which were renowned for their frequent and late-night parties. The head coach then prohibited all of his football players from being members of fraternities. He reported that this would ensure that his players would get to practice on time and that they would have more productive practice sessions. The head coach's reasoning is not sound because he fails to establish which one of the following:

- (A) He fails to establish a system to monitor his players' fraternity membership and to impose penalties for those who do not follow his new rule.
- (B) He fails to establish that his players are physically big and strong enough to be successful football players.
- (C) He fails to establish that his new policy will ensure that at least some of his football players will go to bed at a more reasonable hour.
- (D) He fails to establish that his best football players did not belong to fraternities anyway.
- (E) He fails to establish that the success of the fraternity system will not suffer if the football players are precluded from becoming members.

4. If a person studies four hours a day for the LSAT, he will score in the top 10 percent. Every student at Harvard School of Law scored in the top 10

percent. Thus, Sarah who is studying at Harvard School of Law must have studied at least four hours a day.

The reasoning in the argument above is flawed because it

- (A) fails to consider that many students at Harvard studied more than four hours a day.
- (B) fails to consider that studies have shown that studying one subject more than three hours a day can be counterproductive.
- (C) fails to consider that studying less than four hours a day may be sufficient for some people to score in the top 10 percent.
- (D) fails to consider that people who studied less than three hours a day did not get into Harvard.
- (E) fails to consider that an additional eight hours a week of studying is an impossible burden for most college students.

5. A large group of hyperactive children whose regular diets included food containing large amounts of additives was observed by researchers trained to assess the presence or absence of behavior problems. The children were then placed on a low-additive diet for several weeks, after which they were observed again. Originally nearly 60 percent of the children exhibited behavior problems; after the change in diet, only 30 percent did so. On the basis of these data, it can be concluded that food additives can contribute to behavior problems in hyperactive children.

The evidence cited fails to establish the conclusion because

- (A) there is no evidence that the reduction in behavior problems was proportionate to the reduction in food-additive intake
  - (B) there is no way to know what changes would have occurred without the change of diet, since only children who changed to a low-additive diet were studied
  - (C) exactly how many children exhibited behavior problems after the change in diet cannot be determined, since the size of the group studied is not precisely given
  - (D) there is no evidence that the behavior of some of the children was unaffected by additives
  - (E) the evidence is consistent with the claim that some children exhibit more frequent behavior problems after being on the low-additive diet than they had exhibited when first observed
6. That the policy of nuclear deterrence has worked thus far is unquestionable. Since the end of the Second World

War, the very fact that there were nuclear armaments in existence has kept major powers from using nuclear weapons, for fear of starting a worldwide nuclear exchange that would make the land of the power initiating it uninhabitable. The proof is that a third world war between superpowers has not happened.

Which one of the following, if true, indicates a flaw in the argument?

- (A) Maintaining a high level of nuclear armaments represents a significant drain on a country's economy.
- (B) From what has happened in the past, it is impossible to infer with certainty what will happen in the future, so an accident could still trigger a third world war between superpowers.
- (C) Continuing to produce nuclear weapons beyond the minimum needed for deterrence increases the likelihood of a nuclear accident.
- (D) The major powers have engaged in many smaller-scale military operations since the end of the Second World War, while refraining from a nuclear confrontation.
- (E) It cannot be known whether it was nuclear deterrence that worked, or some other factor, such as a recognition of the economic value of remaining at peace.

7. To score in the ninetieth percentile on the LSAT, one must study hard. If one studies four hours a day for one month, she will score in the ninetieth percentile. Hence, if a person scored in the top ten percent on the LSAT, then she must have studied at least four hours a day for one month.

Which one of the following most accurately describes the weakness in the above argument?

- (A) The argument fails to take into account that not all test-prep books recommend studying four hours a day for one month.
- (B) The argument does not consider that excessive studying can be counterproductive.
- (C) The argument does not consider that some people may be able to score in the ninetieth percentile though they studied less than four hours a day for one month.
- (D) The argument fails to distinguish between how much people should study and how much they can study.
- (E) The author fails to realize that the ninetieth percentile and the top ten percent do not mean the same thing.

8. This pain relief product can be bought over the counter or in a stronger form with a prescription. But according to this pamphlet, for the prescription strength product to be effective it must be taken at the immediate onset of pain, it must be taken every four hours thereafter, and it cannot be taken with any dairy products. So it actually doesn't matter whether you use the prescription strength or the over-the-counter strength product.

Which one of the following best identifies the flaw in the above argument?

- (A) The fact that many people could not live a full life without the prescription strength product cannot be ignored.
- (B) It cannot be concluded that just because the prescription strength product has certain guidelines and restrictions on its use that it is not more effective.
- (C) It does not consider that complications may arise from the prescription strength product.
- (D) It fails to consider that other products may be more effective in relieving pain.
- (E) It is unreasonable to assume that the over-the-counter strength product does not have similar restrictions and guidelines for its use.

9. The senator has long held to the general principle that no true work of art is obscene, and thus that there is no conflict between the need to encourage free artistic expression and the need to protect the sensibilities of the public from obscenity. When well-known works generally viewed as obscene are cited as possible counterexamples, the senator justifies accepting the principle by saying that if these works really are obscene then they cannot be works of art.  
The senator's reasoning contains which one of the following errors?
- (A) It seeks to persuade by emotional rather than intellectual means.
  - (B) It contains an implicit contradiction.
  - (C) It relies on an assertion of the senator's authority.
  - (D) It assumes what it seeks to establish.
  - (E) It attempts to justify a position by appeal to an irrelevant consideration.
10. When workers do not find their assignments challenging, they become bored and so achieve less than their abilities would allow. On the other hand, when workers find their assignments too difficult, they give up and so again achieve less than what they are capable of achieving. It is, therefore, clear that no worker's full potential will ever be realized.  
Which one of the following is an error of reasoning contained in the argument?
- (A) mistakenly equating what is actual and what is merely possible
  - (B) assuming without warrant that a situation allows only two possibilities
  - (C) relying on subjective rather than objective evidence
  - (D) confusing the coincidence of two events with a causal relation between the two
  - (E) depending on the ambiguous use of a key term
11. The 1980s have been characterized as a period of selfish individualism that threatens the cohesion of society. But this characterization is true of any time. Throughout history all human actions have been motivated by selfishness. When the deeper implications are considered, even the simplest "unselfish" acts prove to be instances of selfish concern for the human species. Which one of the following is a flaw in the argument?
- (A) The claim that selfishness has been present throughout history is not actually relevant to the argument.
  - (B) No statistical evidence is provided to show that humans act selfishly more often than they act unselfishly.
  - (C) The argument assumes that selfishness is unique to the present age.
  - (D) The argument mentions only humans and does not consider the behavior of other species.
  - (E) The argument relies on two different uses of the term "selfish."

12. Some of the most prosperous nations in the world have experienced a pronounced drop in national savings rates—the percentage of after-tax income an average household saves. This trend will undoubtedly continue if the average age of these nations' populations continues to rise, since older people have fewer reasons to save than do younger people.

Which one of the following indicates an error in the reasoning leading to the prediction above?

- (A) It fails to specify the many reasons younger people have for saving money, and it fails to identify which of those reasons is the strongest.
  - (B) It assumes that a negative savings rate—the result of the average household's spending all of its after-tax income as well as some of its existing savings—cannot ever come about in any nation.
  - (C) It fails to cite statistics showing that the average age of the populations of certain nations is rising.
  - (D) It only takes into account the comparative number of reasons older and younger people, respectively, have for saving, and not the comparative strength of those reasons.
  - (E) It uses after-tax income as the base for computing the national savings rate without establishing by argument that after-tax income is a more appropriate base than before-tax income.
13. The current proposal to give college students a broader choice in planning their own courses of study should be abandoned. The students who are supporting the proposal will never be

satisfied, no matter what requirements are established. Some of these students have reached their third year without declaring a major. One first-year student has failed to complete four required courses. Several others have indicated a serious indifference to grades and intellectual achievement.

A flaw in the argument is that it does which one of the following?

- (A) avoids the issue by focusing on supporters of the proposal
- (B) argues circularly by assuming the conclusion is true in stating the premises
- (C) fails to define the critical term "satisfied"
- (D) distorts the proposal advocated by opponents
- (E) uses the term "student" equivocally

14. The true scientific significance of a group of unusual fossils discovered by the paleontologist Charles Walcott is more likely to be reflected in a recent classification than it was in Walcott's own classification. Walcott was, after all, a prominent member of the scientific establishment. His classifications are thus unlikely to have done anything but confirm what established science had already taken to be true.

Which one of the following most accurately describes a questionable technique used in the argument?

- (A) It draws conclusions about the merit of a position and about the content of that position from evidence about the position's source.
- (B) It cites two pieces of evidence, each of which is both questionable and unverifiable, and uses this evidence to support its conclusions.
- (C) It bases a conclusion on two premises that contradict each other and minimizes this contradiction by the vagueness of the terms employed.
- (D) It attempts to establish the validity of a claim, which is otherwise unsupported, by denying the truth of the opposite of that claim.
- (E) It analyzes the past on the basis of social and political categories that properly apply only to the present and uses the results of this analysis to support its conclusion.

15. "Physicalists" expect that ultimately all mental functions will be explainable in neurobiological terms. Achieving this goal requires knowledge of how neurons interact, and a delineation of the psychological faculties to be explained. At present, there is a substantial amount of fundamental

knowledge about the basic functions of neurons, and the scope and character of such psychological capacities as visual perception and memory are well understood. Thus, as the physicalists claim, mental functions are bound to receive explanations in neurobiological terms in the near future.

Which one of the following indicates an error in the reasoning in the passage?

- (A) The conclusion contradicts the claim of the physicalists.
- (B) The passage fails to describe exactly what is currently known about the basic functions of neurons.
- (C) The word "neurobiological" is used as though it had the same meaning as the word "mental."
- (D) The argument does not indicate whether it would be useful to explain mental functions in neurobiological terms.
- (E) The passage does not indicate that any knowledge has been achieved about how neurons interact.

16. Mayor Smith, one of our few government officials with a record of outspoken, informed, and consistent opposition to nuclear power plant construction projects, has now declared herself in favor of building the nuclear power plant at Littletown. If someone with her past antinuclear record now favors building this power plant, then there is good reason to believe that it will be safe and therefore should be built.

The argument is vulnerable to criticism on which one of the following grounds?

- (A) It overlooks the possibility that not all those who fail to speak out on issues of nuclear power are necessarily opposed to it.
  - (B) It assumes without warrant that the qualities enabling a person to be elected to public office confer on that person a grasp of the scientific principles on which technical decisions are based.
  - (C) It fails to establish that a consistent and outspoken opposition is necessarily an informed opposition.
  - (D) It leads to the further but unacceptable conclusion that any project favored by Mayor Smith should be sanctioned simply on the basis of her having spoken out in favor of it.
  - (E) It gives no indication of either the basis of Mayor Smith's former opposition to nuclear power plant construction or the reasons for her support for the Littletown project.
17. Those who prepare a nation's armed forces can learn much from the world of college athletics. In athletic competition, winning teams are generally those whose members are well-trained as individuals and as a

team, who are inspired by their coach, and who learn from mistakes made in games they lose. Similarly, a military that is successful needs well-trained soldiers who are confident about their capabilities, with each and every soldier learning from his mistakes in order to constantly improve his abilities.

Which of the following expresses the most serious weakness in the comparison drawn between athletes and soldiers?

- (A) Coaches of athletic teams are often chosen for their ability to teach young adults, while admirals and generals often lack this capability.
- (B) Not all college athletics are team sports. In sports such as tennis or gymnastics, competitors play as individuals.
- (C) College athletic teams that lose games can review mistakes to improve each member's performance, but soldiers who make significant errors in battle may not survive to learn from their mistakes.
- (D) Even those teams from the wealthiest colleges do not have the resources that a nation can marshal in developing its armed forces.
- (E) Both men and women serve in modern armed forces, but there is no college athletic event in which men and women compete on the same team.

18. Because of winter storm damage, the cost of a pound of apples at the local supermarket has increased 40 percent while the cost of a pound of oranges has increased 20 percent. Therefore, apples are now more expensive than oranges.

The argument's reasoning is questionable because the argument fails to rule out the possibility that

- (A) before the storm, apples had increased in price less than oranges
  - (B) before the storm, apples had already been more expensive than oranges
  - (C) before the storm, oranges were significantly more expensive than apples
  - (D) apples will fall back to their normal price more quickly than oranges will
  - (E) consumers will reduce their purchases of apples until the price falls to below that of oranges
19. Over the last 20 years, psychologists have studied the effect of television viewing on the subsequent levels of violent behavior by young adults. The researchers studied children between the ages of 10 and 15 and found that those children who viewed an average of 6 hours or more of television daily were over four times as likely to be arrested for violent crimes when they were young adults than those young adults who as children watched less than 2 hours of television daily. Therefore, researchers concluded that television viewing causes increased levels of violent activity in young adults.

Which of the following would indicate a flaw in the researcher's conclusion?

- (A) The researchers did not establish that those who watched more than

six hours of television were watching shows that featured violence.

- (B) The researchers did not establish that those who watched more violent shows were even more likely to be arrested than those who watched less violent shows.
- (C) The researchers did not establish that some other reason, such as parental style, was not a factor for both the differences in television viewing and later arrest levels between the two groups.
- (D) The researchers did not carry out their study long enough to determine if television viewing influences arrest records for those over the age of 40.
- (E) The researchers did not establish that those who were arrested for violent crimes had actually caused serious injury to other people.