

CHAPTER 5: DEEP ANALYSIS

Putting arguments into standard form helps us to understand argument content, structure and strength

So it's often useful to convert arguments in written passages to standard form
Unfortunately, many long passages often contain fairly simple arguments, with only a few premises and a single conclusion

Why?

(a) People naturally go off on *tangents*:

The trick of *excess verbiage (red herrings)*: Sometimes, however, this is done deliberately to hide the argument's weaknesses

This manoeuvre violates the conversational rules of *Relevance* (by introducing irrelevant material) and *Manner* (be brief and organized)

The only sentences we want to keep are those that are relevant to the truth of the conclusion or the premises



1

That is, the logically relevant material that helps make the argument valid, or that supports the premises themselves

(b) *repetition*: People repeat points to clarify, assure, remind or reveal importance

Such repetition, though, has no logical value for making arguments valid or sound

(c) *guarding terms* can *usually* be dropped, since *often* they don't contribute to the validity or soundness of the argument

e.g., "I think I'm going to be sad, I think it's today; the girl that's driving me mad is going away."

1. The girl that's driving me mad is going away.

∴ 2. ~~I think I'm going to be sad I think it's today.~~

However, you can't always drop guarding terms, since they can be part of the meaning of the premises or conclusions themselves

e.g., "You could be a millionaire, since you bought a lottery ticket"

2

You can't remove the "could," since the argument is not reasonable without it.

1. You bought a lottery ticket

∴ 2. You will be a millionaire?

(d) *assuring terms* can usually be dropped

"Michael Moore clearly doesn't want Bush to be re-elected, since 'Fahrenheit 9/11' portrays Bush as a very incompetent leader."

1. 'Fahrenheit 9/11' portrays Bush as a very incompetent leader.

∴ 2. ~~Michael Moore clearly doesn't want Bush to be re-elected.~~

Again, however, we cannot *always* remove assuring terms, because sometimes they are part of what the arguments assert

e.g., "Because Newton proved it, we now know that white light is composed of many colours."

1. Newton proved that white light is composed of many colours.

∴ 2. ~~We now know that white light is composed of many colours????~~

3

EXAMPLE

Background: Senator Kerry voted against the Defense of Marriage Act. Peter Jennings quizzed Kerry's presidential running mate, John Edwards on Kerry's decision.

Strike through all unnecessary verbiage, repetition, etc.; then put the basic argument into standard form:

"EDWARDS: I think [Kerry] was right. I think he was right, because what happened with the Defense of Marriage Act is it took away the power of states, like Vermont, to be able to do what they chose to do about civil unions – about these kinds of marriage issues. These are issues that should be left – Massachusetts, for example, has just made a decision – the Supreme Court at least has made a decision – that embraces the notion of gay marriage. I think these are decisions that states have the power to make. And the Defense of Marriage Act, as I understand it – you're right, I wasn't there when it was passed – but as I understand it, would have taken away that power. And I think that's wrong – that power should not be taken away from the states."

4

STANDARDIZED

CLARIFYING CRUCIAL TERMS

Perfect clarity is impossible—there will always be *some* vagueness or ambiguity in sentences

E.g. Tim went to town on Monday. He ate some sushi.

What we should do is remove the ambiguity and vagueness that are likely to be a problem in the context of the argument

5

Some steps:

(a) **Specify the reference of pronouns**, such as "she," "he," "it," "they" which depend on further context, since that context will be missing in the standardized argument

(b) **Remove ambiguity**: "Women aren't rational, since women aren't men and only man is a rational animal."

Ambiguous term(s)?

(c) **Clarify vague expressions**: "Pornographic material should be kept from children. So sex education has no place in public schools."

Vague term(s)?

DISSECTING THE ARGUMENT

Sentences in argumentative passages often combine several claims that can be more easily understood and evaluated when they are separated

6

Karla Homolka should not have been released, since she is unrepentant, psychopathic and fully guilty of the murders of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French. No one who is unrepentant, a psychopath and guilty of murder should ever be allowed to be free.



1. Karla Homolka is unrepentant.
2. Karla Homolka is psychopathic.
3. Karla Homolka is fully guilty of the murders of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French.
4. No one who is unrepentant, a psychopath and guilty of murder should ever be allowed to be free
- ∴ 5. Karla Homolka should not be released.

Caution: Not all ways of breaking down premises preserve the original argument

e.g. Why don't we break (4) up into three separate premises: e.g.,

4. No one who is unrepentant should ever be allowed to be free.
5. No one who is a psychopath should ever be allowed to be free.
6. No one who is guilty of murder should ever be allowed to be free.

7

Another example: "There's no way that the Canucks will win the Stanley Cup this coming year [2005/6], since they do not have the goalie needed to win the playoffs."

Simplest version:

1. The Canucks do not have the goalie needed to win the playoffs in 2005/6.
- ∴ 2. The Canucks will not win the Stanley Cup in 2005/6.

One way to break up the premise:

1. The Canucks do not have a goalie.
2. A goalie is needed for any hockey team to win the playoffs.
- ∴ 3. The Canucks will not win the Stanley Cup in 2005/6.

Better:

1. The Canucks do not have a strong goalie.
2. A strong goalie is needed for any hockey team to win the playoffs.
- ∴ 3. The Canucks will not win the Stanley Cup in 2005/6.

8

ARRANGING SUBARGUMENTS: Arguments for premises of the complete or main argument.

There is a large planet beyond the orbit of Uranus in a specific path, since the existence of such a large planet in such a path would best explain Uranus's unusual orbit; hence, we should point our telescopes along this path, if we wish to see this new planet.

An incomplete reconstruction:

1. The existence of a large planet in a specified path would best explain Uranus's unusual orbit
2. There is a large planet beyond the orbit of Uranus in a specified path.
- ∴ 3 We should point our telescopes along this path, if we wish to see this new planet.

We've left out argument structure: There are two, **chained** arguments in the passage

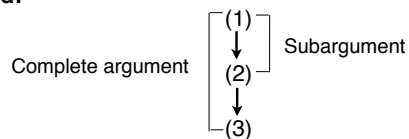
9

Chained:

Argument one:

1. The existence of a large planet in a specified path would explain Uranus's unusual orbit.
- ∴ 2. There is a large planet beyond the orbit of Uranus in a specified path.
- ∴ 3. We should point our telescopes along the specified path, if we wish to see the new planet.

Diagrammed:



CAREFUL: a sequence of argument markers doesn't always indicate a *chain* of reasons.

Sometimes support is **branching (or convergent)**, in that the premises provide support for the conclusion independently of each other

10

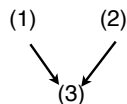
"I should buy that new, gigantic plasma TV, because the price is very good, because my old TV is inadequate, since it doesn't give me the full home movie experience, and no TV which doesn't give the full home movie experience is adequate."

FIRST CUT:

1. The price of that new, gigantic plasma TV is very good
- ∴ 2. My old TV is inadequate.
- ∴ 3. I should buy that new, gigantic plasma TV

This won't work, since (1) is not a reason for (2), but supports (3) by itself

Branching support:



Of course, we've left out some further argument.

(2) has its own argument, a subargument of the total argument

11

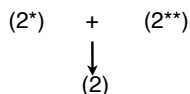
(2*) My old TV doesn't give me the full home movie experience.

(2**) No TV which doesn't give the full home movie experience is adequate.

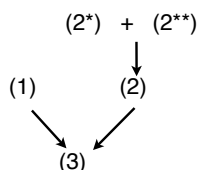
2. My old TV is inadequate.

Linking support: Notice that (2*) and (2**) "need each other" to provide support for (2).

If you remove either, then all support is lost.



The whole thing:



12

Suppressed Premises: Most everyday arguments depend on unstated, but presumably shared, facts or principles.

Suppressed premises: premises that are needed to make an argument valid, but are not explicitly stated

Enthymeme: an argument depending on suppressed premises; such arguments are *enthymematic*

e.g., The earth is a sphere, since the mast of ships sailing out of the harbour are the last part of the ship to disappear from view.

First attempt: We need to show that there is a connection between disappearing masts and spheres.

1. The mast of ships sailing out of the harbour are the last part of the ship to disappear from view.
2. If the mast of ships sailing out of the harbour are the last part of those ships to disappear from view, then those ships are dropping below the (original horizon) as they sail out of harbour.
- ∴ 3. Ships drop below the (original horizon) as they sail out of harbour.
4. Ships drop below the (original horizon) as they sail out of harbour only if the earth is a sphere.
5. The earth is a sphere.

13

Next?

LINGUISTIC PRINCIPLES: Some arguments seem valid, just because of the meaning of the terms involved. For example,

1. John is a bachelor
- ∴ 2. John is unmarried.

Linguistic principle?

1. Jennifer is in Burnaby with me.
- ∴ 2. I am in Burnaby.

e.g., The unstated linguistic principle required to make the above valid?

More: That brothers are male and sisters are female, linguistically supports: If a brother is older than his sister, then there is at least one male who is older than at least one female.

OTHER KINDS OF SUPPRESSED PREMISES

e.g., Adding: "You shouldn't harm innocent people" makes valid: "John was innocent; so you shouldn't harm him."

14

What will make the following valid?

1. Putting in a new transit system would be the best value for the money and would satisfy the most people
- ∴ 2. We should put in a new transit system.

THE USE OF SUPPRESSED PREMISES

It is appropriate to leave premises unstated if

- (i) the audience of the argument can easily supply these missing premises themselves, and
- (ii) the unstated premises are not also controversial

However, using suppressed premises is not kosher if they are controversial and central to the issue

e.g.

God does not exist, since evil exists. *Suppressed premise?*

If God exists, then evil does not exist.

God does exist, since the Bible says so. *Suppressed premise?*

Everything the Bible says is true.

15

Examples: 1, 2 p126

1. You shouldn't call Kirk guilty, because he has not even been tried yet.

Suppressed premise(s)?

If a person has not been tried, they should not be called guilty

Supporting subargument:

Unless a person has been tried, there is insufficient evidence for calling them guilty

If there is insufficient evidence for calling someone guilty, they should not be called guilty.

ARRANGED:

- 1. Unless a person has been tried, there is insufficient evidence for calling them guilty.
- 2. If there is insufficient evidence for calling someone guilty, you should not call them guilty.
- ∴ 3. If a person has not been tried, you should not call them guilty
- 4. Kirk has not been tried.
- ∴ 5. You shouldn't call Kirk guilty.

2. Cows cannot live in the desert because they eat grass.

Suppressed premise(s)?

No animal that eats grass can live on its own in the desert.

There is no grass in the desert.

If there is no grass in the desert, no animal that eats grass can live on its own in the desert.

ARRANGED:

- 1. If there is no grass in the desert, no animal that eats grass can live on its own in the desert.
- 2. There is no grass in the desert.
- ∴ 3. No animal that eats grass can live on its own in the desert.
- 4. Cows eat grass.
- ∴ 5. Cows cannot live on their own in the desert.

IN-CLASS EXERCISES: