PHI 169 – Critical Reasoning – Fall 2014

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Assignment #1 – Due Monday September 15th at the beginning of class

This assignment consists of two exercises, numbered 1 and 2 below. Each exercise counts for 50 %. Both exercises are about graphical argument analysis. If graphical argument analysis is not clear to you, here are the basic points.

Argument Analysis:

(1) identifying the premises and conclusion of an argument;

(2) distinguishing different types of premises (e.g. assumptions, definitions, facts, intermediate conclusion);

(3) assessing whether the premises are true (or at least, plausible) or false (or worse, blatantly false); and

(4) determining whether the conclusion follows from the premises, deductively or inductively, or whether the conclusion does not follow at all from the premises.

Graphical Argument Analysis:

(5) drawing directed arrows from premises toward a conclusion or from premises toward an intermediate conclusion; *please review the slides for examples of graphical argument analysis*.

And now the exercises follow.

1 David Hume against the demonstrability of existence [50 %]

Many philosophers tried to demonstrate that God exists. David Hume argued that the existence of any being, God included, cannot be demonstrated, as follows:

> *Nothing is demonstrable unless the contrary implies a contradiction. Nothing that is distinctively conceivable implies a contradiction. Whatever we conceive as existent, we can also conceive as non-existent. There is no being, therefore, whose non-existence implies a contradiction. Consequently, there is no being whose existence is demonstrable.* (David Hume, *Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion, 1779*)

Please do the following:

(a) Do a graphical argument analysis of Hume's argument. You should draw a one-page graphical representation of Hume's argument in which premises and conclusion are clearly labeled and in which directed arrows connect premises and conclusion or premises and intermediate conclusions. Make sure you distinguish the premises as assumptions, facts, intermediate conclusions, etc. by labeling them appropriately.

(b) Determine whether Hume's premises are true, plausible, false or blatantly false. Briefly explain your answer.

(c) Determine whether Hume's conclusion follows inductively or deductively from the premises, or whether it does not follow at all. Briefly explain your answer.

2   JS MILL IN FAVOR OF THE DEATH PENALTY [50 %]

Read JS Mill's argument in favor of the death penalty. You can find the argument on the course webpage. Do a graphical argument analysis of Mill's argument. You should draw a one-page graphical representation of the argument in which premises and conclusion are clearly labeled and in which directed arrows connect premises and conclusion or premises and intermediate conclusions. Make sure you distinguish the premises as assumptions, facts, intermediate conclusions, etc. by labeling them appropriately. *Since Mill's argument is quite long, please focus on the main conclusion and the main premises of the argument. It is up to you to determine what's most important in Mill's argument and what's less important.*

NB: There is no need to discuss whether Mill's premises are true, false, plausible or blatantly false. Also, there is no need to discuss whether the conclusion follows inductively or deductively. We will discuss these matters in class.