

Critical Reasoning

Spring 2015

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CUNY, Lehman College









In This Course We Will Look at
Some of the Pressing Questions of
Our Time From Different Viewpoints

Syllabus, Readings, Assignments

- ❖ Course website

www.marcello.dibello.com/PHI169/

- ❖ Everything is available through the website
- ❖ Please check it regularly

Topics of the Course

The Shooting of Michael Brown



What do we know about what happened in Ferguson, Missouri?

Did officer Wilson overreact?

Was the officer's behavior racially motivated?

Why didn't the grand jury indict the officer?

Capitalism and Economic Inequalities

Is capitalism the source of prosperity and wealth?

Is capitalism responsible for widening economic inequalities?

Should the rich be taxed more?



Religion in Society

Does religion facilitate or obstruct the construction of a just and free society?



Let's Turn to the Fundamental Notion
of this Course — i.e. **ARGUMENT**

What Is an Argument?

An argument is a **series of statements** in which

- (1) some of the statements are the **premises**
- (2) one of the statements is the **conclusion**
- (3) the premises are meant to **support** the conclusion

Example

*You are wasting your time.
If you are learning old
things, you are wasting
your time. In college you
only learn about old things.
You are going to college.*

Premise (1): If you are learning old things,
you are wasting your time.

Premise (2): In college you only learn about
old things.

Premises (3): You are going to college.

Conclusion (C): You are wasting your time.

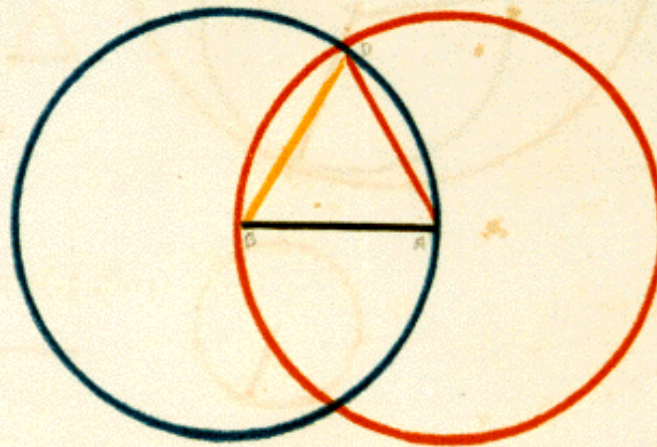
...from Euclid's *Elements*






Euclid's *Elements* (circa 300 BC)




BOOK I.
PROPOSITION I. PROBLEM.

Q *N a given finite
straight line (—)
to describe an equila-
teral triangle.*



Describe  and
 (postulate 3.); draw  and  (post. 1.).
then will  be equilateral.

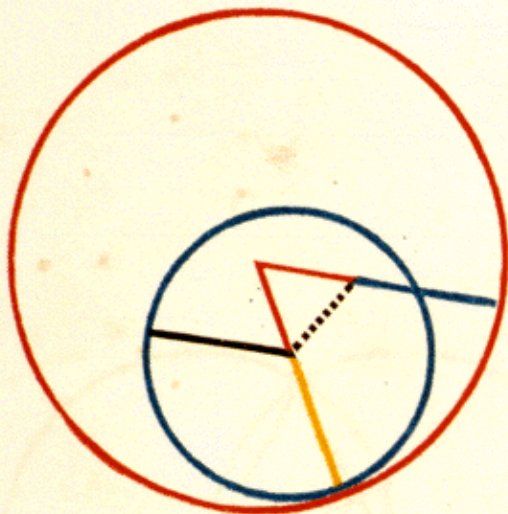
For — = — (def. 15.);
and — = — (def. 15.),
∴ — = — (axiom. 1.);

and therefore  is the equilateral triangle required.

Q. E. D.

Def. 15: A circle is such that all of the straight-lines radiating towards the circumference from one point amongst those lying inside the figure are equal to one another.

Ax. 1 (also called “common notion 1”): Things equal to the same thing are also equal to one another.



FROM a given point (— — —),
to draw a straight line equal
to a given finite straight
line (— — —).

Draw ——— (post. 1.), describe
△ (pr. 1.), produce — (post.
2.), describe (post. 3.), and



(post. 3.); produce — (post. 2.), then
— is the line required.

For — — — = — — — (def. 15.),
and — — — = — — — (const.), ∴ — — — = — — —
(ax. 3.), but (def. 15.) — — — = — — — = — — —;
∴ — — — drawn from the given point (— — —),
is equal the given line — — —.

Q. E. D.

**Ax. 3 (also called
"common notion 3"):**
If equals are subtracted
from equals, then the
remainders are equals.

Next Assignment Is Due Feb 2
