

PHILOSOPHY 101

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WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

THE ORIGINS OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

- Originates with ancient Greek study of nature
- Philosophy means "love of wisdom" (φιλοσοφία, "*philosophia*")

The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term

—Wilfrid Sellars

PHILOSOPHY AS ARGUMENT

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Argument:

A statement or sequence of statements (truth claims called 'premises') which logically support the truth of some further statement (a truth claim called a 'conclusion').

PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT

An argument has two basic parts:

- Evidence ("premises")
- What follows from the premises ("conclusion")

Both premises and conclusion must consist of statements or propositions—i.e. sentences that can be true or false

- Declarative statements: "This class is boring"
- Hypothetical statements: "If the class is boring then it is easy"
- False statements: "PHIL 101 is an easy A"
- Questions: "What is the meaning of life?"
- Commands: "Run away!"

IDENTIFYING STATEMENTS

1. Japan invaded Korea in 1948.
2. What is the atomic number of aluminum?
3. What a lovely baby!
4. Flattering women amused him.
5. Everyone who fails to tell the truth is a liar.

PREMISE & CONCLUSION

Premises support the conclusion in two ways:

1. The truth of the conclusion (in some sense) *depends on or is related to* the truth of the premises
2. Premises provide *reasons for believing* the truth of the conclusion

FINDING THE RELATION BETWEEN PREMISE & CONCLUSION

1. $1 + 1 = 2$
2. $2 + 2 = 4$
3. \therefore Donald Trump is President of the United States

1. The candidate that receives a majority of electoral college votes is elected President of the United States
2. Donald Trump received a majority of electoral college votes
3. \therefore Donald Trump is (elected) President of the United States

CRITICIZING ARGUMENTS

- How does one criticize an argument?
 - *Ask questions*
 - Is there even an argument being made?
 - Are there recognizable statements being made?
 - Is there a conclusion? What is it?
 - Is there evidence for the conclusion?
 - Does the truth of the conclusion depend or otherwise relate to the truth of the premises/evidence?
 - Do the premises give us reason to believe the truth of the conclusion?
 - Are the premises true?

A SAMPLE ARGUMENT

Each of us has our interests, wants, or needs. Moreover, each of us is uniquely placed to pursue those wants and needs effectively. At the same time, we understand the desires and needs of other people only imperfectly. Since we understand them imperfectly, we are not well situated to pursue them. Therefore, each of us should pursue our own interests to the exclusion of others.