

Philosophy 101

Philosophy & Argument

January 13, 2015

What is Philosophy?

The Core Areas of Philosophy

- ① Epistemology
- ② Logic
- ③ Metaphysics
- ④ Value Theory

Class Info

- course website: <http://colinmclear.net/phil-101>
 - syllabus
 - course assignments
 - readings (posted online)
 - announcements

Class Info

- Evaluation
 - Essay: 25%
 - Two Exams: 45%
 - Quizzes: 20%
 - Participation: 10%

Philosophy 101

Philosophy &
Argument

What is
Philosophy?

Philosophical
Method

Philosophical Method

Argument



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

- Evidence (“premises”)
- What follows from the premises (“conclusion”)

Parts of an Argument

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

- Declarative statements: "The table is brown"
- Hypothetical statements: "If the table is brown then the table is colored"
- False statements: "The moon is made of cheese"
- Questions: "What's your favorite color?"
- Commands: "Open the door!"

Kinds of Argument

Deductive Argument: the conclusion follows from the premises
necessarily

Inductive Argument: the conclusion is made *probable* by the
premises

Abductive Argument: the conclusion is the *best explanation* of
the truth of the premises

A Simple Argument

- ① All humans are mortal
- ② John is human
- ③ \therefore John is mortal

Is this a good argument?

- assuming that the premises are true, could the conclusion be false?
- does the conclusion follow from the premises?

Validity

- Philosophers understand the notion of “following from” in terms of the *structure* of the argument
- Arguments with the right structure are *valid* arguments

Validity & Soundness

Valid Argument: An argument whose structure *guarantees* that, if the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true

Sound Argument: A valid argument whose premises are *true*

Argument Extraction

- Is there an argument being made?
- What's the conclusion of the argument?
- What support does the conclusion have?
- What material is essential to the argument and what is extraneous?
- Is the argument valid?
- Is the argument sound?

Argument Extraction

There is no reason to think that there are any absolute moral truths. We can see this when we consider different cultural outlooks concerning what is morally required. For example, indigenous Inuit culture considered infanticide to be morally permissible in some situations. But modern American culture clearly thinks infanticide is always morally wrong. So what's morally right or wrong is just a matter of opinion, which can vary from culture to culture. (James Rachels, The Elements of Moral Theory)

Argument Extraction

- What's the conclusion?
 - There are no absolute moral truths
- What is the support for the conclusion?

Argument Extraction

- ① If moral truths were absolute then they would not vary from culture to culture
 - ② What's considered morally right or wrong does vary from culture to culture
 - ③ \therefore There are no absolute moral truths
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- ① If P, then Q
 - ② $\sim Q$
 - ③ $\therefore \sim P$

Homework

- Read chs. 1-2 of *Writing Philosophy*
- Read the syllabus
- Visit the course website:
<http://colinmclean.net/phil-101>