

Philosophy 101

Introduction

May 19, 2014

What is Philosophy?

The Core Areas of Philosophy

The Core Areas of Philosophy

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

The Core Areas of Philosophy

① Epistemology

- what is knowledge?
- how do we know anything?
- are there beliefs which we're justified in holding even if we can't prove them to be true?

The Core Areas of Philosophy

① Epistemology

② Logic

- what is an argument?
- what are the rules for arguing correctly?
- what inferences are good or bad?

The Core Areas of Philosophy

① Epistemology

③ Metaphysics

- what kinds of things exist?
- what things are fundamental?

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④ Value Theory

- what makes an action right or wrong?
- what makes for a good life?
- what is beauty?

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Philosophical Method

Argument



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- Does not involve, shouting, name calling, or physical violence

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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

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

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- 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

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Deductive Argument: the conclusion follows from the premises
necessarily

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Inductive Argument: the conclusion is made *probable* by the
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Deductive Argument: the conclusion follows from the premises
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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

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

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Is this a good argument?

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Is this a good argument?

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

Validity

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

Validity

Validity

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

Form vs. Content

Form vs. Content

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

- ① All plants are living things
- ② All trees are plants
- ③ \therefore All trees are living things

- What do these arguments have in common?

Form vs. Content

① All A is B

② x is A

③ \therefore x is B

- Whatever the content of this argument form, it will *always* be valid

Basic Deductive Argument Forms

Modus ponens: “the affirming mode”

- ① If P, then Q
- ② P
- ③ \therefore Q

- ① If the chef is talented then dinner will be good
- ② The chef is talented
- ③ \therefore Dinner will be good

Basic Deductive Argument Forms

Modus tollens: "the denying mode"

- ① If P, then Q
- ② $\sim Q$
- ③ $\therefore \sim P$

- ① If the chef is talented then dinner will be good
- ② Dinner is not good
- ③ \therefore The chef is not talented

Soundness

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- Good deductive arguments are about more than form
- If the argument is to be fully convincing, the premises have to be *true*

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Sound Argument: An argument which is (i) valid and (ii) has true premises

- Whether an argument is sound concerns both its *form* and its *content*

Soundness

- ① All plants are living things
- ② All trees are plants
- ③ \therefore All trees are living things

- ① All plants are rocks
- ② All lions are plants
- ③ \therefore All lions are rocks

- ① All A are B
- ② All B are C
- ③ \therefore All A are C

Soundness

- Not all valid arguments are sound arguments
- Not all arguments with true premises and a true conclusion are sound

- ① If class meets today, then it is a weekday
- ② It is a weekday
- ③ \therefore Class meets today

Interpreting Arguments

Argument Markers

- Arguments are *constructed* from statements but they typically don't appear as lists of statements
- (Good) Arguments often contain "marker" words, which indicate what is evidence or conclusion

Argument Markers

Sample Evidence Markers

- as
- because
- for
- from
- since

Argument Markers

Sample Evidence Markers

- as
- because
- for
- from
- since

The streets are wet *because* it is raining

Argument Markers

Sample Conclusion Markers

- hence
- so
- then
- therefore
- thus

Argument Markers

Sample Conclusion Markers

- hence
- so
- then
- therefore
- thus

It is raining, *therefore* the streets are wet

Argument Extraction

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

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

- ① If P, then Q
- ② $\sim Q$
- ③ $\therefore \sim P$

Argument Extraction

There are, moreover, seemingly unanswerable arguments that, if they are correct, demonstrate that the existence of moral responsibility entails the existence of free will, and, therefore, if free will does not exist, moral responsibility does not exist either. It is, however, evident that moral responsibility does exist: if there were no such thing as moral responsibility nothing would be anyone's fault, and it is evident that there are states of affairs to which one can point and say, correctly, to certain people: That's your fault. (van Inwagen "How to Think")

Argument Extraction

- ① If there were no such thing as moral responsibility, then no one would be at fault for anything
- ② But people do correctly fault others for performing certain kinds of actions
- ③ \therefore There must be moral responsibility
- ④ If there were no free will, then there would be no moral responsibility
- ⑤ There is moral responsibility (from 3)
- ⑥ \therefore There is free will

Argument Extraction

- ① If $\sim A$, then $\sim B$
- ② B
- ③ $\therefore \sim\sim A = A$
- ④ If $\sim A$, then $\sim B$
- ⑤ B
- ⑥ $\therefore \sim\sim A = A$

Fallacies

Logical fallacy: A defect in the logical form or content of an argument

- There are some standard patterns of bad argument
- Some bad argument forms nevertheless may initially appear to be good arguments

Common Fallacies

Formal Fallacies:

Common Fallacies

Formal Fallacies:

Denying the Antecedent: denying the consequent of a hypothetical by denying the antecedent

① If P, then Q

② $\sim P$

③ $\therefore \sim Q$

① If the dog is outside, then he is barking

② The dog is not outside

③ \therefore The dog is not barking

Common Fallacies

Formal Fallacies:

Affirming the Consequent: Accepting the antecedent of a hypothetical by accepting the consequent

① If P, then Q

② Q

③ \therefore P

① If the dog is outside, then he is barking

② The dog is barking

③ \therefore The dog is outside

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Informal Fallacies:

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Straw Man: Purposely misrepresenting a view so that it can be more easily attacked or criticized

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Mary: We must not betray the principles of justice and democracy. Suspected terrorists must be granted basic rights as well as legal representation and access to a fair court.

Tom: Mary is advocating the release of known terrorists. We cannot afford to allow our enemies to move freely in our society.

Common Fallacies

Informal Fallacies:

Genetic Fallacy: Accepting or rejecting a statement or argument on the basis of its source

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Genetic Fallacy: Accepting or rejecting a statement or argument on the basis of its source

The US Senate is considering various proposals to reduce social inequality. But anything they come up with will be ridiculous because they are all rich white people.

Common Fallacies

Informal Fallacies:

Appeal to the Person (*ad hominem*): Rejecting a statement or argument because it comes from a particular person or group, rather than because the statement or argument is false or dubious

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President Obama says that the United States health care system is in need of serious reform, and should be changed so that more people can affordably receive adequate coverage. This is ridiculous, and only a socialist like Obama would be silly enough to believe it.

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Informal Fallacies:

Begging the Question: Attempting to prove the truth of a statement by using that very statement as evidence

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We know that God exists because the bible says so, and everything the bible says is true because God wrote it.