

Philosophy 101

Philosophy & Argument

August 26, 2014

What is 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

② Logic

③ Metaphysics

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

The Core Areas of Philosophy

- ① Epistemology
- ② Logic
- ③ Metaphysics

- ④ Value Theory
 - what makes an action right or wrong?
 - what makes for a good life?
 - what is beauty?

Class Info

- Course Website: colinmclear.net/phil-101
 - syllabus
 - course assignments
 - readings (posted online)
 - announcements

Class Info

- Prof: Colin McLearn
 - mclear@unl.edu
 - 1003 Oldfather Hall
 - Office Hours: T/R, 11-12
- TA: Gabe Bruguier
 - gbruguier@gmail.com
 - 1019 Oldfather Hall
 - Office Hours: T/R, 10:30-11:30

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

- Philosophical argument is not a contest
- Does not involve, shouting, name calling, or physical violence

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

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

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

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

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