

Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy, Queens College, Fall 2004

Russell Marcus, Instructor

email: [philosophy@thatmarcusfamily.org](mailto:philosophy@thatmarcusfamily.org)

website: <http://philosophy.thatmarcusfamily.org>

Office phone: (718) 997-5287

Lecture Notes, August 31

I. Introduction to course, syllabus, requirements.

II. My info:

Office phone: 718,997,5287

Email: [Philosophy@thatmarcusfamily.org](mailto:Philosophy@thatmarcusfamily.org)

website: <http://philosophy.thatmarcusfamily.org>

Office hours: Powdermaker 350J, M, W: 12:15 - 1pm

III. The core areas of philosophy

1. Metaphysics, the study of what exists.

Examples:

The physical world

Numbers

Souls

Heaven

Electrons

2. Epistemology

Theory of knowledge

How do we know what we know?

Through the senses only?

Or through reasoning?

We will mostly focus on the history of philosophy. Contemporary philosophy tends to presume all of this.

IV. A tool of philosophy: Logic

In order to determine whether to accept a philosophical position, we look at arguments for that position.

An argument is set of assertions, called premises, that support a conclusion.

The premises and conclusion should be truth valuable, i.e. capable of being either true or false.

In a Valid Deductive Argument, if the premises are true, the conclusion must be true.

The validity of an argument depends on the form of the argument.

Consider an argument:

Premise 1. All persons are mortal.

Premise 2. Socrates is a person.

Conclusion: Socrates is mortal.

The same argument can be represented more abstractly, more generally, as:

1. All As are Bs

2. x is an A.

So, x is a B.

This is related to:

1. If A then B

2. A

So, B

The latter is called Modus Ponens and can be instanced as:

1. If x is a person, then x is mortal.
  2. x is a person.
- So, x is mortal.

Similarly, the following is called Modus Tollens:

1. If A then B.
  2. Not-B.
- So, not-A.

Another valid form is Disjunctive Syllogism:

1. Either Bush or Kerry will win the election.
  2. Bush won't win.
- So, Kerry will win.

This Disjunctive Syllogism can be symbolized as:

1. A or B.
  2. Not-A.
- So, B.

Now notice that the following is a valid form:

1. All men are fish
  2. Joe is a man.
- So, Joe is a fish.

Since the conclusion of the above argument is false, given plausible assumptions, and the form is valid, we have to reject one of the premises, i.e. Premise 1.

If the conclusion of a valid deductive argument is false, at least one of the premises must be false.

We will try to represent the arguments of philosophers we study as valid argument, in order to use this logical result.

Two invalid argument forms:

A. Denying the antecedent:

1. If A then B.
  2. not-A.
- So, B.

B. Affirming the consequent:

1. If A then B.
  2. B.
- So, A.

In an invalid argument, the conclusion can be false, and the premises true.

A basic logical principle is non-contradiction.

Something can't be both true and false.

Reductio proofs are based on this.

Basic reductio form:

1. Assume the negation of something.
2. Derive a contradiction (p and not-p), or other repugnant conclusion.
3. Conclude the affirmative of your assumption.

Examples:

If everyone may do as (s)he pleases, then we must allow murder.

If we legalize drugs, then violent crime will increase, or productivity will decrease.

Much of what I will do in this class will be to introduce an argument in this form. If we don't like the conclusion, we will try to discover which of the premises are wrong.

Soundness vs validity

Validity concerns form of argument.

'p and not-p' is invalid, no matter what assertion we substitute for 'p'.

The first step in evaluating an argument is to determine whether the premises entail the conclusion.

Example A):

1. If AIDS is harmless then we need not take precaution against it.

2. AIDS is harmless.

So, we need not take precautions against AIDS.

Example B):

1. Any disease which threatens many lives is worth our concern.

2. Mumps is worth our concern.

So, mumps threatens many lives.

A) and B) are both bad arguments, but for different reasons.

A) is valid, passes the first test.

B) is invalid, we don't even have to go on to the second step.

Soundness concerns truth of premises.

A) is unsound - one of the premises is false.

Two questions you must answer for any philosophical argument:

Is it valid? (i.e. Does the conclusion follow from the premises?)

Is it sound? (i.e. Are the premises true?)

Another logical property: transitivity:

It holds for =, <, >, is

For example:

1.  $(1+1) + (1+1) = 2 + 2$

2.  $2 + 2 = 4$

So,  $(1+1) + (1+1) = 4$

Also:

1. Theodore Geysel is Dr. Seuss.

2. Dr. Seuss is the writer of The Cat in the Hat.

3. The Cat in the Hat is a great book.

So, TG is the writer of a great book.

Now, consider:

God is love.

Love is blind.

Ray Charles is blind.

So Ray Charles is God.

What's wrong with this argument?