Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W
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Hamilton College, Fall 2014

Class #1 - Introduction to
Introduction to Philosophy

My name is Russell.

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My office hours are 11am - noon daily.

Camp Hamilton is over.

Welcome to College.

Five Topics in This Course

- Appearance and Reality
- Space and Time
- Personal Identity
- Consciousness and the Nature of Mind
- Ethics

Metaphysics

- What is there?

- What is it like?

- Some things that one might think exist
  - Trees
  - Tables
  - Planets and Stars
  - People
  - Electrons
  - Angels
  - Numbers
  - Space-time points

Properties

- Red

- Square

- Moving at 25 miles an hour

- Located outside of space and time

- Being considered by you right now

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Nominalism

a name may not refer to anything real

- Nominalism opposes realism.
- Santa Claus
- Properties: Is there redness, in addition to red things?
- Where should the line between nominalism and realism be drawn?

Reality

Is the world exactly as it appears?

Julian Beever, Anamorphic Art

More Anamorphic Art

Hans Holbein
The Ambassadors (1533)

Epistemology

theory of knowledge

- How do we know what we know?

- Does all our knowledge originate in sense experience, or are there other ways of gaining knowledge?

- How can we explain our predictive success in science, when we seem to be isolated from the laws of nature?

Arguments and Logic
The Primary Tools of Philosophy

- An argument is set of assertions, called premises, that support a conclusion.
  - ‣ The premises are (perhaps) reasons to believe the 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.

An Argument

Premise 1. All persons are mortal.

Premise 2. Socrates is a person.

Conclusion: Socrates is mortal.

More abstractly:

1. All As are Bs

2. x is an A.

So, x is a B.

Another Valid Form

1. Either it will rain on Tuesday or it will be sunny.

2. It will not rain on Tuesday.

So, it will be sunny.

This Disjunctive Syllogism can be represented more abstractly as:

1. A or B.

2. Not-A.

So, B.

The Importance of Validity

1. All women are turtles.
2. Juliet is a woman.
So, Juliet is a turtle.

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

- The conclusion of the argument is false.

- So we have to reject one of the premises.

- An argument is *unsound* when at least one of its premises is false.

Soundness and Validity

- **Validity** concerns the form of an argument.
- Validity is about whether some assertion follows from some other assertions.
- A valid argument is **sound** if its premises are true.
- The first step in evaluating an argument is to determine whether the premises entail the conclusion.
- The second step is to see if the premises are true
  - ▸ (i.e. whether the argument is sound).

Invalid Argument Forms

- Invalid forms are called fallacies, or logical errors.
- In an invalid argument, the conclusion can be false, while the premises are true.
- Two examples:

The fallacy of denying the antecedent:

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

The fallacy of affirming the consequent:

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

Reductio Arguments

A valid form

- Based on the logical principle called non-contradiction
- A statement can not be both true and false.
- The form of a reductio argument
    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 of Reductio Arguments

- If everyone may do as (s)he pleases, then murder is acceptable.
- If we legalize drugs, then violent crime will increase or productivity will decrease.
- If we do not go to war in Iraq, then Saddam Hussein will use his weapons of mass destruction against us.

Contrast Two Arguments

Example A:
1. Any disease which threatens many lives is worth our concern.
2. Mumps is worth our concern.
So, mumps threatens many lives.

Example B:
1. If AIDS were harmless then we would not need to take precaution against it.
2. AIDS is harmless.
So, we need not take precautions against AIDS.

A and B are both bad arguments, but for different reasons.
A is invalid, we do not have to go to the second step.
B is valid, passes the first test.
B is unsound - one of the premises is false.

Underlying Structure
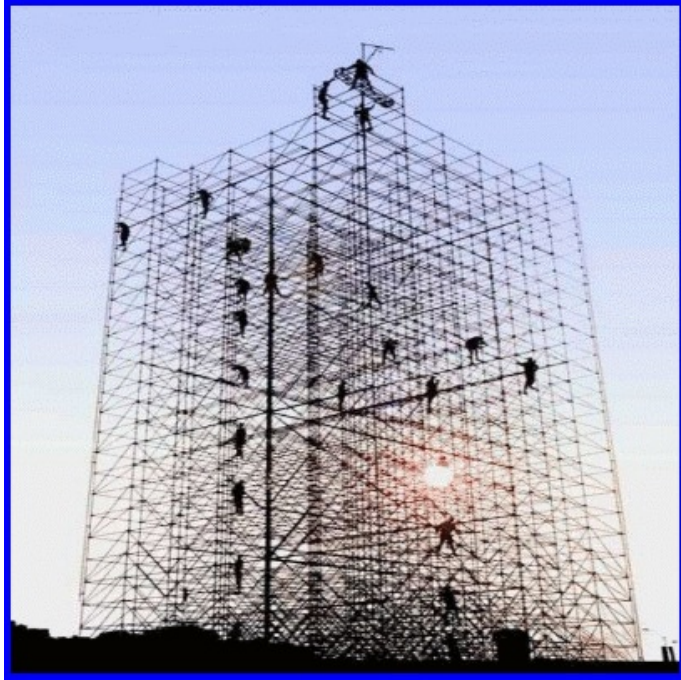
Most philosophers do not write in argument form.
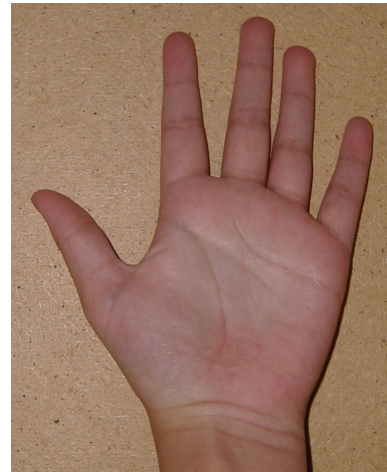
Consider

1. God is love.

2. Love is blind.

3. Ray Charles is blind.

So, Ray Charles is God.

Consider

This sentence is false.

Another Tool: Intuitions

- Not a spooky sixth sense

- The way that things seem

- Thought experiments
  - What if there were two suns?
  - What if I were of the opposite gender?
  - What if my parents never met?
  - What if machines could think?
  - What if all people in a world lacked vision?

Counterfactuals

- The notion of validity relies on counterfactual reasoning.

- It concerns possibility and necessity.
  - ▸ An argument is valid if the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises.
  - ▸ An argument is invalid if it is possible for the conclusion to be false while the premises are true.

- We will use our intuitions about counterfactual circumstances.

- Science fiction

The Syllabus

- Writing Intensive
- Course Website
  - ‣ Readings for class (links)
  - ‣ Reading Guides
  - ‣ Lecture Notes
- Five Writing Assignments
- Presentation
- Final
- Schedule
- Jackson

Reading Philosophy

Wittgenstein's *Investigations*, §1

Tone, Process, and My Expectations

The Country of the Blind