

Reason and Argument

Lecture 1:

Introduction

Lecture 1 Overview

- **Module Subject Matter**
- **Motivation**
- **Module Details**

Module Subject Matter

Logic

Specifically, the logic of **natural language**

Arguments

Philosophical texts present ***arguments***.

The philosopher attempts to persuade the reader that some key claim—his or her ***conclusion***—is true.

She or he will present other claims—claims s/he thinks you will accept—and try to ***reason*** from these to her or his conclusion.

Example Argument 1:

If there is a wholly good and all-powerful God, then the world will be ordered in ways we'd expect in a product of intelligent design.

The world is ordered in ways we'd expect in a product of intelligent design.

Therefore, there is a wholly good and all-powerful God.

Example Argument 2:

If there is a wholly good and all-powerful God, then there would be no unnecessary evil in the world.

There is unnecessary evil in the world.

Therefore, there is not a wholly good and all-powerful God.

Logic and Argument

In philosophy we want to *evaluate* arguments.

Arguments are chains of reasoning.

Logic is the systematic study of reasoning.

[Note: Logic is *not* a psychological investigation. Sometimes our psychology makes us reason badly. In logic we are interested in *good* reasoning.]

The Parts of an Argument

The starting claims of an argument are its *premisses*.

The target claim of an argument is its *conclusion*.

Example Argument

All physical objects are extended in space.	} {	Premises
The mind is not extended in space.	 }	
Therefore, the mind is not a physical object.	} { }	Conclusion

Two Kinds of Evaluation

We can ask:

—Are the premisses true?

—Is the reasoning good?

In logic we are concerned with the second question.

What Makes Reasoning Good?

Roughly:

The reasoning in an argument is good when the premisses *support* the conclusion.

The premisses of an argument support its conclusion if:

If one believes the premisses, that gives one reason to believe the conclusion.

If one thinks the premisses *true*, that gives one reason to think the conclusion *true*.

Progress?

But when *do* premisses support conclusion in the sense we're interested in ... ?

It looks like this will depend upon the *meanings* of the claims involved.
(More on this in Lecture 2.)

For the moment ...

Note that our task is going to be all the more difficult because the claims and arguments we are interested in are *expressed in natural language*.

Natural Language

Examples of natural languages:
Japanese, Hindi, English,
Norwegian...

A natural language is a “wild” or
“untamed” language.

—not invented by anyone

—meanings not set down in codified
definitions which *fix* the meanings by
stipulation

—meanings and rules somehow
implicit in the activities and/or
characteristics of speakers

Why study logic?

Philosophy is concerned with **arguments**.

Logic provides us with tools to order and evaluate arguments.

Philosophy is concerned with the **meaning or content of particular claims**.

Logic provides us with ways of explicating meaning.

Everyday language is **imprecise**.

Logic allows us to be more precise.

Terminology and concepts of logic used widely in philosophy.

Notation of logic widely used.

Notation allows us to **view arguments** 'at a glance'.

The Importance of Clear and Functional Notation

Example: Arabic vs Roman Numerals

XLVIII multiplied by XXIV

$$\begin{array}{r} 48 \\ 24 \times \\ \hline 192 \\ 960 \\ \hline 1152 \end{array}$$

Why Study Logic? (Continued)

In everyday life we don't worry that much about the nature of the support given by premisses to conclusion in arguments.

When we do, we tend not to try to look at the problems in a systematic way.

Philosophers, on the other hand,
WORRY ABOUT EVERYTHING.

In logic we bring issues of argumentative support and meaning to the fore, and try to get them in focus.

These issues of 'support' and meaning raise deep philosophical questions in themselves.

The Nature of the Course

The course has three main ingredients:

Reading

Lectures

Seminars

Set Book:

Meaning and Argument, revised edition, by Ernest Lepore.

—Everything for 10 credit course

—Almost everything for 20 credit course

Readings are set for each week
(Read *and* do the exercises)

Lectures:

—To crystallise, highlight and give a different perspective

—Questions *more than welcome*

Seminars

—Complete the worksheet tasks in advance

—Participate in seminar exercises

NB: Part of what you'll learn are some *skills*

—skills of representing the logic of claims and arguments expressed in natural language in terms of a particular kind of notation

—skills of evaluating arguments in a systematic way

Skills are acquired and developed by practice

Course Structure: 10 Credit Module

Teaching:

Monday Lectures weeks 2 to 9

Seminars weeks 2 to 9

Assessment:

—Examination (in week 10)

Procedural Requirements:

—Attendance at lectures and seminars as above

—Completion of all worksheets for the relevant seminars

Course Structure: 20 Credit Module

Teaching:

Monday Lectures weeks 2 to 9

Tuesday Lecture weeks 7, 8 and 9

Seminars weeks 2 to 9

Assessment:

—Examination (in week 10)

—Essay (due in week 10)

Procedural Requirements:

—Attendance at all lectures and seminars

—Completion of all worksheets