

Philosophy 1A

Lecture 1

How do I think critically?

Bowell and Kemp, Critical Thinking : A Concise Guide

Cognitive Bias - habit of thinking that tends to lead to the formation of mistaken thoughts about the world.

- We are largely unaware of it

Examples of Cognitive Bias:

Framing Effect Bias - tendency to be unduly influenced by the way in which something is worded or formed.

Availability Bias - mental shortcut that involves giving inappropriate weight to immediate and easy examples when evaluating a topic or choice.

Confirmation Bias - can be a tendency to seek out only information that confirms a person's preconceptions.

- can also be a tendency to try and confirm the truth of a statement rather than seeking out information that might disconfirm it

Thinking critically is creating beliefs about the world with good reasons, and forming beliefs on the basis of good arguments.

Arguments - an attempt to establish the truth of a statement by providing reasons for it

- the reasons are intended to support the statement being argued for
- an argument will always involve a statement making a claim against another statement
- includes premises and a conclusion
- good arguments are ones where the premises really do provide good reasons for the truth of the conclusion

Rhetoric - contracts with arguments because it does not involve an attempt to provide reasons for the truth of a statement

- instead relies on emotion

Unsupported Assertions - does not attempt to give reasons for a statement

Lecture 2

How do I think critically?

Argument is a set of propositions, one of which is the conclusion, and the remainder are premises the truth of the premises is intended to support the truth of the conclusion.

Two sentences can have the same factual language, they both depict the world in a certain way, true or false.

Proposition:

- factual content
- can be true or false
- can be expressed by different sentences
- same type of sentence can express different propositions ("I saw her duck")

Standard form:

- P1
- P2
- C

Argument Identification

Argument Reconstruction

Good Arguments:

- the premises are true
- tight connection between the supposed truth of the premises and the truth of the conclusion

Deductive Validity:

- an argument is deductively valid just in case it would be impossible for the premises to be true but for the conclusion to be false
- if premises are true then the conclusion has to be true

Lecture 3

Deductive validity: it is conditional, it need not be the case that the premises are true.

Conditional propositions: are compound propositions consisting of two parts - the antecedent (if) and the consequent (then).

The truth of the antecedent is supposed to be sufficient (enough) for the truth of the consequent.

The truth of the consequent is supposed to be necessary (required) for the truth of the antecedent.

e.g. If you were born in Glasgow then you were born in Scotland.

Being born in Glasgow is sufficient but not necessary for being born in Scotland.

Being born in Scotland is necessary but not sufficient for being born in Glasgow.

Conditionals are not arguments:

- by themselves conditionals are just unsupported assertions
- conditionals can be true or false
- arguments can NOT be true or false
- conclusions can be true or false

Deductive soundness:

- to say that an argument is deductively sound is to say that...the argument is valid and all its premises are actually true.

If it is sound:

- if the premises are true then the conclusion must be true
- the premises are true
- thus the conclusion must be true

Deductively sound arguments actually establish the truth of the conclusion.

Lecture 4

3 important questions to answer in identification:

- is there an argument presented
- what is the conclusion
- what are the conclusion

Writers sometimes use words which serve as indicators that there are stating premise or conclusion.

Conclusion:

- therefore
- thus etc

Premises:

- reason for thinking this
- because etc

Extraneous Material:

- material that is not argumentative
- sentences of extraneous material express propositions which do not constitute the premises or the conclusion of the argument
 - do not put them in standard form

Implicit conclusions and premises:

- arguers do not always explicitly state their conclusions and premises
- sometimes the premises of an argument may only be implied or suggested by the rest of what the arguer has said/written
 - they are implicit

Often there may be more than one way of reconstructing someone's argument

- e.g. one way makes the argument appear sound and another makes the argument clearly invalid etc.

Which should you advance as the reconstruction of the argument?

- depends on aim
 - if we are treating the argument as someone we want to defeat in an argument then we should reconstruct it to be shit