

PHI1101

Reasoning and critical thinking: Chapter 1-Recognizing arguments

- Human being is rational animal (Aristotle)
- The ability to reason or to think is the most fundamental characteristic of humans. (Non human animals like dolphins or apes exhibit lower ability to think to reason, this distinguishes us from other animals).
- Certain conscious human activity involves reasoning (Ex: solving problems, making decisions, predict election, discoveries, art...)

Mere Thinking and Reasoning

- Reasoning is a conscious and active systematic process of analyzing, evaluating and formulating beliefs in accordance with rational standards.
- Mere thinking like reasoning is a conscious activity, but mere thinking is not reasoning because it is neither an active process nor is it systematic.

A Comparison

- Compare the following passages:
Computers do not feel pleasure or pain and they have no sense of right and wrong. Clearly it would be a serious mistake to treat computers as moral agents. **Argument**
- Join is armed therefore he is dangerous. **Argument**
- By the end of September in new england the leaves are already changing, nights are cooler, days are shorter, some inhabitants are noticeably. Some inhabitants begin to feel a sense of dread as they think of the long winter to come. **Not Argument**
- **Is there logical relation between sentences? Is one or 2 sentences backing up another sentence. One is premise, one is conclusion. Premise supports conclusion.**

What is an argument?

- An argument is a set of claims (statements) In which some of them (The premises) are intended to support another of them (the conclusion).
- So a conclusion is a claim that is supported by the premise.
- A premise is a claim that supports the conclusion.

- Argument=Premise(s)+Conclusion(s)
- Each time we move from a premise to a conclusion we infer or make an inference.
- Inference= move from premise to conclusion.

Claims or statements

- A claim which is also a statement or proposition is a sentence that can either be true or false (But not both)
- EX: That water looks polluted, Maurice smells bad, taxes are too high...

Not a Claim

- Questions: Not part of arguments cause they don't make claims if they don't assert fact.
- Commands: Give me your pen
- Exclamations: Wow what a beautiful house!
- Exhortations: You should really try the caviar it's divine!

Recognizing Arguments:

- Identify premis and conclusion.
- Ex: John is aremed (Premise) Therefore, he is dangerous (Conclusion).
- Computers do not feel pleasure or pain (Premise) and they have no sense of right and wrong (Premise) . Clearly it would be a serious mistake to treat computers as moral agents. (Conclusion)

A difficulty:

- AN argument is a matter of intention and contact. Consider this example:
- "Today is the 5th, yesterday was the 4th." This can be understood in 3 different ways.

The first sentence is premise, second is conclusion.

The first sentence is confusion, second is premise.

The sentences are just 2 unrelated observations with no inference intended.

Inference indicators:

- Suppos the example said: Today is the 5th, so yesterday was the 4th. Or since today is the 5th yesterday was the 4th.

2 Main types of indicators:

- Premise indicators: Since, for, seeing as, the reason is that, because, as is implied by, on account of the fact that, given that, in view of that, due to the fact that...
- Conclusion indicators: Therefore

Note that:

- We should not mistake word such as and, also, besides, but, nevertheless, in addition etc as indicators.
- Sometimes indicators aren't used.
- Presence of indicator doesn't always mean an inference.

Unstated (Implicit) Premises and confusions:

- Arguments can have implicit premises and conclusions (Not openly and explicitly stated. They are called enthymemes,
- Unstated premises and conclusions are genuine parts of arguments (It is difficult to recognize thus it needs practice.)
- Ex: the bigger the burger the better the burger, the burgers are bigger at burger king.
Implicit confusion: Burgers are better at burger king.

2 Genreal considerations:

- Length of arguments: Some arguments are brief and others will be quite lengthy,
- Arguments and bad argument: A bad argument is still just as much an argument.
Ex: it hasn't rained in weeks, that means it is sure to rain tomorrow.

What isn't an argument?

- Disagreement (Dispute): Disagreement is critical and active, but unlike reasoning It is not to examine the structure of an entire commentary, taking some statements as justifications or proofs for others. (Not systematic).
- Critical reasoning is more concerned with revising our own systems of beliefs than in cultivating an attitude for disputing others.
- Mere disagreeent is applied to separate, individual statements and they are judged solely against the background of the reader's or listener's own beliefs.

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- Description
- Report of facts
- Explanation

2 kinds of argument:

- Simple argument: When a single argument has just one conclusion, can have more than once premise. (Contains only one inference)
- Complex argument: An argument with more than 1 conclusion (At least one intermediate conclusion). A complex argument is still one argument, but it has intermediate conclusions and 1 final conclusion.