PHIL 355 Handout
Concepts for Understanding Arguments, 1/14/20
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Concepts for Understanding Arguments: The Basics
Answer the following questions (and save the challenge questions for last). Use your notes <u>only</u> if you are completely stumped (i.e. you've tried to remember the answer for four minutes and cannot remember). And always feel free to skip questions and come back to them!

1. Why is the following sentence not an argument?
    - "I believe that some animals should not be eaten."

2. Identify the premise(s) and conclusion(s) in the following argument. Explain why you chose what you chose. (<u>Note:</u> Here, 'sentient' just means 'able to feel or experience pleasure or pain.')
    - Some animals are sentient.
    - If something is sentient, it should not be killed for food.
    - Therefore, some animals should not be killed for food.

3. Identify the premise(s) and conclusion(s) in the following argument. Explain why you chose what you chose.
    - Some animals are sentient.
    - If something is sentient, it should not be killed for food.
    - So some animals should not be killed for food.
    - If people buy the meat of those animals, they increase demand for the meat of those animals.
    - If people increase demand for the meat of those animals, they participate in the killing of those animals for food.
    - So people should not buy the meat of those animals.

4. What are the two different ways in which an argument can be bad?

5. Why is the following sentence incorrect, with respect to the definition of validity?
   - The statement, "Some animals are sentient", is valid.

6. <u>Challenge Question:</u> The following argument is (debatably) good, but invalid. Why? What kind of argument is it?
   - Some animals have similar pain reactions, behavioral dispositions, and emotional responses to sentient humans.
   - Some animals are sentient.

7. <u>Challenge Question:</u> The following argument is bad, but valid. Why is it bad?
   - Some animals are sentient.
   - If something is sentient, it should not ever be killed in any situation.
   - Therefore, some animals should not ever be killed in any situation.

Exercise Two: Tests for Validity

Determine whether or not your assigned argument is valid. If it is not valid, explain why. If time, go on to evaluate the other arguments.

<u>Argument 1</u>
If killing an infant is wrong, killing a fetus is wrong.
If killing a fetus is wrong, then abortion is wrong.
Abortion is not wrong.
So killing an infant is not wrong.

<u>Argument 2</u>
You have a right that other people not interfere with your property without your consent.
Taxes interfere with your property.
So you have a right that other people not tax you.
Therefore, libertarianism is correct.

Argument 3
All redistribution policies transfer resources from people who are better off to people who are worse off.
Every transfer of resources from people who are better off to people who are worse off is morally required.
Thus, all redistribution policies are morally required.

Argument 4
If you shleeble, then you shmoble.
If you shmoble, then you ogle.
So if you shleeble, you ogle.
If you ogle, then you dockle.
So if you shleeble, you dockle.
If you dockle, then you don't quankrle.
So if you shleeble, you don't quankrle.
You shleeble.
So you don't quankrle.

Argument 5
Either companies are forbidden from wage discrimination on the basis of gender, required to engage in such wage discrimination, or permitted to (but not required to or forbidden from).
Companies are neither permitted nor required to engage in wage discrimination on the basis of gender.
So companies are forbidden from wage discrimination on the basis of gender.

Argument 6
A country is morally required to open its border to any immigrants.
So a country is required to make all immigrants into citizens.

Argument 7
All zoinks are badoomers.
Some badoomers are gratpies.
Hence, some zoinks are gratpies.

Exercise Three: Making Invalid Arguments Valid (if time)

The following arguments are invalid. Insert implicit premises to make them valid.

<u>Argument 1</u>
Marijuana does not harm anyone.
So it is morally permissible for adults to smoke marijuana.

<u>Argument 2</u>
Either cheating on your partner is forbidden or it's not.
So it's forbidden.

<u>Argument 3</u>
If less-than-life imprisonment is morally permissible, then life imprisonment is morally permissible.
If life imprisonment is morally permissible, then the death penalty is morally permissible.
No amount of imprisonment is morally permissible.

Exercise Four: Tests for Soundness

Explain how someone might dispute the soundness of the following valid arguments.

<u>Argument 1</u>
Some animals are sentient (i.e. they can feel pleasure and pain).
If something is sentient, it should not be killed for food.
Therefore, some animals should not be killed for food.

<u>Argument 2</u>
All redistribution policies transfer resources from people who are better off to people who are worse off.
Every transfer of resources from people who are better off to people who are worse off is morally required.
Thus, all redistribution policies are morally required.

Argument 3
Use of psychedelic drugs causes death in 100% of cases.
Death is bad.
If death is bad, then things that cause death are bad.
So any use of psychedelic drugs is bad.

Exercise Five: Argument Reconstruction (if time)

The following arguments are written in prose. Try to formalize each argument – lay it out in premises that lead to a conclusion.

1. Kimbra is an amazing singer. She writes her own songs, jumps between genres, sells out all of her tours, and has a great vocal range. Anyone with all of those qualities must be an amazing singer.

2. I just don't get why people are okay with our media spreading lies and misleading information all the time. Don't they know what the duty of a journalist is? So yeah, I absolutely think we should blame the media – and we should blame the people who think the media is okay!