Philosophical Arguments

A *philosophical argument* is a means of rational persuasion. It is not to be confused with an emotional disagreement. It is providing reasons for the basis of a conclusion.

Tools of philosophical arguments:

➢ A proposition is a sentence that affirms or denies something.
➢ A premise is a proposition that supports a conclusion.
➢ A conclusion is a proposition supported by premises.
➢ A syllogism is the format for deductive arguments that aids in the analysis of the relationships between propositions. Deductive arguments are not limited to two premises; however, a syllogism is always two premises followed by a conclusion.

Propositions are either true or false. Arguments are deductive or inductive, valid or invalid, sound or unsound, weak or strong, reliable or unreliable.

A deductive argument guarantees the conclusion from the premises, and often infers from the general to particulars. Deductive arguments are either valid or invalid. A valid argument has the proper deductive form (the conclusion is necessary from the premises), but the premises could be false. Deductive arguments are also sound or unsound. A sound argument has a valid deductive form *and* true premises. For example,

> All men are mortal
> Socrates is a man
> Therefore, Socrates is mortal

An inductive argument is probabilistic--the conclusion is not guaranteed from the premises-- and often infers from particulars to the general. Inductive arguments are either strong or weak. A strong argument is considered to be greater than 50% but less than 100% probable, based on the premises. An argument could be strong but the premises be false. Inductive arguments are also reliable or unreliable. A reliable argument is a strong inductive argument with true/acceptable premises. For example,

> The sun has risen every day of my life
> Therefore, the sun will rise tomorrow

Since the premises in a deductive argument are often formed by inductive reasoning, a good (or strong) deductive argument is guaranteed if the premises *and* the conjunction of the premises are more probable than not.

However, even invalid deductive arguments or weak inductive arguments, if taken together, can form a deductively valid argument or strong cumulative case argument. For example,

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Invalid   All employees are citizens
Therefore, Ned is a citizen

Invalid   Ned is an employee
Therefore, Ned is a citizen

Valid   All employees are citizens
Ned is an employee
Therefore, Ned is a citizen

Inductively, a criminal case could be used as an example where a number of independent evidences, which isolated are individually weak, together form a strong cumulative case of guilt.

Sources: Geisler/Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason,* Moreland/Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*

Make three circles for each argument

Argument 1:   deductive or inductive, valid or invalid, sound or unsound
Every person in this room is in Cumming, Georgia
I am in this room
Therefore, I am in Cumming, Georgia

Argument 2: deductive or inductive, valid or invalid, sound or unsound
Every chair in this room is green
The chair I am sitting on is in this room
Therefore, the chair I am sitting on is green

Argument 3: deductive or inductive, valid or invalid, sound or unsound
All cars we earlier observed in the church parking lot have four tires
A new car is now in the church parking lot
Therefore, the new car has four tires

Argument 4: deductive or inductive, valid or invalid, sound or unsound
Every church in Forsyth County has a kitchen
North Lanier Baptist Church is a church in Forsyth County
Therefore, North Lanier Baptist Church has a kitchen

Argument 5: deductive or inductive, valid or invalid, sound or unsound
Every person in this room is in Cumming, Georgia
I am a person in Cumming Georgia
Therefore, I am in this room

Answer code: 1 DVS; 2 DVU; 3 I strong reliable; 4 DVU; 5 DIU