

Exercises 01 - Arguments

1 Identifying the parts of an argument

[Copi, Cohen and McMahon, p. 9] Identify the premises and conclusions in the following passages. Some premises do support the conclusion, others do not. Note that premises may support conclusions directly or indirectly and that even simple passages may contain more than one argument.

A) Sir Edmund Hillary is a hero, not because he was the first to climb Mount Everest, but because he never forgot the Sherpas who helped him achieve this impossible feat. He dedicated his life to helping build schools and hospitals for them. — Patre S. Rajashekhar, “Mount Everest,” *National Geographic*, September 2003.

(B) Omniscience and omnipotence are mutually incompatible. If God is omniscient, he must already know how he is going to intervene to change the course of history using his omnipotence. But that means he can't change his mind about his intervention, which means he is not omnipotent. — Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*. New York: Houghton Mifflin (2006).

2 Reconstructing the form of an argument

[Copi, Cohen and McMahon, p. 55] Each of the following famous passages, taken from classical literature and philosophy, comprises a set of arguments whose complicated interrelations are critical for the force of the whole. Construct for each the diagram that you would find most helpful in analyzing the flow of argument in that passage. More than one interpretation will be defensible.

“... You appeared to be surprised when I told you, on our first meeting, that you had come from Afghanistan.”

“You were told, no doubt.”

“Nothing of the sort. I knew you came from Afghanistan. From long habit the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps. There were such steps, however. The train of reasoning ran, ‘Here is a gentle-man of medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan.’ The whole train of thought did not occupy a second. I then remarked that you came from Afghanistan, and you were astonished.”

“It is simple enough as you explain it,” I said, smiling.

A. Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887)

3 Constructing arguments

[Copi, Cohen and McMahon, p. 32] For each of the argument descriptions provided below, construct a deductive argument (on any subject of your choosing) having only two premises.

1. A valid argument with one true premise, one false premise, and a false conclusion
2. An invalid argument with two true premises and a false conclusion
3. A valid argument with two false premises and a true conclusion
4. A valid argument with two true premises and a false conclusions
5. An invalid argument with one true premise, one false premise, and a true conclusion