

NAME: _____

Philosophy 1104: Critical Thinking

Another Practice Quiz #3

TIME: 60 minutes

1. Comment on the following *ad hominem* (to the person) arguments, explaining why they are, or are not, reasonable.

- (i) According to Prof. Paul Krugman, who won the Nobel Prize for economics in 2008, the big banks are insolvent “zombie banks” and need to be temporarily nationalised.

--We liberals should be careful about quoting Krugman. He worked for the Reagan administration, and was a consultant for Enron before the scandal hit.

- (ii) Former US vice president Al Gore has shown in *An Inconvenient Truth* that global warming is a serious problem that has to be dealt with, right now, by reducing CO₂ emissions.

-- Rubbish. According to UK High Court judge Mr Justice Barton, the “apocalyptic vision” presented in Gore’s film was politically partisan and not an impartial analysis of the science of climate change. Gore is a politician, not a scientist, and you can’t take his word for it.

- (iii) I wouldn’t buy that truck you’re thinking about. Brandy McElroy reviewed that model in *Truck Weekly* and said that it’s aimed at posers who just want to drive in the city. It looks aggressive, but underneath they’ve cut a lot of corners and it won’t stand up to heavy work.

-- Ok, whatever. You’re going to ask a woman which truck to buy? She probably just thought the vanity mirror was too small.

2. Comment on the following passages, being sure to:

- (a) Identify the type(s) of argument used (e.g. ad hominem, appeal to force, etc.)
- (b) Say why the argument is reasonable, or not, as the case may be. (Most are unreasonable.)

- (i) A -- There isn't a shred of reliable historical evidence that any of the miracles attributed to Jesus actually occurred.

B -- What about the accounts in the Gospels?

A -- The Gospels can't be taken seriously as historical documents, as they contain magical events that obviously couldn't be real.

- (ii) Welfare seems to be needed to avoid severe hardship, but the trouble is that it traps them in a life of dependency. It's like an addictive drug. A lot of people get used to being on welfare, they like it, and so it actually harms them by robbing them of their independence and self reliance.

--I'm sorry, but I can't listen to any more of your poor-bashing. I've heard it all before, all this claptrap about welfare being *so* cushy and generous. You try living on \$610 a month, including \$375 for shelter, and see how wonderful that is!

- (iii) Don't tell me you're one of those raving conspiracy theorists! Do you truly think it possible that a secret army consisting of thousands of spies and demolitions engineers could really spend months planting thousands of bombs around some of the busiest office buildings in the world without someone noticing? I thought you were rational!

(iv) Some documents that seem purely technical, such as the BC Building Code and local planning bylaws, should be drafted with more attention to the human misery they cause. The stringent requirements for a 'legal' suite, for example, lead to many basements sitting empty, even while people sleep outside for lack of housing. The committees that draft these rules need to show more compassion.

(v) You claim God doesn't exist. But polls consistently show that a strong majority of people know that he does. It's pretty arrogant to tell all those people that they're wrong.

(vi) I assure you that none of the chemicals we produce are hazardous to health. If you look at the composition of each molecule, you'll find just carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen, which are all completely harmless.

(vii) I didn't start wearing a helmet regularly until AFTER I WOKE UP FROM THE COMA!

(viii) Canada is proud of its universal health care system, and thinks it's better than the USA in this regard, but let's consider the facts. The average person in the United States receives \$4507 in health-care treatment, per year, whereas the average Canadian gets only \$2080 per year (all figures in US dollars). We see that the American system is far superior in actually delivering care to the people who need it.

- (ix) You're signing your kid up for soccer? I wouldn't do that. Soccer is a dangerous game. My cousin Emily put her son into soccer, and he wound up in hospital with a serious concussion.
-
-

- (x) I don't think smoking is as dangerous as people make out. I visit my grandpa every week at the nursing home. I see a lot of happy smokers there, puffing away into their eighties.
-
-

3. The following complex questions either involve an assumption, or ask two questions in one. For each question below say which kind it is, and state the assumption being made, or separate the question into two, as appropriate.

- (i) Have you recently associated with Muslims and terrorists?
-

- (ii) Were you fooled by her fallacious argument?
-

- (iii) Why did you copy parts of your friend's essay?
-

4. In the article, "Deadly Doctors: Advisors want to ration care" (*New York Post*, July 24, 2009) Betsy McCaughey argues that Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel (one of President Obama's top health advisors) has dangerous ideas on reducing health care costs.

... Emanuel bluntly admits that the cuts will not be pain-free ... Savings, he writes, will require changing how doctors think about their patients: Doctors take the Hippocratic Oath too seriously, "as an imperative to do everything for the patient regardless of the cost or effects on others"

Yes, that's what patients *want* their doctors to do. But *Emanuel* wants doctors to look beyond the needs of their patients and consider social justice, such as whether the money could be better spent on somebody else.

Many doctors are horrified by this notion; they'll tell you that a doctor's job is to achieve social justice one patient at a time.

The following text is selected from Ezekiel J. Emanuel, "The Perfect Storm of Overutilization", *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2008; 299(23): 2789-2791.

The United States spends substantially more per person on health care than any other country, and yet US health outcomes are the same as or worse than those in other countries ...

The most important contributor to the high cost of US health care, however, is overutilization ... [Note: overuse is defined as treatment with little or no medical benefit -- RJ]

At least 7 factors drive overuse, 4 related to physicians and 3 related to patients. First, there is the matter of physician culture. Medical school education and postgraduate training emphasize thoroughness. When evaluating a patient, students, interns, and residents are trained to identify and praised for and graded on enumerating all possible diagnoses and tests that would confirm or exclude them. The thought is that the more thorough the evaluation, the more intelligent the student or house officer. Trainees who ignore the improbable "zebra" diagnoses are not deemed insightful. In medical training, meticulousness, not effectiveness, is rewarded.

This mentality carries over into practice. Peer recognition goes to the most thorough and aggressive physicians. The prudent physician is not deemed particularly competent, but rather inadequate. This culture is further reinforced by a unique understanding of professional obligations, specifically, the Hippocratic Oath's admonition to "use my power to help the sick to the best of my ability and judgment" as an imperative to do everything for the patient regardless of cost or effect on others ...

Based on the (admittedly slim) textual evidence given here, is McCaughey's presentation of Emanuel's view accurate, or does she commit a straw person fallacy? Support your answer with a detailed comparison of the texts, noting the similarities and differences.