

NAME: _____

Philosophy 1104: Critical Thinking

Answers to the Other Practice Quiz #3

[Total: 50 marks]

1. Comment on the following *ad hominem* (to the person) arguments, explaining why they are, or are not, reasonable. [2 marks each]

- (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.

The attack is of questionable relevance. As a distinguished economist, he is likely to be asked to advise governments and major corporations. He would not necessarily share all the views and endorse all the crimes of these groups.

- (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 it’s a political film.

This is more relevant, since Gore is indeed a politician, not an expert himself. Also, the judge is more likely to be objective than such a politician is.

- (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 around 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?

This is irrelevant. There is no reason why a woman might not have a good understanding of trucks. And her job as a reviewer for a truck magazine is evidence that McElroy does.

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.)

[3 marks each]

- (i) Intelligent design, the idea that life is the product of a supernatural designer, is a scientific theory because it uses the scientific method. They look at the empirical data, and try to come up with an explanation of it that's consistent with present scientific knowledge.

-- Nonsense. Science, by definition, can appeal only to material causes, so intelligent design is ruled out from the start.

Begging the question (circular argument). The claim that science can appeal only to material causes is argued against by the first speaker, but simply assumed by the second. Unreasonable.

- (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!

The second speaker commits a straw man fallacy. The first speaker didn't claim that welfare rates are too high, or that he would like to live on welfare. Unreasonable.

- (iii) A – Larry Summers is a total sexist to even suggest that one reason why few women become top scientists is because of innate biology.

B – I'm not so sure. Perhaps it's something that needs research?

A – If you think that, then it means you're a sexist too.

Poisoning the well. A makes B's position unattractive by attaching an unpleasant label to it. Unreasonable.

- (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.

Appeal to pity. But this one seems reasonable, as City planners are entrusted with acting in the public interest, and not harming people.

- (v) You claim that there was no link between 9/11 and Saddam's Baathist party in Iraq. But, according to a Newsweek poll, 83% of Americans believe that Saddam was involved. So I guess you're wrong about that.

Appeal to popularity (*ad populum*). Unreasonable, as the people have no direct experience of this issue, and are easily misled by mass media.

- (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.

Composition argument. (Since the parts are benign, so is the whole.) Unreasonable, since many deadly poisons (e.g. nitrogen (IV) oxide) are made of such harmless elements.

- (vii) There's no proof that the new H1N1 virus won't mutate into something even more deadly, causing another global pandemic like the 1918 Spanish flu, killing millions of people. Get yourself out of the city, right now, before it's too late!

Argument from ignorance. The argument is rather weak, since such mutations are rare.

- (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.

Division argument. (Since Americans as a whole receive more health care per person than Canadians, then so do individual Americans.) Unreasonable, since it may be that some Americans get Cadillac health care, while others get very little.

- (ix) I used to get colds all the time until I started eating vast amounts of garlic. Now, after more than two weeks, I haven't had the tiniest sniffle.

Possible false cause, since two weeks is a rather short test period for the new regime.

- (x) Students complain about high tuition fees, but if you look at the student parking lots of major Canadian universities you'll see mostly newer cars, including a lot of high-end luxury models. Clearly, most students are doing just fine, and can afford to pay more in tuition.

Hasty generalization, since it may be that many students don't drive to school (perhaps they cannot afford to). Many students may arrive on foot, by mass transit, or on a bike. Unreasonable.

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. [2 marks each]

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

2 questions: Have you recently associated with Muslims? Have you recently associated with terrorists?

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

Assumes: Her argument is fallacious

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

Assumes: You copied 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. [8 marks]

The main problem with McCaughey's presentation of Emmanuel's view is that she doesn't make it clear that Emmanuel is talking about *overuse* (or waste) of health care. McCaughey talks about Emmanuel's cost-cutting measures as being 'not pain-free', and suggests that patients medical *needs* will not be met. She suggests that patients will not be treated justly. Emmanuel is not endorsing any such measures. So her presentation is substantially distorted.