

Introduction to Logical Reasoning

Workshop on Informally Assessing Arguments

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Part I, Problem 1 Solution

1. The Internet promotes sensationalism.
2. The Internet trains people to consume news in smaller, bit-sized pieces.

∴ The Internet has destroyed balanced, thoughtful journalism.

This argument is not deductively valid. (Can you give a counter example?) The argument is probably more inductively weak than strong because assuming sensationalism and reduced news consumption does not necessarily lead to the *destruction* of the type of journalism mentioned. So this is a bad argument because it is invalid/unsound and weak/non-cogent. (So *no* need to test the premises, though these are questionable as well.)

Part 1, Problem 2 Solution

1. The Internet has widened the audience of news consumers.
2. The Internet has put more news at people's fingertips.
3. If 1 and 2 are true, then the Internet is not killing journalism.

∴ The Internet is not killing journalism.

This argument is deductively valid. (Why?) Now for checking the truth of the premises, 1 and 2 seem clearly true, but what about 3? This is a pretty strong claim that probably is false, since the Internet might do 1 and 2, and yet still kill journalism in other ways. So bad argument: unsound.

Part I, Problem 3 Solution

1. The Internet makes a journalist out of anyone with a modem.
 2. The Internet values speed and sensation above accuracy.
 3. New media will not accept our standards.
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- ∴ This is a grim time for newspapers.

This argument is not deductively valid. (Can you give a counter example?) This argument is pretty inductively weak, since supposing the truth of the premises does little to show why it is a grim time for newspapers. So this is a bad argument because it is invalid/unsound and weak/non-cogent.

Part 2, Problem 1 Solution

1. It is morally permissible for the head of a family to care more for the members of his or her family than outsiders.
 2. Qatarization simply involves the Qatar government giving more aid to its own citizens as opposed to the expats living there.
 3. The American government gives more aid to its own citizens as opposed to the expats living in there.
 4. America is thought to be acting morally on this matter.
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- ∴ Qatarization is morally permissible.

This argument is not deductively valid. (Can you give a counter example?) This rests on two arguments by analogy. Qatarization is the target for both. One analogy (in 2) compares Qatarization to the priority a family gives to its members and the second analogy (in 3) compares Qatarization to the priority America gives to its citizens. In these cases the analogs are thought morally permissible (in 1 and 4). This seems inductively strong, so the question remains about whether the premises are in fact true. (I'll let you decide for yourselves.)

Part 2, Problem 2 Solution

1. Some Internet aggregators already have experience giving audiences the kind of content they want on the new digital platforms.
2. Internet aggregators don't have to support legacy businesses like print or broadcast.
3. Legacy businesses have huge cost structures that are becoming less efficient.
4. The audiences of legacy businesses are splintering off.
5. The audiences of legacy businesses require multiple distribution systems to reach.

∴ Some Internet aggregators may have a leg up on finding the ultimate business model for original [journalistic] content.

This argument is not deductively valid. (Can you give a counter example?) But this does seem to be a pretty inductively strong argument, giving compelling reasons to accept the conclusion (which is itself pretty mild, with talk of “some” and “may”). I'm no expert on these matters, but the premises themselves seem to be true. If that is the case, then this is a inductively cogent argument.

Part 2, Problem 3 Solution

1. Either the Internet is killing journalism or journalists are adapting.
 2. If the internet is killing journalism, then the audience of news consumers should not widen.
 3. The audience of news consumers is widening.
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- ∴ Journalists are adapting.

This argument is deductively valid. (You may have to think about this for a moment.) Soundness therefore depends on whether 1, 2, and 3 are actually true. 3 seems to be true, I believe. But 1 might be flawed because both parts may be false (that is, there is some third possibility where the Internet is not killing journalism and the journalists are not adapting). And 2 might be flawed because the internet might be killing journalism and yet the audience is still getting wider (can you think of why this might be the case?). On the whole, then, I'd say this is not a deductively sound argument.

Next Class...

You begin the journey into logic by learning how to transform statements from English into the formal language of logic.