

Summer Task - Philosophy

Philosophy means "love of wisdom". Wisdom is about searching for truth and practising sensible and wise thinking. To ensure that we conduct philosophical enquiry well, we need to make sure we are following logic correctly so that our arguments remain robust. Below is an explanation of one of these logical principles; the principle of validity.

The principle of validity - An argument is valid if and only if the conclusion necessarily follows from the premises.

For example:

Premise 1 - All men are mortal

Premise 2 - Socrates is a man

Conclusion - Therefore Socrates is a mortal

This argument is valid because the conclusion follows from the premises. If all men are indeed mortal and Socrates is in fact a man, then it **must** be the case that Socrates is mortal.

Now, validity is only to do with whether the conclusion follows. It has nothing to do with the truth of the premises or the conclusion. So an argument **could** be valid but false.

For example:

Premise 1 - All cheese is from the moon

Premise 2 - Chocolate is a cheese

Conclusion - Therefore chocolate is from the moon.

Cheese isn't from the moon and chocolate isn't a type of cheese but the argument is still valid. This is because **if** it were true that all cheese is from the moon and that chocolate is a cheese, then chocolate would **have** to be from the moon. Therefore this is still a valid argument.

Premise 1 - Vegetarians don't eat pork sausages

Premise 2 - Moby doesn't eat pork sausages

Conclusion - Therefore Moby is a vegetarian

In this case the premises are true but the conclusion does not follow from the premises. Therefore it is **not a valid argument**.

Sometimes premises may include an "if" sentence, but these can be valid too.

Premises 1 - If today is Tuesday then I should be at work.

Premise 2- Today is Tuesday

Conclusion - Therefore I should be at work

This is also a valid argument

The thing to remember is that whether or not the premises or conclusion are true in reality, the argument is still valid if the conclusion necessarily follows from the premises.

Tasks

1. **Identify whether the following arguments are valid or invalid. For each argument write a brief justification of whether you think it is valid or invalid. You will be able to work this out from the information above. Do not worry if you are unsure, decide what you think is best and justify it:**

A. Premise 1 - If man-made global warming is really happening, then the polar ice caps will be melting.

Premise 2 - The polar ice caps are melting.

Therefore man-made global warming is really happening

B. Premise 1 - All men are selfish

Premise 2 - Some selfish people are attractive

Conclusion - Therefore some men are attractive

C. Premise 1 - All politicians are liars.

Premise 2 - No person of integrity is a politician

Conclusion - Therefore no person of integrity is a liar

D. Premise 1 - Today isn't both sunny cold.

Premise 2 - Today isn't sunny.

Conclusion - Therefore today is cold.

For the following tasks you **must not sit on the fence**. Even if you are unsure, you need to pick a side of the argument and argue for it.

2. An old woman was very ill. On her deathbed she asked her son to promise that he would visit her grave at least once a week. The son didn't want to disappoint his mother, so he promised that he would. But after his mother died, he didn't keep his promise. He was too busy. He didn't tell anyone about his promise, and he has never felt guilty for failing to do as he said he would.

Was he wrong or not wrong to not visit his mother's grave? Write at least 150 words explaining your opinion.

3. Imagine a machine which scans your body in Paris, and sends that information to a machine in York which builds a perfect copy of your body down to the minutest detail. It doesn't get a single atomic isotope, nor the placement of it, wrong. Now, upon building this new body, the original is discarded and you find yourself in York.

Is this still you? Write at least 150 words explaining what you think.

4. You have fallen into the hands of a mad and powerful scientist. He informs you he is going to torture you tomorrow morning. Not surprisingly, you find this idea rather terrifying. However, the Professor tells you that when the time comes to torture you, not only will you not be able to remember anything that you now remember, but you'll have an entirely different set of thoughts and impressions of your past (very different from the thoughts and memories you currently have).

Should you be fearful of the torture? Write at least 150 words explaining what you think?

5. Some people have lived all their lives in a cave held in place by chains and facing a blank wall. They watch the shadows on the wall of things passing by the front of a fire, which is behind them. They create names for the shadows. Some of the shadows' appear at the same time as when they get water and food. For them, the shadows are the reality. They do not even have a desire to leave the cave because they have not known any other way of life. One of the prisoners' chains break and he ends up making his way out of the cave but is confused about what he is experiencing and is blinded by the light.

This is an allegory that Plato put forward. Explain the point that you think it is trying to make. Write 150 words justifying your interpretation.