

### 1.10.1. Chain Argument Evaluation Problems

A. Construct an **argument map** for the following chain argument; then answer the questions below about **which argument links** are being **criticized**.

**Anselm:** (1) Does God, *the all-perfect being*, really exist? Well, (2) we can certainly *conceive of* a being having every perfection to the highest degree, so (3) such an all-perfect being is at least *possible*. Now, (4) which is *more* perfect – a merely possible perfection, or a really existing perfection? Clearly (5) an existing perfection is more perfect than a merely possible one; and that shows that (6) existence itself is a perfection. Therefore, (7) a ‘being with every perfection’ must, by its very nature, *really exist*.

**Barbie:** Look, **(a)** even if we can conceive of something, it doesn’t follow that that thing is *possible* – for, given the limitations of the human mind, we may conceive of absurdities without realizing that they’re impossible. And anyway, **(b)** even if it’s true that an existing perfection is better than a non-existing one, that doesn’t mean existence itself a perfection. After all, an existing toothache is *worse* than a non-existing one, so existence looks more like a neutral amplifier.

1. Criticism **(a)** presents a validity counterexample for: the **argument link** from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Criticism **(b)** presents a validity counterexample for: the **argument link** from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

**B.** Construct an **argument map** for the following chain argument; then answer the questions below about **which parts of the argument** are being **criticized**.

**Barbie:** (1) Does God exist? Certainly (2) we have no explanation for why a well-intentioned designer of the universe would allow there to be so much suffering in the world; which shows that (3) the universe doesn't have a well-intentioned designer. Also, (4) God would be a non-physical object, not detectable through scientific methods. But (5) we have no reason to believe in things not detectable by scientific methods. All of which proves that (6) God does not exist.

**Rex:** **(a)** Just because we don't have an explanation for something doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Our success at explaining *some* things doesn't guarantee success at explaining *everything*. There might be lots of things whose explanation escapes our understanding – like stuff too complex for the human mind to understand, or not detectable by any methods we've come up with. And anyway **(b)** it's just not true that we only believe in things detectable by scientific methods. For instance, we believe in things like ethical values and that life is worth living, but we don't discover that through scientific methods.

1. Criticism **(a)** presents a validity counterexample for: the **argument link** from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Criticism **(b)** makes a false premise criticism of sentence \_\_\_\_\_.

**C.** Construct an **argument map** for the following chain argument; then answer the questions below about **which parts of the argument** are being **criticized**.

**Elvis:** (1) We should either stop in to see Jake or else hang out at the food court in the mall. Now admittedly, (2) it would be more fun to hang at Jake's, given that (3) he just got that new surfing video game and already owns Logic Warrior 3D. Trouble is, (4) Jake's not home – since (5) he didn't answer his phone when I called this morning. So (6) we're better off just going to the mall.

**Jack:** Ha! **(a)** No way are those our only good choices. There are plenty of better options you haven't even considered – like riding over a waterfall in a homemade barrel, or shooting each other out of a cannon. Anyway, **(b)** just because Jake's not answering his phone doesn't mean he isn't home. He might be wasting his life watching the TV turned up at full blast or listening to some hippy music through earphones so he doesn't hear the phone ringing.

1. Criticism **(a)** makes a false premise criticism of sentence \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Criticism **(b)** presents a validity counterexample for: the **argument link** from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

**D.** Construct an **argument map** for the following chain argument; then answer the questions below about **which argument links** are being **criticized**.

**Trixie:** Kitty agreed to meet me at the multiplex to see *Love and Footwear*. But the movie's about to start and she's still not at the theater. Now, I know she's not held up with some emergency, since she didn't call me. Moreover earlier today she said she was feeling tired, which shows that she didn't really want to see the movie. Clearly, Kitty has decided to just stand me up and skip the movie.

**Letitia:** Oh, you're jumping to conclusions here. **(a)** Even if Kitty didn't call you she might still have had some emergency. In fact, an emergency (such as a car accident or illness) might be exactly why she didn't phone you. Besides, **(b)** even if she was tired she might still have wanted to see the movie. Maybe she wanted to see the movie so much she'd have seen it even if she were exhausted.

1. Criticism **(a)** presents a validity counterexample for: the **argument link** from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Criticism **(b)** presents a validity counterexample for: the **argument link** from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

**E.** For each of the following chain arguments, build an **argument map** for that argument; then describe a **validity counterexample** for at least one link in the argument map.

1. Either the bartender committed the murder or the bootlegger did. But the bootlegger was passionately in love with the victim, so clearly he didn't commit the murder. Therefore the bartender committed the murder.

—adapted from Trudy Govier, **A Practical Study of Argument** Third Edition p. 36

2. It would just be a waste of time for me to try striking up a conversation with that woman at the bar. After all, last time I was here I tried talking to two different women, and neither of them seemed interested; so it would just end the same way this time.

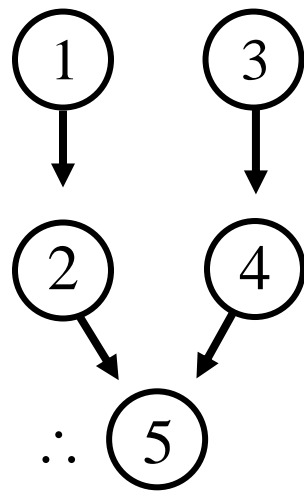
3. Since these skee ball tokens conduct electricity, and all gold objects conduct electricity, they must be made of gold. Now, gold currently sells for about \$700 per ounce. And since these tokens weigh 12 ounces altogether, that means they're worth almost \$10,000.

4. Whenever the Bobcats lose a game Rex gets upset. And he's currently very upset, as we can see from his choice to skip dinner and stay in his room. So obviously the Bobcats must have lost a game.

5. Everywhere you look these days, people are installing lightning rods on their houses. But is it really such a good idea? Consider this: following the first round of installations there was an earthquake in Lisbon. And a few weeks later, after more lightning rods went up, there was a big fire in Boston. Events like this show that divine forces are upset with us for trying to escape lightning, and are punishing us with other natural disasters instead. But that means putting up lightning rods won't ultimately make us any safer.

**F.** While we test a chain argument for validity by separately testing each of its links for validity, another test might suggest itself: simply see if the topmost premises (the ones not supported by any premises) validly entails the main conclusion of the chain argument. Call this the **Top and Bottom test of validity**.

For instance, the Top and Bottom test applied to the following argument just looks at the inference from (1) and (3) to (5). The test says: if that inference turns out valid, the whole chain argument counts as valid.



Build an argument map for the following argument. Does it look like a valid argument? What verdict does the Top and Bottom test give for this argument? What verdict does our piecemeal, link-by-link test give for this argument?

**Washington and Adams weren't both the first US president, so Rex graded the Logic exams. Kitty will win at mahjongg, since Washington was the first US president. Therefore, Adams wasn't the first US president.**