

1.9.1. 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**.

Argument: (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) an ‘all-perfect being’ must, by its very nature, *really exist*.

Criticism: *First*, just because we can conceive of something, it doesn’t follow that it’s *possible* – for, given the limitations of the human mind, we may conceive of absurdities without realizing that they’re impossible. *Second*, even if it’s true that an existing perfection is better than a non-existing one, that doesn’t make existence itself a perfection. After all, an existing toothache is *worse* than a non-existing one, so existence looks more like a neutral amplifier.

Q1. The **first** criticism presents a validity counterexample for: the **argument link** from _____ to _____.

Q2. The **second** criticism 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**.

Argument: (1) Does God exist? Well, (2) we have no explanation for why a well-intentioned designer of the universe would allow there to be a lot of suffering in the world. And that 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. For these reasons we see that (6) God does not exist.

Criticism: *First*, just because we don't have an explanation for something, that doesn't mean it doesn't exist. There could be lots of things whose explanation escapes our understanding – like physical phenomena too complex for us to understand. *Second*, it's just not true that we only believe in things detectable by scientific methods. For instance, we believe in things like ethical values, but we don't think we discover them through scientific methods.

Q1. The **first** criticism presents a *validity counterexample* for: the **argument link** from _____ to _____.

Q2. The **second** criticism makes a *false premise* criticism of sentence _____.

C. For each of the following chain arguments: **map** the argument; then construct a **validity counterexample** for at least one link in that map.

1. Either the butler committed the murder or the judge did. But the judge was passionately in love with the victim, so it wasn't he who committed the murder. Therefore the butler committed the murder. (*From Trudy Govier, Asking the Right Questions, 2nd Edition*)

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 coins conducts 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 coins weigh 12 ounces altogether, that means they're worth almost \$10,000.

4. Whenever Rex's team loses a game he gets depressed. And he's currently very depressed, as we can see from the moody voicemail he left, and his refusal to come out of his room for dinner. Clearly, Rex's team must have lost a game.

5. Kitty agreed to meet me at the movies. But the movie is 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, she complained earlier today of feeling tired; so clearly she didn't really want to see the movie. Obviously, Kitty has just decided to stand me up and skip the movie.

6. We should either stop in to see Ace or else hang out at the food court in the mall. Admittedly, it would be way more fun to hang at Ace's than at the mall. But it's only worth going to his place if he's home – which he's not, since he didn't answer his phone. So we're better off going to the mall.

7. 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 were put up, there was a big fire in Boston. Events like this show that divine forces are upset with us for trying to play G-d by escaping lightning, and are punishing us with other natural disasters instead. But that means putting up lightning rods won't ultimately make us any safer.