

ExPhil

Understanding, examining and
constructing arguments

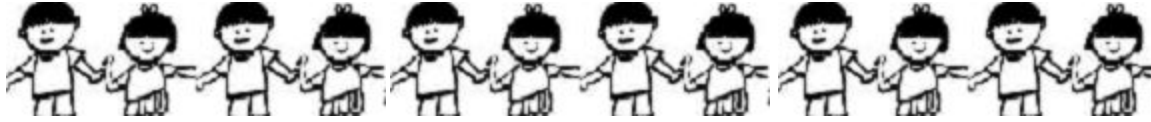
Why is it important to think about reasoning and arguments?

Assess the following argument:

- Most people prefer a to b;
- Most people prefer b to c;
- Therefore most people prefer a to c.

Does the conclusion follow from the premisses (reasons)?

12 children 3 vegetables



Most children like Asparagus better than Beetroot



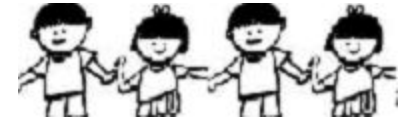
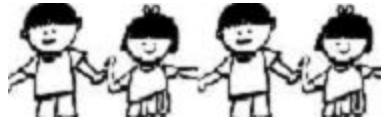
Most children like Beetroot better than Carrot



Therefore most children like Asparagus better than Carrot



Could the premisses be true and the conclusion false?



- Most people prefer a to b;
- Most people prefer b to c;
- Therefore most people prefer a to c?

NO!!! The conclusion does not follow from the premisses

Speeding

Being aware of the dangers of driving too fast is not sufficient to stop people from speeding. Many drivers are still exceeding the speed limits. A recent campaign has emphasised the dangers of driving too fast, by showing home videos of children who were subsequently killed by speeding motorists.

Task

- All women are mortal
- The American president is mortal
- Therefore the American president is a man

- All men are mortal
- The American president is mortal
- Therefore the American president is a man

*If the reasons given above were true, could the conclusions be false?
See if you can construct an argument where – if the reasons are true,
the conclusion **MUST** be true.*

Example

- All men are mortal
- The American President is a man
- Therefore the American President is mortal

- All bachelors are unmarried
- John is a bachelor
- Therefore John is unmarried

- All swans are white
- This bird is a swan
- Therefore this bird is white

Task

Read the passage from Descartes. Identify the conclusion and the reasons given for it. Do the reasons support the conclusion? Can you think of any counter-examples?