

Re: Tautologies and Empirical Truth

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.cognitive/2004-10/0884.html>

From: Lester Zick (lesterDELzick_at_worldnet.att.net)

Date: 10/30/04

Date: Sat, 30 Oct 2004 15:48:08 GMT

On Sat, 30 Oct 2004 06:06:43 GMT, "Stephen Harris"
<cyberguard1048-usenet@yahoo.com> in comp.ai.philosophy wrote:

>
> "Stephen Harris" <cyberguard1048-usenet@yahoo.com> wrote in message
> news:A6Ggd.36745\$QJ3.27084@newssvr21.news.prodigy.com...
>>
>> "Lester Zick" <lesterDELzick@worldnet.att.net> wrote in message
>> news:4181bedf.75193516@netnews.att.net...
>>> On Wed, 27 Oct 2004 22:22:32 GMT, "Stephen Harris"
>>> <cyberguard1048-usenet@yahoo.com> in comp.ai.philosophy wrote:
>>>>
>>>> "Lester Zick" <lesterDELzick@worldnet.att.net> wrote in message
>>>> news:4180c3a7.71190262@netnews.att.net...
>>>>> On Wed, 27 Oct 2004 17:04:19 -0400, Wolf Kirchmeir
>>>>> <wwolfkir@sympatico.ca> in comp.ai.philosophy wrote:
>>>>>>
>>>>>> Lester Zick wrote:
>>>>>>>
>>>>>>> Tautologies and Empirical Truth
>>>>>>> -----
>>>>>>>
>>>>>>> In a frank discussion with Wolf Kirchmeir yesterday concerning
>>>>>>> whether
>>>>>>> tautologies constitute empirical evidence he took occasion to remind
>>>>>>> me quite candidly that tautologies are always true. And the moral he
>>>>>>> drew from this was that tautological truths can't be empirical
>>>>>>> because
>>>>>>> empirical observations are always problematic and tautologies are
>>>>>>> not.
>>>>>>>
>>>>>>> Then I got to pondering. It seemed a shame to have something that was
>>>>>>> always true and not be able to draw some useful information from it.
>>>>>>> Here was this beacon of universal truth, and we had no use for it. I
>>>>>>> understood that philosophers and scientists consider tautologies
>>>>>>> useless despite their universal truth. However, I decided that the
>>>>>>> final chapter on usefullness of the tautology had yet to be written.

>>>>>
>>>>> "Always true" does not mean "universal truth."
>>>>>
>>>>> Aw, c'mon, Wolf, you're quibbling. If something is always true, it's
>>>>> true for all things everywhere at all times. If it's not true for all
>>>>> things everywhere, it's not true all the time. Totally irrelevant.
>>>>>
>>>>> Regards – Lester
>>>>>
>>>>> I am more sympathetic to Wolf's original point, which was something
>>>>> which is logically/tautologically true does not have an empirical
>>>>> (physical
>>>>> reality) implication. Of course if the premise is true about reality then
>>>>> the argument is called sound and then has an actual implication about
>>>>> reality, because you are essentially just stating a fact about reality.
>>>>>
>>>>> So statements about reality which are true constitutes a sound
>>>>> argument? A mere statement doesn't constitute an argument at all.
>>>>>
>>>>> I can appreciate where your sympathies lie, Stephen, but where does
>>>>> your reason lie?
>>>>>
>>>>>
>>>>> Arguments are called valid if they are logically correct.
>>>>> Arguments are called sound if they are both valid and have a true premise.
>>>>> An argument consists of a premise and statements which follow to arrive at
>>>>> a
>>>>> conclusion.
>>>>>
>>>>> Rabbits are often white. (true premise)
>>>>> Some rabbits are pets for children. (supporting premise)
>>>>> Conclusion: Some pets for children are white.
>>>>>
>>>>> the argument is called sound and then has an actual implication about
>>>>> reality, because you are essentially just stating a fact about reality.
>>>>>
>>>>>
>>>>> "Some pets for children are white." is a true statement about reality
>>>>> because it follows from the true premise "Rabbits are often white
>>>>> which is supported by "some rabbits are pets for children and leads
>>>>> to the true conclusion Some pets for children are white which is
>>>>> also a true statement about reality.
>>>>>
>>>>> Maybe you thought "argument" was meant to imply some type of dispute
>>>>> which has nothing much to do with a statement. An argument is a series
>>>>> of statements in logic without the implication of a dispute involved.
>>>>>
>>>>> My "reason lies" in being educated.
>>>>>
>>>>>
>>>>>
>>>>> Tautological means circular.

Incorrect as a matter of definition. A tautology excludes no possibility. A circular argument includes no possibility.

- >> *Rabbits are often white. (true premise)*
- >> *Some rabbits are pets for children. (supporting premise)*
- >> *Some pets for children are white.*
- >*Some white pets for children are rabbits.*

Regards – Lester