

Evaluation of bouwsma's argument

Finance



Evaluation of Bouwsma's Argument The argument of Bouwsma is not valid, particularly because of the major premise(1) and the minor premises (2) and (3). For the purposes of clarity, the premises will be represented as: (1) If we are deceived about the world around us (A), either we are able to detect the deception through our five sense (B) or we are not able to detect the deception through our five senses (B-). (2) If we are able to detect the deception through our five senses (B), then we are not deceived about the world around (A-). (3) If we are not able to detect the deception through our five senses (B-), then we are not deceived about the world around us (A-). (4) We are not deceived about the world around us (A-). If we closely analyze the argument above as Bouwsma put it, we will notice in the major premise (1) that A is either B or B-. He then proceeds to prove in the minor premises (2) and (3) that B = A- and that B- = A-, and so he concludes that A- is true, thus implying that A in the major premise is not true. What Bouwsma is trying to say here is that simply because B and B- actually lead to A-, then it is A- that is true and not A. Nevertheless, without analyzing the content of the premises, the minor premises (2) and (3) commit a fault since they contradict the major premise (1). Based on the major premise, A = either B or B-. Therefore, if A = B, then A ? B-; or if A = B-, then A ? B, because whatever happens, A must either be B or B-. In short, one of these two possibilities must necessarily be true. There is actually no way that A, or Descartes' claim that we are deceived about the world around us, can be proven false if it is stated in a major premise. The reason is that if A is not B, then it must be B-; or if it is not B-, then it must be B, regardless of whether B or B- is false. It is like saying that John is either a bird or a fish. It therefore means that if John is not a bird, then he must be a fish; and if he is not a fish,

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then he must be a bird - regardless of whether the conclusion is true, and regardless of whether both terms "bird" and "fish" are nonexistent and are not even concepts. Using this argument about John, the bird and the fish, what Bouwsma did was to say that either John is a bird or a fish, and then prove that neither bird nor fish point to John, so therefore John does not exist. What then is the use of the major premise if the possibilities are not exhaustive? After all, Bouwsma's major premise is actually "John is a fish, or a bird or does not exist." Likewise, in our original argument, Bouwsma's major premise is wrongly stated and should have been: (1) "If we are deceived about the world around us, there are three possibilities: we are able to detect the deception through our five senses (and it is true that we are deceived), or we are not able to detect the deception (and it is true that we are deceived), or it is NOT true that we are deceived." Bouwsma should therefore have stated in the major premise (1) that there are actually three possibilities, because either of the two possibilities he gave would still mean that it is true that we are deceived about the world around us. Bouwsma is like a teacher telling his student that if he is diligent, then he either does his homework or does not do it, and then later on tells him that whether he does his homework or not, he is not diligent, and finally concludes that he is not diligent. Do you think this would make sense to the student? Something is actually wrong with the minor premises (2) and (3). The reason is that they contradict the major premise. The minor premises must therefore be: (2) If we are able to detect the deception through our five senses, then it is NOT true that we are not able to detect the deception through our five senses; and the other premise must be (3) If we are not able to detect the deception through our five senses, then it is NOT true that we are able to detect the

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deception through our five senses. Based on Bouwma's revised major and minor premises, the pattern is now "Either P or Q; Not P; Therefore Q." In short, deception is either detected or undetected; if detected, then it is not undetected; and if undetected, it is not detected. However, since the minor premises (2) and (3) only present possibilities, then no conclusion can be made. The idea of deception therefore remains true. Perhaps, the only valid way that Bouwsma could prove that "we are not deceived about the world around us," is by using this argument: (1) If we are deceived about the world around us, there are three possibilities: we are able to detect the deception through our five senses, or we are not able/unable to detect the deception, or it is not true that we are deceived. (2) We are neither able nor unable to detect the deception through our five senses. (3) It is not true that we are deceived. = We are not deceived about the world around us. However, if this is the case, then people would have difficulty understanding "neither able nor unable" in the minor premise (2). Top of Form Bottom of Form