

The joy of research and argumentation

“Questioning eternally”

The hallmark of a child is his **natural need to know**. Here I reintroduce you to the **joy of learning, which begins with questioning**.

When we like a child, energetically pursue reality, and when we try to find the broadest possible reasons for, and the causes of that reality not only because of what we see or hear or feel but based on reason and logic and when we seek for the value and the deeper meaning of these things we are DOING PHILOSOPHY

At some time or another every one of us has been a Ramose a Plato a Confucius a Locke or a Biko.

All humans pursue understanding and seek naturally for an assumed order in the universe. From the child asking a simple question about why the sky is blue to deep moral and ethical questioning to political social questions about rulers and the ruled as well as natural science questions about gravity for example.

All Knowledge starts with a desire to understand and make meaning out of reality and this begins with inquiry. All these questions revolve around why, how, where, when and with who or what Phenomena elate. These questions explore the relationships and interconnections between phenomena

Inquiry or questioning involves

Looking at everything critically, questioning the nature of reality the nature of beliefs and assumptions.

Inquiry is about thinking for yourself, listening to and offering others answers.

We also share our opinions with modesty and humility as we gather new insight and facts.

What is an argument?

An argument is simply the reasons given for the answer to a question or problem. It consists of groups of statements (**reasons/premises**), one of which is the CONCLUSION (answer, explanation or proof) to the question. These premises must persuade the listener or reader that THE CONCLUSION IS TRUE.

A VALID argument

The **premises must provide** reasons for accepting the conclusion, and must support the conclusion. This does not mean that the statement is observationally or empirically true, only that the structure is valid. It can be absolutely true or absolutely false!

If we accept the premises of an argument as being true and the validity of the structure (as above) **WE MUST ACCEPT THE CONCLUSION**

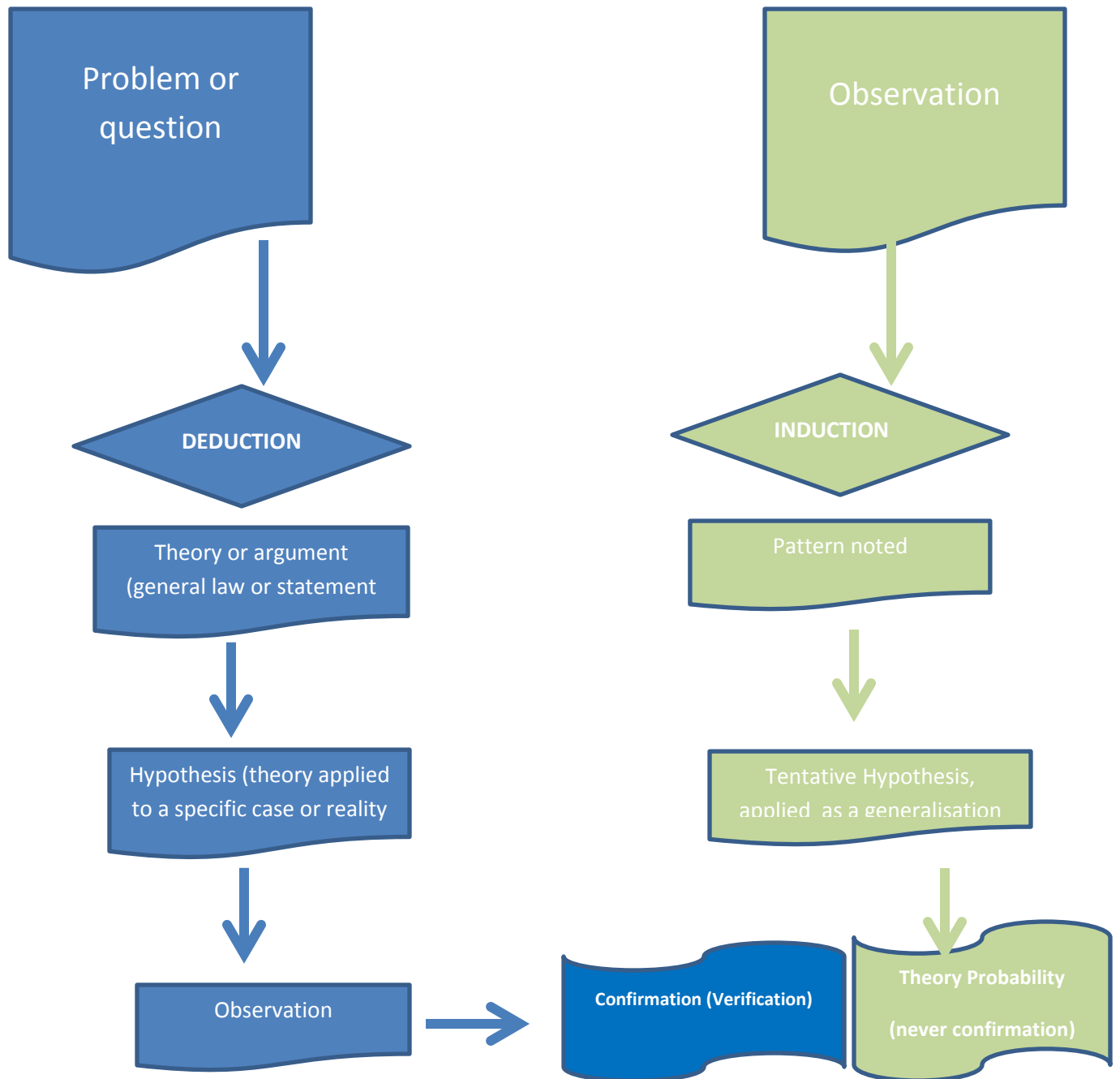
Good arguments must be

- **Sound/true**(Match up with reality ,be verifiable or falsifiable)
- Have sufficient and **relevant reasons or premises** which support the conclusion
- Must be **consistent** with the rest of the truth about reality(**knowledge we have.**)

Types of arguments

- **Empirical arguments (inductive)** deal with facts only. They prove that premises are true through our senses(observations)

- **Normological arguments (value statements)** are about judgements about good or bad, right or wrong. They are subjective(dependent on the observers opinion).Most people do not have the same opinion therefore these arguments can be contentious
- **Deductive Arguments consist of** reasoning that constructs arguments correctly and evaluates the construction of arguments



Premise indicators

- Because, since
- If
- For the reason
- Firstly secondly
- In so far as
- In the light of

Conclusion indicators

Therefore, thus, so

Consequently, accordingly

Subsequently

Hence, than

We NEVER assume the truth of an argument or premise.

We question EVERYTHING.

Preconceived ideas (generalizations, stereotypes assumptions) influence our actions and thinking but they have not been reflected on to see if they are Valid by deductively analysing them ie the premises that lead to the conclusion must contain enough relevant information to support the conclusion.

Fallacies are Deceptive arguments that try to persuade us to accept the conclusion.

The reasons(premises) are irrelevant, inappropriate, exaggerated or absurd

Some common errors of logic (fallacies)

- **Opinions that** are given are not a logical conclusion that follows from the reasons.
- Something that has already been stated obviously in the premise is given as a conclusion (**circular reasoning**)The king is in charge because he is the person who has been put in charge
- **Using a word and then again in a different sense later on in the argument**, even if it is a simile or metaphor.
- Using analogies that are not really similar or related (**false analogy**)

- Using statements that attack a person's race, culture, attributes(**stereotype**)
- Using statements that **appeal to authority**, titles ,esteemed people when they are in fact not experts in the subject being questioned
- Using force or **threats** of force to push the conclusion

An Invitation to look at the world in a fresh new way

Every one of us need to critically analyse and question EVERYTHING WE ARE TAUGHT (at home, school at work, in church and our communities)

- Analyse arguments for **logical/Valid structure**
- **NEVER** accept something as true unless it is proved to be true empirically or logically
- Look carefully for **hidden fallacies**
- **Think creatively**, out the box ,look at things from a new angle ,**probe deeper**, and **look beyond the surface**

BE CRITICAL. ASK MEANINGFULL QUESTIONS, TAKE NOTHING AS GIVEN, USE YOUR IMAGINATION!

It is only as we do this that we return to the freedom, natural inquisitiveness and imagination of the child within.

We begin to make informed judgements on the “knowledge” that is fed to us and make our own unique meaning of the world around us