

PHL 308
Elementary Ethics

Dr. Jeff Johnson
Lecture Two

WHY-QUESTIONS

- ▶ Why does Leslie think that Johnny has taken up with Judy?
- ▶ Why do Mary Ann and Wanda think Earl has to die?
- ▶ Why was Judy wearing his ring?
- ▶ Stories as answers to why questions?
- ▶ Stories that make sense of the relevant facts

LESLIE'S STORY

e₁. Johnny has gone missing at Leslie's birthday party.

e₂. Judy left the same time.

e₃. Johnny was holding Judy's hand.

e₄. Johnny and Judy have reappeared together.

e₅. Judy exhibits a disturbing expression and carriage – “like a queen with her king.”

e₆. Judy is wearing a (man's) ring (that appears to be Johnny's).

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t₀. Johnny has taken up with Judy.

INFERENCE TO THE BEST EXPLANATION

In making this inference one infers, from the fact that a certain hypothesis would explain the evidence, to the truth of that hypothesis. In general, there will be several hypotheses which might explain the evidence, so one must be able to reject all such alternative hypotheses before one is warranted in making the inference. Thus one infers, from the premise that a given hypothesis would provide a "better" explanation for the evidence than would any other hypothesis, to the conclusion that the given hypothesis is true.

INFERENCE TO THE BEST EXPLANATION (IBE)

- Structure of evidence
 - Evidence supports hypothesis
 - Hypothesis explains evidence (at least some)
- Rival explanations
- Quality of explanations (rivals and original)
- Test for quality of an argument
 - Original is best explanation — the evidence is strong
 - A rival is best explanation — the evidence is weak

LESLIE'S EVIDENCE

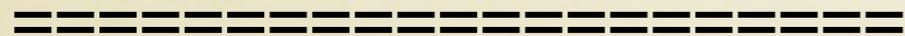
- Her story
- Rival explanations
 - Captain of the football team
 - Brother's ring
- Quality of competing explanations — Original is 1st
- Leslie's evidence is pretty strong

MARY ANN AND WANDA'S STORY

R₁. It wasn't two weeks after she got married that Wanda started gettin' abused.

R₂. She finally got the nerve to file for divorce.

R₃. Earl walked right through that restraining order and put her in intensive care.



T₀. Earl had to die.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE STORIES

- Leslie — story about what happened
- Mary Ann and Wanda — story about what should be done
- Johnny and Judy explains the evidence
- Earl has to die doesn't explain any of the evidence
- Still, both stories attempt to make sense of what we know (the facts)

INFERENCE TO THE BEST (NORMATIVE) STORY

In making this inference one infers, from the fact that a certain **narrative** would **make sense of the facts**, to the truth of that **normative recommendation**. In general, there will be several **narratives** which might **make sense of the facts**, so one must be able to reject all such alternative **narratives** before one is warranted in making the inference. Thus one infers, from the premise that a given **narrative** would **make** "better" **sense of the facts** than would any other **narrative**, to the conclusion that the given **narrative** is true.

MARY ANN AND WANDA'S EVIDENCE

- Their story
- Rival narratives
 - The danger of vigilante justice and self-protection
 - Must place trust in the system
- Quality of competing narratives — Rival is 1st
- Mary Ann and Wanda's evidence is weak