SYLLOGISMS
with examples and exercises

Extracted from the presentation by Emily Hsu

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Two forms of argument

Two forms of argument are used to defeat wrong conceptions and generate clear understanding

- **syllogisms** – consist of a thesis and a sign/reason stated together in a single sentence
- **consequences** – an argument structurally similar to a syllogism but containing a word indicating a logical outflow of an opponent’s own assertions
Syllogisms

**Thesis to be proven:** Sound is impermanent

**Syllogism:** Sound is impermanent because of being a product
Syllogism – three parts

Syllogism:

Sound is impermanent because of being a product

Subject (1)

Predicate to be proven (2)

Sign/reason (3)

Thesis (subject + predicate)

Sign/reason (proof)

(that which is to be proven)
Correct sign

- “In order to inferentially understand that sound is impermanent, for example, a perfect reason (correct sign) has to be found, stated to and established within the mind.”
- “Simply to state this reason is not sufficient for a comprehension to occur.”
- “The reason must first be established as being both applicable to the subject (property of the subject) and congruent with the predicate (forward and counter-pervasions).”

from Mind and Its Functions, Geshe Rabten
Correct sign – three modes

Definition of a correct sign: that which is the three modes*

Three modes:

- *Property of the subject* – establishing that the sign/reason applies to the subject
- *Forward pervasion* – understanding that the sign/reason is pervaded by the predicate
- *Counter pervasion* – understanding that the non-predicate is pervaded by the non-sign/reason.

*from Perdue, Debate in Tibetan Buddhism
Correct sign – three modes

Sound is impermanent because of being a product

1. **Property of the subject** – establishing that the sign/reason applies to the subject
   \[ \rightarrow \text{sound is a product} \]
2. **Forward pervasion** – understanding that the sign/reason is pervaded by the predicate
   \[ \rightarrow \text{whatever is a product is necessarily impermanent} \]
3. **Counter pervasion** – understanding that the non-predicate is pervaded by the non-sign/reason
   \[ \rightarrow \text{whatever is not impermanent is necessarily not a product.} \]
Another example

Thesis to be proven: People change from moment to moment
Another example

*Syllogism:*

People change from moment to moment because of arising from causes and conditions.
Another example

**Syllogism:**

People *(subject)* change from moment to moment *(predicate)* because of arising from causes and conditions *(sign)*

What are the three modes?

1. Property of the subject
2. Forward pervasion
3. Counter-pervasion
An incorrect sign

**Sound** is **impermanent** because of being an **existent**

Subject

Predicate to be proven

Sign/reason
An incorrect sign

Sound is impermanent because of being an existent

1. **Property of the subject** – establishing that the sign/reason applies to the subject
   →

2. **Forward pervasion** – understanding that the sign/reason is pervaded by the predicate
   →

3. **Counter pervasion** – understanding that the non-predicate is pervaded by the non-sign/reason
   →
An incorrect sign

**Sound** is **impermanent** because of being an **existent**

1. **Property of the subject** – establishing that the sign/reason applies to the subject
   \( \rightarrow \text{sound is an existent} \)
2. **Forward pervasion** – understanding that the sign/reason is pervaded by the predicate
   \( \rightarrow \text{whatever is an existent is necessarily impermanent} \) – **NO PERVASION**
3. **Counter pervasion** – understanding that the non-predicate is pervaded by the non-sign/reason
   \( \rightarrow \text{whatever is not impermanent is necessarily not an existent} \) – **NO PERVASION**
Exercise – syllogisms

- With regard to the syllogisms:
  a. Sound is impermanent because of being a product
  b. Sound is an existent because of being a product
  c. Sound is a product because of being an existent
  d. Sentient beings will suffer again and again in samsara because of being under the control of karma and afflictions
  e. Sentient beings are empty of inherent existence because of being dependent-arisings

- Identify the subject, the predicate, and the sign/reason. What is the property of the subject? What is the forward pervasion? What is the counter-pervasion?
Another example

**Thesis to be proven**: Today is Friday.
Another example

*Syllogism*

Today is Friday because the Awarenesses & Knowers class is meeting at Tse Chen Ling.
Another example

Syllogism:

Today \textit{(subject)} is Friday \textit{(predicate)} because the Awarenesses & Knowers class is meeting at Tse Chen Ling \textit{(sign)}

What are the three modes?

- Property of the subject
- Forward pervasion
- Counter-pervasion
An incorrect sign

Today is Friday because of being a weekday

Subject          Predicate to be proven          Sign/reason
An incorrect sign

Today is Friday because of being a weekday

Subject Predicate to be proven Sign/reason

1. Property of the subject – establishing that the sign/reason applies to the subject
   →

2. Forward pervasion – understanding that the sign/reason is pervaded by the predicate
   →

3. Counter pervasion – understanding that the non-predicate is pervaded by the non-sign/reason
   →
An incorrect sign

Today is Friday because of being a weekday

1. **Property of the subject** – establishing that the sign/reason applies to the subject
   \[ \text{Æ} \text{Today is a weekday} \]
2. **Forward pervasion** – understanding that the sign/reason is pervaded by the predicate
   \[ \text{Æ} \text{if it is a weekday, it is necessarily Friday – NO PERVASION} \]
3. **Counter pervasion** – understanding that the non-predicate is pervaded by the non-sign/reason
   \[ \text{Æ} \text{if it is not Friday, it is necessarily not a weekday – NO PERVASION} \]
Another incorrect sign

Today is Saturday because tomorrow is Sunday

- What is the property of the subject?
- What is the forward pervasion?
- What is the counter-pervasion?
Exercise – syllogisms

• With regard to the syllogisms:
  a. Today is Friday because tomorrow is Saturday.
  b. Today is Friday because it is a weekday.
  c. Today is a weekday because it is Friday.
  d. Sentient beings will suffer again and again in samsara because of being under the control of karma and afflictions
  e. Sentient beings are empty of inherent existence because of being dependent-arising

• Identify the subject, the predicate, and the sign/reason. What is the property of the subject? What is the forward pervasion? What is the counter-pervasion?