

Going Around the Circle: The Basic Process of Analysis

1. What is the person's main *purpose* in this piece of reasoning? (Also, what other goals or objectives does the person hope to accomplish in this piece of reasoning?)
2. What is the key *question* or problem the person is addressing? (Also, what are two or three of the most important subsidiary questions at issue?)
3. What is the most important *information* the person is using to reason through this issue? (Also, what other information or data does the person need in this piece of reasoning?)
4. What are the person's major *conclusions*? How is the person *interpreting* this issue? (Also, how does the person answer the main question at issue? What solutions are being offered?)
5. What are the main *concepts* the reasoning depends on? (Also, how does the person understand those concepts? How do those concepts fit together in the person's reasoning?)
6. What are the main *assumptions* the person is making in this piece of reasoning? (Also, what are the crucial stated and unstated assumptions the author is making?)
7. What are the main *implications and consequences* of the person's reasoning? (Also, what are some of the unforeseen consequences of this line of reasoning?)
8. From what *point of view* is the person addressing this question? (Also, what other points of view are necessary to understand this piece of reasoning? What discipline's point of view is being used to address this issue? What other disciplines would help illuminate this reasoning?)
9. What is the *context* of the issue the person is addressing? (Also, what circumstances led up to the issue and to this person's reasoning? What is the background in the discipline [scientific, artistic, cultural, business, sociological, etc.] in which this issue is being addressed?)
10. What *alternatives* are there? (Also, what alternative answers could you reasonably give to the preceding questions? What alternatives are there to the person's reasoning?)