

PRELIMINARIES

Ted Sider
Intro Metaphysics

1. What is philosophy?

Some questions philosophers think about:

Does god exist?	
Do we have free will?	} metaphysics
What makes a person the same over time?	
Is time just another dimension, like space?	
Do we know that the external world exists?	
What does it take to know something?	} epistemology
How ought we to live?	} value theory (ethics, aesthetics)
Is morality objective?	
Is aesthetic value objective?	
What is beauty?	

The questions are: “general”, “abstract”, and “deep”; in a sense they are not very “real-world”, yet they’re important; and they are hard to answer. Philosophers try to answer them in a rational way, with distinctive methods.

2. What is metaphysics?

Rough answer: the branch of philosophy that asks general and abstract questions about how the world is.

(Metaphysics is about how the world *is*, epistemology is about how we *know* about the world, logic is about how we *reason* about the world, value theory is about how the world *ought to be*.)

Example of a branch of metaphysics: *Ontology*. Here we ask: “what, fundamentally, is there in the world?” E.g., are the following categories an exhaustive list of the things there are? Can any of the categories be eliminated?

1. Physical objects
2. People
3. Events
4. God

3. Methods of philosophy

3.1 Arguments

Definition of an argument: a sequence of sentences, the last of which (the *conclusion*) is supposed to follow from the others (the *premises*).

3.2 Analyzing an argument

Earlier I mentioned a possible reason for thinking that events aren’t physical objects: “you can’t touch the World Series”. What is the argument behind this?

First step: what is the conclusion? Probably this:

The 2015 World Series isn’t a physical object

Second step: what are the premises? All that was given was “you can’t touch the 2015 World Series”. That gives us this argument:

1. You can’t touch the 2015 World Series
2. Therefore, the 2015 World Series isn’t a physical object

But this argument isn’t yet fully explicit; we need to fill in the gaps with further premises, so that the conclusion is completely justified by the premises:

1. You can't touch the 2015 World Series
2. *Any physical object can be touched*
3. Therefore, the 2015 World Series isn't a physical object

Evaluating arguments In part this requires assessing whether the premises are true. But there's more.

3.3 Validity and soundness

1. All fish talk
2. All talking things fly
3. Therefore, all fish fly

Although this is a bad argument, it does have one important virtue: it is *valid*:

Valid argument: An argument where it's impossible for the premises to be true while the conclusion is false. (Another way to put it: if the premises were true, the conclusion would have to be true.)

In a valid argument there are "no gaps" in the reasoning. The argument above is valid because it has the form:

All *As* are *Bs*

All *Bs* are *Cs*

Therefore, all *As* are *Cs*

Example *invalid* argument:

1. All fish talk
2. All flying things are fish
3. Therefore, all fish fly

Sound argument: an argument that is i) valid, and ii) has true premises

Pop quiz: true or false?

- “Any argument with true premises and true conclusion must be valid”
- “No valid argument can have false premises and a true conclusion”
- “Any sound argument has a true conclusion”

So: to evaluate an argument fully, we must ask both whether it is valid and whether it has true premises.