Preliminaries

Ted Sider
Intro Philosophy

1. What is philosophy?

Some questions philosophers think about:

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

2.1 Arguments

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

An example argument:

1. All fish swim
2. All minnows are fish
3. Therefore, all minnows swim

2.2 Extraction

Arguments are useful for separating reasoning to parts. Converting some reasoning into an argument is called "extraction". For example, suppose someone says:

> "You ought to believe in God—the Bible says that god exists"

First step: figure out the conclusion

> God exists

Second step: figure out the main premise or premises

> The Bible says that God exists
> Therefore, God exists

Third step: add suppressed premises

1. The Bible says that God exists.
2. Everything the Bible says is true   (suppressed premise)
3. Therefore, God exists.

2.3 Validity and soundness

This argument wouldn't convince anyone:

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

But it does have one important good feature: 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.)

It is valid because it has the form:

> All *A*s are *B*s
>
> All *B*s are *C*s
>
> Therefore, all *A*s are *C*s

Example of an *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"

3. Terminology for discussing God's existence

Suppose someone argues as follows:

> For some people, God is a loving being in heaven who created the world. For other people, God is morality, or science, or the entire universe. So God exists for everyone. (Including atheists—for them, God is just an idea.)

Two problems: the talk of things being true "for" some people and not others, and the shifting meaning of the word 'God'.

Definition of the word 'God': the supreme being who created the universe

Traditional conception of God's supremecy: God is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omnibenevolent (wholly good)

Theist: someone who believes that God exists

Atheist: someone who believes that God does not exist

Agnostic: someone who suspends judgment about the existence of God

4. Reasons

epistemic reason You have epistemic reason to believe something if you have evidence that it is true

pragmatic reason You have pragmatic reason to believe something if believing it would benefit you

Reasons don't have to be conclusive (they don't have to be *proofs*).

5. Some arguments we won't discuss

God exists because…

- …an authority figure told me that God exists
- …belief in God is common in many cultures, and has been throughout history
- …of mystical experiences