What do philosophers do?

• Argue -- This is about sentences, or propositions.
  – "So and so must be true, because look, it follows from such and such other truths."

• Analyze -- This is about words, or concepts.
  – "To be a so and so boils down to having such and such features, because look, that fits all the examples."
Argument

- There's the activity, and the product: what the arguer seeks to provide. We're interested more in the product.
- An argument in our sense is a list of sentences of which the last, the conclusion, is supposed to be supported by the others, the premises.
Good or bad?

No professors are ignorant.
All ignorant people are vain.
So no professors are vain.

All lions are fierce.
Some lions do not drink coffee.
Some creatures that drink coffee aren't fierce.
Real arguments harder to see

• You have to dig them out of complex stretches of text
• Premise-flags -- because, since, given that, inasmuch as,..,
• Conclusion-flags -- thus, therefore, hence, it follows that, so, consequently, in view of which it can hardly be doubted that
Evaluating arguments

• P and Q entail R iff (if and only if) it is impossible for P and Q to be true and R false.

• P, Q ⊢ R is valid iff P and Q entail R.

• "Valid" is not the same as "good."
  – Good arguments need not be valid -- example?
  – Valid arguments can be bad -- example?
How to align valid with good

• Arguments can always be made valid by adding a premise, e.g., if P and Q then R. Assume this is always done.
• Then the only remaining question is whether the premises are (plausibly) true
• A good argument *in this course* is a valid argument with true premises
• The shorthand for this is a *sound* argument
Is this valid? Is it sound?

1. Clinton's troubles were caused by a right-wing conspiracy, or by his own mistakes.
2. They were caused by his own mistakes.
3. There was no right-wing conspiracy
Is this valid? Is it sound?

1. If George W. can speak Spanish, I'm the Queen of England.
2. George W. can speak Spanish.
3. I'm the Queen of England.
Valid? Sound?

1. All politicians are dishonest.
2. Some dishonest politicians are Democrats.

1. Abortion is morally wrong.
2. Abortion is not a constitutional right.
3. Abortion ought to be outlawed.

Same questions after adding the "missing premise."
Crucial fact about soundness

• If an argument is sound, then its conclusion is true. (How do we know that?)
• This has two kinds of practical import.
  – If you read an argument and dislike the conclusion, the onus is on you to show that the premises fail to entail the conclusion, and/or a premise is untrue.
  – If you write an argument and want the conclusion accepted, make sure your premises entail your conclusion and avoid premises that skeptical readers can easily shrug off as untrue.
Analyze this

• x is a rational number iff x is…..?
• y is a sister iff y is…
• z is a bachelor iff z is….?
• I regret that P iff ……?
• I know that P iff I believe that P and…?
Readings for Monday

- Perry, *Three Dialogues on Personal Identity and Immortality*
- Parfit, Ch. 10, "What We Believe Ourselves to Be"