- It is often taken to be the case that an argument is good if it is persuasive, that is, if people are inclined to accept it.
- People accept all kinds of foolish things, so persuasiveness is not the standard of quality for which we are looking.
- In fact, Western philosophy was born when some people drew a distinction between **philosophy** and **sophistry**.

What makes an argument good?

- Validity
  - Means that IF the premises are true, then the conclusion has to be
  - In other words, an argument is valid if it is truth-preserving, meaning that it never takes us from truths to a falsehood.

- Soundness
  - Means the argument is valid AND
  - Means that the premises ARE true

What makes a good argument:

- Bill and Hillary Clinton have the same last name
- People with the same last name are siblings
- ∴ Bill and Hillary Clinton are siblings

Example:

- Bill and Hillary Clinton have the same last name
- People with the same last name are siblings

- ∴ Bill and Hillary Clinton are siblings

(VALID) If both premises were true, then the conclusion would have to be true as well.

Example:

- Bill and Hillary Clinton have the same last name
- People with the same last name are siblings
- :. Bill and Hillary Clinton are siblings

(UNSOUND) The second premise is false.

Example:

- Whoever wrote the Bible is a great author
- Charles Dickens wrote the Bible

- :. Charles Dickens is a great author

Example:

- Whoever wrote the Bible is a great author
- Charles Dickens wrote the Bible
- ∴ Charles Dickens is a great author

(VALID) If the premises were true, then the conclusion would have to be.

Example:

- Whoever wrote the Bible is a great author
- Charles Dickens wrote the Bible
- ∴ Charles Dickens is a great author

(UNSOUND) At least premise 2 is false.

Example:

Consider:

- Biff is a teenager
- Biff is not a teenager
- Bob is a superhero

Since this argument's premises are never true at the same time, this argument never leads one from true premises to a false conclusion (because the premises are never all true). That means the argument is technically valid. (Arguments that are valid in this way are sometimes called "trivially valid".)

Tricky cases

Consider:

- My coffee cup is ceramic.

- My coffee cup is ceramic.

This argument is valid (and, as it turns out, sound). But is it any good?

Beyond Validity

- No, the previous argument is not useful to us.
- Validity is a minimum standard. A good argument must *at least* be valid, but it must be something further in order to be useful or informative.
- The reason that we start with validity is because validity is a more concrete determination than 'useful' or 'informative'.
- Also, if an argument is not valid, it would be a waste of time to ask whether it were useful or informative.

Beyond Validity

•Sometimes an argument can appear to have only one premise. This is what happens when the person supplying the argument assumes some fact that is (usually) too obvious to be stated directly.

•There is usually nothing wrong with this, but in this course we will make a habit of filling in unstated premises.

Unstated premises:

•Factual: facts that are left unstated because they are assumed to be common knowledge.

•Linguistic: these are facts about how certain words and concepts relate to one another that are left unstated because it is assumed that any competent user of the language is aware of them.

•Evaluative: these are phrases that imply a value judgment without directly stating that value judgment.

Kinds of Suppressed Premises:

1. The news media are not in the business of endorsing or validating lifestyles.

C. The media should not endorse lifestyles.

This argument is missing the claim that people should not do what they are not in the business of doing. [unstated evaluative premise]

Example

1. News media abandons its objectivity when it endorses lifestyles.

C. News media should not endorse lifestyles.

This argument is missing the claim that the news media should not abandon its objectivity.

Example (continued)

1. Endorsing lifestyles means the news media destroys what respect people have for it.

C. The news media should not endorse lifestyles.

Can you spot the unstated premise?

Example (continued)

1. Statement of a particular state of affairs
2. Normative principle (contains the word 'should', 'ought', 'must', etc.)

C. Connects the two statements in a logical way

Example:

1. The new construction proposal would break the state budget
2. The state should not break its budget

C. The state should reject the new construction proposal.

A common argument structure: