



**Plato's
"Meno"**


**Aren't we
done yet?**

First Paper Assignment
posted on-line at
<www.phil.vt.edu/Jklagge/coursepage.htm>

- State and briefly explain the requirements on a good definition.
- Illustrate their importance by giving bad definitions that fail each requirement.
- Then give a good definition that satisfies all the requirements.
- Contact the Writing Center for help writing.
- Due in discussion section on **February 8.**
- **NOT ON BLACKBOARD!!!**

Where do things stand (at 86c)?

- *Socrates:* We should search for things we do not know, so let's figure out what virtue is.
- *Meno:* Can virtue be taught?
- *Socrates:* Meno, you idiot...



OK, let's examine that *hypothetically.*

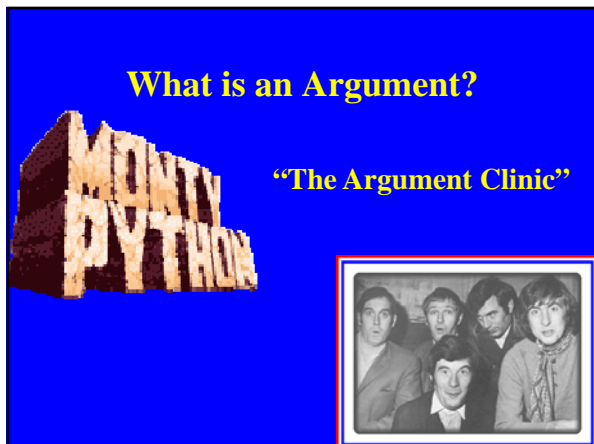
Reasoning about Virtue (87c-100b):

- *If* virtue is a kind of knowledge, then it can be taught (87c).
- *If* something can be taught, then there must be teachers and learners of it (89d)
- There are no teachers of virtue (89e-96c)

∴ Therefore, virtue cannot be taught (96d)

What is an Argument?

"The Argument Clinic"



"The Argument Clinic"

M: Good morning, I'd like to have an argument, please.
R: Certainly sir. Have you been here before?
M: No, I haven't, this is my first time.

R: Fine. Well, I'll see who's free at the moment.
[Pause]
R: Mr. DeBakey's free, but he's a little bit conciliatory.
Ahh yes, Try Mr. Barnard; room 12.
M: Thank you.

Q: WHAT DO YOU WANT?
M: Well, I was told outside that...
Q: Don't give me that, you snotty-faced heap of parrot droppings!
M: What?
Q: Shut your festering gob, you tit!
Your type really makes me puke, you vacuous,
coffee-nosed, malodorous, pervert!!!
M: Look, I CAME HERE FOR AN ARGUMENT,
Q: OH, oh I'm sorry, but this is "Abuse."
M: Oh, I see, well, that explains it.
Q: Ah yes, you want room 12A, next door.
M: Oh, Thank you very much. Sorry.
Q: Not at all.
M: Thank You.
(Under his breath) Stupid git!!

M: (Knock)
A: Come in.
M: Ah, Is this the right room for an argument?
A: I told you once. M: No you haven't.
A: Yes I have. M: When?
A: Just now. M: No you didn't.
A: Yes I did. M: You didn't
A: I did! M: You didn't!
A: I'm telling you I did! M: You did not!!
A: Oh, I'm sorry, is this a five minute
argument or the full half hour?
M: Oh, just the five minutes.
A: Ah, thank you. Anyway, I did.
M: You most certainly did not.
A: Look, let's get this thing clear; I quite definitely told you.
M: No you did not.

A: Yes I did. M: No you didn't.
A: Yes I did. M: No you didn't.
A: Yes I did. M: No you didn't.
A: Yes I did. M: You didn't.
A: Did.....
M: Oh look, this isn't an argument.
A: Yes it is.
M: No it isn't. It's just contradiction.
A: No it isn't. M: It is!
A: It is not.
M: Look, you just contradicted me.
A: I did not. M: Oh you did!!
A: No, no, no. M: You did just then.
A: Nonsense! M: Oh, this is futile!
A: No it isn't.
M: I came here for a good argument.
A: No you didn't; no, you came here for an argument.

M: An argument isn't just contradiction.
A: It can be.
M: No it can't. An argument is a connected series of
statements intended to establish a proposition.
A: No it isn't.
M: Yes it is! It's not just contradiction.
A: Look, if I argue with you, I must take up a contrary
position.
M: Yes, but that's not just saying 'No it isn't.'
A: Yes it is! M: No it isn't!
A: Yes it is!.....
M: Argument is an intellectual process. Contradiction
is just the automatic gainsaying of anything
the other person says.
A: No it isn't. M: It is.
A: Not at all. M: Now look.
A: [Rings bell] Good Morning.

M: What?
A: That's it. Good morning.
M: I was just getting interested.
A: Sorry, the five minutes is up.
M: That was never five minutes!
A: I'm afraid it was.
M: It wasn't.
[Pause]
A: I'm sorry, but I'm not allowed to argue anymore.
M: What?!
A: If you want me to go on arguing, you'll have to pay
for another five minutes.
M: Yes, but that was never five minutes, just now.
Oh come on!
A: [Hums] M: Look, this is ridiculous.
A: I'm sorry, but I'm not allowed to argue unless you've
paid!

M: Oh, all right.
[pays money]
A: Thank you.
[short pause]
M: Well? A: Well what?
M: That wasn't really five minutes, just now.
A: I told you, I'm not allowed to argue unless you've
paid.
M: I just paid! A: No you didn't.
M: I DID! A: No you didn't.....
M: Look, I don't want to argue about that.
A: Well, you didn't pay.
M: Aha. If I didn't pay, why are you arguing? I...Got you!
A: No you haven't.
M: Yes I have. If you're arguing, I must have paid.
A: Not necessarily. I could be arguing in my spare time.

“Argument”:

A connected series of statements (“premisses”) intended to establish a proposition (“conclusion”).



Reasoning about Virtue (87c-100b):

- *If* something can be taught, then there must be teachers and learners of it.
- There are no teachers of virtue.

- ∴ Virtue cannot be taught.

Is this a good argument?

Reasoning about Virtue (87c-100b):

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Is the reasoning good?

“Valid”: If, for the sake of argument, we *assume* the premisses are true, then the conclusion has *got* to be true.

Charles Dodgson
(1832-1898)
Oxford Mathematician

= “Lewis Carroll”



Valid or Invalid?

- “All widgets are wudgets, all wudgets are widgets, therefore all widgets are wudgets.” ??

****Valid****

“All A’s are B’s; all C’s are B’s, therefore all A’s are C’s.” ??

****Invalid****: Consider: All men are human, all women are human, therefore, all men are women.

Reasoning about Virtue (87c-100b):

- *If* something can be taught, then there must be teachers and learners of it.
- There are no teachers of virtue.

- ∴ Virtue cannot be taught.

Are the premisses all true?

Valid + all true premisses = “Sound”

Reasoning about Virtue (87c-100b):

Are the premisses all true?

- *Do we agree that: If something can be taught, then there must be teachers and learners of it?*
- *Are there teachers of virtue?*

Reasoning about Virtue (87c-100b):

- *Are there teachers of virtue? (89e-96b)*

What about the sophists?

What about the leading citizens of Athens?

But they can't reliably make their own sons virtuous.

What about Socrates?

Reasoning about Virtue (87c-100b):

- *Can people be taught to be good?*

What about parents?

What about school?

What about the church?



Reasoning about Virtue (87c-100b):

- *If virtue is a kind of knowledge, then it can be taught (87c).*

- *If something can be taught, then there must be teachers and learners of it (89d)*

- *There are no teachers of virtue (89e-96c)*

∴ Therefore, virtue cannot be taught (96d)

∴ Therefore, virtue is not a kind of knowledge

Reasoning about Virtue (87c-100b):

- *If something is a kind of knowledge, then it can be taught.*

Is this true? Whistling?

Can you know/learn something without anyone being able to *teach* it to you?

Could virtue be like that?

Reasoning about Virtue (87c-100b):

Where do we stand?

- *Virtue can't be taught.*
- *Virtue doesn't come by nature (89b).*
- *So, virtue must be a gift of the gods (99e-100b)!*

Does Socrates really believe that?

Do you? What would *you* question?

For Next Class:

- **Descartes' "First Mediation" in *Meditations on First Philosophy*.**

**Rene Descartes
(1596-1650)**

