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24.06J / STS.006J Bioethics  
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### Bioethics Session 3 Handout: Arguments

An argument is *valid* if and only if it is impossible that its premises be true and its conclusion false.

An argument is *sound* if and only if it is valid and its premises are true.

When Q is a person, an argument is *persuasive for Q* if and only if it is valid and, before being confronted with the argument, Q believes the premises without believing the conclusion.

#### Examples:

**P1** All doctors are responsible, upstanding people.

**P2** Jane is a responsible, upstanding person.

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**C** Jane is a doctor.

*Valid? Sound?*

**P1** All doctors are responsible, upstanding people.

**P2** Jane is a doctor.

---

**C** Jane is a responsible, upstanding person.

*Valid? Sound?*

**P1** All doctors can be sued for malpractice.

**P2** Jane is a doctor.

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**C** Jane can be sued for malpractice.

*Valid? Sound?*

#### Harder examples:

**P1** All doctors are responsible, upstanding people.

**P2** Jane is a responsible, upstanding person.

**P3** Jane is not a responsible, upstanding person.

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**C** Jane is a doctor.

*Valid? Sound?*

**P1** MIT is in Cambridge.

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**C** MIT is in Cambridge.

*Valid? Sound? Likely to be persuasive for someone?*

**P1** God hates murder.

**P2** If God hates our doing something, we should not do it.

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**C** We should not murder.

*Valid? Sound? Likely to be persuasive for someone?*