Philosophy
The Power of Ideas

ELEVENTH EDITION

Brooke Noel Moore and Kenneth Bruder

with Anne D'Arcy, Feminist Philosopher
California State University, Chico

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To Marianne Moore; Kathryn Dupier Bruder and
Albert Bruder; and Xandria

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Preface

Getting right to it, this edition contains these important changes: First, we have revised and updated the first chapter, in hopes of making clear philosophy's relevance to our current world in which disinformation and "alternative facts" seem increasingly to play an important role in shaping the opinions of society. Second, to that same end, we have included a new essay focused precisely on philosophy and disinformation; you will find this in Chapter 18, a chapter concerned with five important philosophical issues.

And third, we have included a new chapter (Chapter 2) devoted entirely to philosophical quotations. Speaking generally, some philosophical quotations are very insightful—we won't disclose our favorites—but even those that maybe aren't, can be excellent jumping-off points for thought and discussion. One thing readers will find (or be reminded of) as they read this book, is that the thought of many of the philosophers covered in the book can't be reduced to one-liners—a point we mention in Chapter 2. Conversely, some brief quotations seem to express thoughts so insightful they can't be captured adequately in a thousand words.

Also for this edition, we have updated background details—examples, references, dates, and so forth—to maintain the book's currency with the times. When we first started teaching, we were approximately the same age as our students. When they addressed us, it would often be, "Hey, dude!" Now what we hear is more apt to be, "Sir, can I help you pick that up?" We think this book can still be understood and appreciated by most of today's university students.

The book remains a straightforward ungimmicky introduction to philosophy written especially for first- and second-year university students. It contains separate historical overviews of the main subjects of Western philosophy and includes both the Analytic and the Continental traditions. It also covers Eastern philosophy, postcolonial philosophy, and feminist philosophy and contains a chapter devoted to major philosophical issues. Its coverage is broad. We hope readers will learn that thinking deeply about almost anything can lead them into philosophy.

Philosophy—Powerful Ideas

We concluded years ago that most people like philosophy if they understand it and that most understand it if it isn't presented to them in exhausting prose. In this text, we strive to make philosophy understandable while not oversimplifying.

Which is not to say that everyone who understands philosophy is attracted to it. Philosophy is just not for everyone, and no text and no instructor can make it so. We do hope, however, that readers of this book will at least learn that philosophy is more than inconsequential mental flexing. Philosophy contains powerful ideas, and it affects the lives of real people.

Philosophy: A Worldwide Search for Wisdom and Understanding

Until the middle of the last century, most philosophers and historians of ideas in American and European universities thought philosophical reflection occurred only within the tradition of disciplined discourse that began with the ancient Greeks and has continued into the present. This conception of philosophy has changed however, perhaps first through the interest in Eastern thought, especially Zen Buddhism, in the 1950s, then through the increasingly widespread publication of high-quality translations and commentaries of texts from outside the Western tradition in the following decades. Of course, the availability of such texts does not mean that unfamiliar ideas will receive a careful hearing or even that they will receive any hearing at all.

Among the most challenging threads of the worldwide philosophical conversation is postcolonial thought. The lines defining this way of thinking are not always easy to draw—but the same could be said for existentialism, phenomenology, and a number of other schools of thought in philosophy. In any event, in many cultures and subcultures around the world, thinkers are asking searching questions about methodology and fundamental beliefs that are intended to have practical, political consequences. Because these thinkers frequently intend their work to be revolutionary, their ideas run a higher-than-usual risk of being lost to philosophy's traditional venues. We include in this book a small sample from such writers.

Women in the History of Philosophy

Histories of philosophy make scant mention of women philosophers prior to the latter half of the twentieth century. For a long time it was assumed that lack of mention was due to a deficit of influential women philosophers. Scholarship such as that by Mary Ellen Waithe (*A History of Women Philosophers*) suggests that women have been more important in the history of philosophy than is often assumed. To date, we lack full-length translations and modern editions of the works of many women philosophers. Until this situation changes, Waithe argues, it is difficult to reconstruct the history of the discipline with accuracy.

This text acknowledges the contributions of at least some women to the history of philosophy. We include women philosophers throughout the text in their historical contexts, and we also present a chapter on feminist philosophy. In it, among other things, we include a section on feminist perspectives on some of the important Western philosophers.

Features

Among what we think are the nicer attributes of this book are these:

- Separate histories of metaphysics and epistemology; the Continental, pragmatic, and Analytic traditions; moral and political philosophy; feminist philosophy; and the philosophy of religion

- A chapter on selected perennial philosophical issues, including the problem of free will, the problem of consciousness, the problem of the gift (ethics of generosity), and problems in aesthetics. As mentioned above, the chapter also includes an essay on philosophy and disinformation.
- A philosophy toolkit containing details on argument and logic, the Socratic method, thought experiments, *Reductio ad Absurdum*, and common fallacies
- A section comparing philosophy East and West
- A section on philosophical issues in quantum mechanics
- A section on zombies
- Coverage of postmodernism and multiculturalism
- A section titled "More Voices," which contains chapters on Eastern influences, feminist philosophy, and postcolonial thought
- Recognition of specific contributions of women to philosophy
- A supply of easy, original readings that don't overwhelm beginning students
- Boxes highlighting important concepts, principles, and distinctions or containing interesting anecdotes or historical asides
- Biographical profiles of many of the great philosophers
- Online checklists of key philosophers, with mini-summaries of the philosophers' leading ideas
- End-of-chapter questions for review and reflection and online lists of additional sources
- A pronunciation guide to the names of philosophers
- A brief subsection on American Constitutional theory, a subject never more controversial than today
- A glossary/index that defines important concepts on the spot
- Teachable four-part organization: (1) Metaphysics and Epistemology, (2) Moral and Political Philosophy, (3) Philosophy of Religion, and (4) More Voices
- For instructors, online detailed lecture ideas for each chapter

The eleventh edition of *Philosophy: The Power of Ideas* is available online with Connect, McGraw Hill Education's integrated assignment and assessment platform. Connect also offers SmartBook for the new edition, which is the first adaptive reading experience proven to improve grades and help students study more effectively. All of the title's website and ancillary content is also available through Connect, including:

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- Jordan Cunningham,
Eastern Washington University

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1

Dark Blue Velvet

These days you hear a lot about alternative facts.

On the last day of 2020, Wisconsin police arrested Steven Brandenburg, a 46-year-old pharmacist working at the Aurora Health Care medical center in Grafton, Wisconsin.[1] Brandenburg was said to have removed several hundred doses of coronavirus vaccine from refrigeration at the Grafton medical center, in order to render them ineffective. He told police the world was "crashing down" and the vaccine would hurt people by altering their DNA. In Brandenburg's world these counted as facts. He admitted to getting his information about the vaccine from websites that claimed the vaccine was a government conspiracy. According to one of his colleagues, Brandenburg also claimed the sky was not really the sky but a "shield put up by the government to prevent individuals from seeing God."

Legal charges being considered against Brandenburg include recklessly endangering safety, adulterating a prescription drug, and criminal damage to property. We do not know if Brandenburg will consider his arrest on these charges an alternative fact.

The incident raises certain questions which belong to the domain of philosophy. Given two conflicting beliefs about facts, how do you tell which is correct? Indeed, what does being correct about *facts* even amount to? These are questions of epistemology, a branch of philosophy we will examine in this book. But what are facts in the first place? This is a question of metaphysics, another branch of philosophy we shall consider.

The Brandenburg incident also calls attention to questions discussed in ethics, another major branch of philosophy. Did Brandenburg act wrongfully? If so, in what does the wrongfulness of his action consist—what *makes* it ethically wrongful? Is it that it violated certain norms? If so, what is the origin and authority of these norms? Most people might agree that he acted wrongly: is popular sentiment what makes an action wrongful, assuming it is?

[1] https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/02/01/wisconsin-pharmacist-vaccine-flatearth/?utm_campaign=wp_evening_edition&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_evening

Of course, Brandenburg might claim that he acted in order to prevent harm to others. He might say that his intentions were honorable, that his moral compass was sound. This claim would probably be considered irrelevant to the legal charges which are being considered. But ethically? Does intent diminish or eliminate or otherwise mitigate the wrongfulness of a deed?

Now if Brandenburg had relied on medical sources of information rather than conspiracy webpages, he could not have thought that his action would benefit people. Do our ethical responsibilities extend to the type and sources of information we consume and act on?

All these questions crop up outside the philosophy classroom, but wherever they are discussed they remain philosophical questions.

In this book, we give an historical overview of the questions of ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology, as well as of other branches of philosophy. Let's start by considering what philosophy is, more generally speaking. You will then know why this chapter is called "Dark Blue Velvet."

The word **philosophy**[2] comes from the Greek *philo*, a word for fondness, and *sophia*, which denotes "wisdom." Thus, philosophy is a fondness of wisdom. This isn't particularly helpful, since any person who seeks knowledge in any area is a philosopher, according to this definition. And in fact, this is exactly what the Greeks thought.

Indeed, this view of philosophy persisted for more than two thousand years. In 1687, Sir Isaac Newton, who would be at or near the top of every scholar's list of important scientific intellects, set forth his renowned theories of physics, mathematics, and astronomy in the famous book *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. At that time, those subjects were all still thought of as philosophical subjects.

In fact, at some point in Western history nearly every subject currently listed in a university catalog would have been considered philosophy. If you continue your studies and obtain the highest degree in psychology, mathematics, economics, sociology, history, biology, political science, or practically any other subject, you will be awarded a PhD, a Doctorate of Philosophy. If you wear an academic gown for commencement or other ceremonies, regardless of your discipline, it will probably be trimmed in the dark blue velvet that represents philosophy. On your sleeve will be three blue velvet stripes, again representing that you have earned a philosophy doctorate, regardless of your specific field.

Understanding the complete history of your own academic subject in many cases means knowing something about the history of philosophy. That's what this book is intended to give you, a fairly detailed introduction to the history and problems of philosophy.

[2] When you see a word in bold print, it is defined in the glossary at the end of this book.

The best way to understand a subject is to consider the questions it seeks to answer. Here are a few more examples of questions philosophy seeks to answer.

- Why is there something rather than nothing at all?
- Do humans have free will?
- What is consciousness? What is the self?
- What are the legitimate scope and functions of government?
- What are natural rights? Do people have them? Do nonhuman animals have them? Does the environment have them?
- In what does happiness consist?
- Does God exist?
- Does it matter if God exists?
- What makes some actions right and others wrong?
- Is truth relative? Subjective?
- What is the extent of our moral obligation to people we don't know?
- Can anything be known with certainty?
- What is the meaning of life?
- What is the meaning of "What is the meaning of life?"?
- What happens, if anything, after death?
- What is appearance and what is reality?
- What are the basic categories of reality? Of thought?
- Can you know you are not now dreaming you are reading this book? Does it matter?
- What is time?
- What is art?

Granted, none of these questions is pressing in the way in which a question like "Where the heck can I park????" is sometimes pressing. You rarely have to drop what you are doing to answer philosophical questions. And clearly, one can go through life without spending much time wondering whether, for example, people have free will. Yet it is pretty clear our criminal justice system rests on the assumption that people have free will. It is certain, for example, the court will assume Steven Brandenburg acted of his own free will.

Actually, it is difficult not to think philosophically from time to time. For example, situations will arise in which we must balance our own needs against the needs of others we are concerned about—an aging parent might require care, for instance. Of course, we will try to determine the extent of our obligation. But we may go beyond this and ask what makes this our obligation, or, more generally, what makes anything our obligation. Is it simply that it strikes us that way? Or do some situations have features that require a certain response?

If we are led to questions like these, the rest of the university curriculum may be of little help.

Sometimes, too, philosophers ask questions about things that seem so obvious we usually might not wonder about them—for example, the nature of change. That things change is obvious; we might not see anything puzzling in the fact. If something changes, it becomes something different, so what?

Well, for one thing, if we have a different thing, we seem to be considering two things, the original thing and the new, different thing. Suppose George Washington puts a new head on his axe. It's still the same axe. Suppose that next year he replaces the handle. Still the same axe? Well, George Washington thinks so; there is no question what he has in mind if he asks someone to bring him his axe. But is this right? Suppose we find the old handle and stick the old head on it and bring both axes to him. Which is *really* his axe?

We can picture Washington looking at us briefly before saying "Whatever, just hand me the new one." But let's consider a parallel case. Over the course of a lifetime, every molecule in a person's body may possibly be replaced. Thus, we might wonder, say, whether an old man who has been in prison for 60 years for a murder he committed as a young man is really the same person as the young man. If not a single molecule of the young man is in the old man, then hasn't the young man in fact been replaced? If so, then the old man in prison is not the person who committed murder. It isn't clear this is merely a matter of "semantics."

Philosophical questions, like the ones we have talked about, are among the most fundamental you can ask. That, of course, does not necessarily mean they are pressing questions. "Where the heck can I park?"—this is an example of a question that can be pressing in a way in which philosophical questions rarely are. You rarely have to drop what you are doing to answer philosophical questions.

Let's look at the parking question more carefully. Why do you even care about where you can park? Why does it matter? Clearly there are lives you might have led in which you could care less about parking, lives in which you don't even have a car, for example, this raises the question, whether and to what extent the life you do lead is up to *you*. Presumably you won't worry about this right now, while you are desperate to find a place to park.

But if you ever do contemplate the extent to which the life you lead is up to you, you are back to philosophy. And one philosophical position is that *zero* aspects of your life are up to you. This is the position held by those philosophers—and there are not just a few—who believe that free will doesn't exist. Yes, certainly you make choices, these philosophers say, but the choices you make, if they are voluntary, stem from your desires and values, and if you think about it, it may occur to you that your desires and values are a *given* and *not* something you had any say over.

Don't believe it? As an experiment, you might try to change a desire or a value by an act of will. Will yourself to believe, for example, that it is actually right or good to hurt

kittens. Can you do it? We can't either. Well, then, think of something you desire. Can you make yourself not desire it by an act of will? If you try such an experiment, it may not be so clear after all that your desires, values, actions, or the life you lead really is up to you.

You might think that something as old as philosophy would be fairly well understood by many or most people. Would you be surprised to learn that misconceptions of philosophy are common?

One misconception is the idea that *one person's philosophy is as correct as the next person's* and that *any philosophical position is as good, valid, or correct as any other opinion*. This idea is especially widespread when it comes to values. If one person thinks that people should contribute 10% of their income to their church, and another person disagrees, it may at first seem reasonable to say*, Well, the first person's view is true for that person, and the second person's view is true for the other person*. But if you look carefully, you will notice that the two may be disagreeing about whether *people in general* should contribute 10% of their income. If so, they cannot both be correct. If people in general should do such and such, then it cannot be that they need not do it.

Or let's say you think hunting is cruel and inhumane, but your roommate doesn't. He might say something like, *Well, that's okay for you, but that's not what I think*. What does he mean? Possibly he means just that it's fine with him if you don't like hunting, but he doesn't think there is anything wrong with it. But let's look at this more closely. When *you* said that hunting is cruel and inhumane, you probably didn't mean just that it would be cruel and inhumane for *you* to hunt. You may well have meant that hunting is cruel and inhumane, period. You may well have meant that, in your view, it is cruel and inhumane for *him* to hunt, and he shouldn't do it. If so, your opinion (that it is cruel and inhumane for *him* to hunt) and his opinion (that it isn't), cannot both be correct. Sometimes, when it seems as if opposing positions could both be correct, then closer inspection may disclose that in fact they couldn't.

Another misconception about philosophy is that it is *nothing but opinion.* In fact, we should distance ourselves from this notion. This is because philosophy *requires opinions to be supported by good reasoning*. If you express your opinion without providing supporting reasoning, your philosophy teacher is apt to say something like, "Well, that is an interesting opinion," but he or she won't say that you have produced good philosophy. Philosophy requires supporting your opinions—which, by the way, can be hard work.

Another idea people sometimes have when they first enter into philosophy is that "truth is relative." Now, there are numerous things a person might mean by that statement. If he or she means merely that people's beliefs are relative to their perspectives or cultures, then there is no problem. If, however, the person means that the same sentence might be both true and not true depending on one's perspective or culture, then he or she is mistaken. The same sentence cannot be both true and not true, and whatever a person

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Does a tree falling in the forest make a sound when nobody is around to hear it? Never mind that! Is there even a forest if there is nobody to observe it?

wishes to convey by the remark, "Truth is relative," it cannot be that. Of course, two different people from two different cultures or perspectives might *mean* something different by the same words, but that is a separate issue.

A different sort of misconception people have about philosophy is that it is light reading, something you relax with in the evening after all the serious work of the day is done. In reality, philosophical writing generally takes time and effort to understand. Often it seems to be written in familiar, everyday language, but that can be deceiving. It is best to approach a work in philosophy with the kind of mental preparedness and alertness appropriate for a textbook in mathematics or science. You should expect to be able to read *an entire novel* in the time it takes to understand just a *few pages* of philosophy! To understand philosophy, you have to reread a passage several times and think about it a lot. If your instructor assigns what seem to be short readings, don't celebrate. It takes much time to understand philosophy.

Philosophy isn't light reading, and it isn't mere expression of opinion. Philosophers support their positions with arguments, which (ideally) make it plain why the reasonable person will accept what they say.

Argument

When you support a position by giving a reason for accepting it, you are making an **argument.** Giving and rebutting arguments (a rebuttal of an argument is itself an argument) are the most basic of philosophical activities; they distinguish philosophy from mere opinion. **Logic,** the study of correct inference, is concerned with whether and to what extent a reason truly does support a conclusion.

To illustrate, if you tell someone you believe that God exists, that's not philosophy. That's just you saying something about yourself. Even if you add, "I believe in God because I was raised a Catholic," that's still just biography, not philosophy. If, however, you say, "God must exist because the universe couldn't have caused itself," then you have given an *argument* that God exists (or existed). This remark counts as philosophy.

But if you want to be good at philosophy, you must also consider challenges to and criticisms of your arguments. Such challenges are known as **counterarguments.** Suppose, for example, someone challenges your argument with "Well, you seem to be assuming that God can be self-caused, and if God can be self-caused, then why can't the universe?" You are now being called upon to *defend* your assumption that the universe could not be self-caused. Good philosophizing requires the ability to reason correctly, to defend assumptions, and to anticipate and rebut rebuttals.

The Socratic Method

Philosophers have spent much time over the centuries trying to arrive at a proper understanding of several important concepts: truth, beauty, knowledge, justice, and others you will be reading about shortly. One of the most famous of all philosophers, the Greek philosopher Socrates [SOK-ruh-teez] (c. 470–399 B.C.E.), championed a method for doing this, which is now called the Socratic method. To see how this works, imagine that you and Socrates are discussing *knowledge:*

You: You're asking me what knowledge is? Well, when you believe something very strongly, that's knowledge.

Socrates: But that would mean that kids who believe in fairies actually know there are fairies, if they believe this strongly.

Y: That's a good point. To know something, then, isn't just to believe it very strongly. The belief also must be true.

S: That still doesn't sound quite right. That means a mere *hunch* is knowledge, if a person believes it strongly, and it turns out to be correct.

Y: Well, you're right again. So, for one to know something, one must believe it strongly, it must be true, AND it must NOT be a mere hunch. In other words, it must be based on good evidence or solid reasoning. . . .

The exchange might continue until you offer an analysis of knowledge with which Socrates cannot take issue.

So, the **Socratic method** as practiced by Socrates involves proposing a definition, rebutting it by counterexample, modifying it in the light of the counterexample, rebutting

the modification, and so forth. Needless to say, the method can be practiced by one person within his or her own mind. Clearly, the method can help advance understanding of concepts, but it can also be used to improve arguments or positions.

If you are reading this book as part of a class in philosophy, you may see your instructor utilizing the Socratic method with the class.

Thought Experiments

When we asked you to try to make yourself think, through an effort of willing, that it is good to hurt kittens, we were asking you to conduct a thought experiment. **Thought experiments** are not uncommon in science; in philosophy, they are among the most common methods used to try to establish something. You will encounter thought experiments in this book, and although some of them may seem far-fetched, you shouldn't discount them for that reason. For example, to establish whether time travel is possible, a philosopher might ask us to imagine someone stepping into a time machine, going back in time to before she was born and, while there, accidentally killing her parents. The thought experiment seems to show that, on one hand, the person existed at the time she entered the time machine; but, on the other hand, because her parents never gave birth to her, she could not have existed at that or any other time. The thought experiment thus shows, or seems to show, that time travel leads to contradictions and therefore is impossible.

Reductio ad Absurdum

Philosophers will often attempt to establish a thesis by using the ***reductio ad absurdum***—demonstrating that the contradictory of the thesis is or leads to (i.e., "reduces to") an absurdity. The thought experiment about time travel is an example of this method as well as an illustration of a thought experiment.

The most famous *reductio ad absurdum* in the history of philosophy is St. Anselm's ontological proof that God exists. As we shall see in detail in Chapter 13, St. Anselm (c. 1033–1109) began his famous proof by assuming—merely for the sake of argument—that God, a being "greater than which cannot be conceived," does *not* exist. This assumption, Anselm argued, leads to the absurd result that a being greater than which cannot be conceived is not a being greater than which cannot be conceived. In other words, the idea that God does not exist "reduces" to an absurdity; therefore, God exists. Likewise, in the foregoing dialog between you and Socrates, Socrates argued that the assumption that knowledge is identical with strong belief leads to an absurd result; which means that knowledge is *not* identical with strong belief.

Fallacies

A **fallacy** is a mistake in reasoning. Some mistakes are so common they have earned names, many in Latin. You won't often find philosophers making these mistakes, but you will often find them referring to the mistakes, so you should at least be familiar with the more common specimens.

• **Switching the burden of proof:** Logically, you can't prove your position by asking an opponent to disprove it. You don't prove God exists by challenging a listener to prove God doesn't exist.

• **Begging the question:** These days, you frequently hear people assert that something "begs the question." Generally, when people say this they mean the thing *invites* some question. However, this is not what "begging the question" means to logicians or philosophers. To them, you *beg the question* when you *assume* the very thing you are trying to prove, which means your "proof" doesn't go anywhere. For example, if you want to give a reason for thinking that God exists, and your reason is that "It says so in the Bible, and the Bible is the word of God," you are assuming that God exists, when that is what you were supposed to prove. It's like trying to prove that someone committed a crime because "he was the one who did it."

• ***Argumentum ad hominem*** (argument against the person): This fallacy amounts to transferring the qualities of a spokesperson to his or her insights, arguments, beliefs, or positions. For example, thinking that a person's *position* is frightening because the person himself is frightening would be an obvious mistake in reasoning, an *argumentum ad hominem*.

It is especially important to note that when someone—Susan, let us say—has changed her mind about something, it doesn't mean that what she now thinks is incorrect. That *Susan* has contradicted herself doesn't mean that what she has just said is contradictory. If a critic of a war supported the war at an earlier time, that fact doesn't mean her criticism is defective. The earlier support and the present criticism are logically unrelated. That someone has changed positions is a fact about the *person,* not his or her position. Confusing these two things is perhaps the most common mistake in reasoning on this planet.

From time to time, you hear someone ask an opponent if he or she really believes what he or she has said. That question is irrelevant to the truth or falsity of what the person has said. In his book *Republic,* Plato portrayed Socrates as conversing with the Athenian general Thrasymachus. Socrates asks Thrasymachus whether he really believes his own argument. Thrasymachus responds by saying,

> What difference does it make to you whether I believe it or not? Why don't you test the argument?[3]

Thrasymachus's response is 100% correct, in response to a question like Socrates's.

• **Straw man:** This fallacy occurs when you think you have refuted a view by distorting, misrepresenting, or exaggerating it. When the Irish philosopher George Berkeley maintained that physical objects really exist only in the mind, the English writer Samuel Johnson "refuted" Berkeley by kicking a rock and proclaiming, "I refute him thus!" But Samuel Johnson misrepresented Berkeley, for Berkeley never

[3] Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes,* Vols. 5 & 6, translated by Paul Shorey. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1969.

maintained that rocks aren't solid; Berkeley's position was that solid things like rocks (and legs and boots) exist only in the mind.

Suppose we argue that there is no such thing as free will, because our decisions are predetermined by our heredity and environment. If an opponent then points out that people obviously can choose what they do, the opponent has brought in a straw man. Our position wasn't that people don't make choices but that choices were predetermined by heredity and environment. What we said was X; our opponent acts as if we had said Y.

- **False dilemma** (either–or fallacy): This is the fallacy of offering two choices when in fact more options exist. Suppose someone says, "Either God exists, or there is no explanation for the universe." This is a false dilemma because it ignores a third possibility, namely, that there is an explanation of the universe that does not involve God.

- **Appeal to emotion:** This is trying to establish a point by arousing pity, anger, fear, and so on. Suppose we try to "prove" that God exists with the "argument" that "if you don't believe in him, you will burn in hell." We haven't really given an argument; we are just trying to scare the listener into agreeing with us.

- **Red herring:** When someone brings an irrelevancy into a conversation, it is called a red herring. As you can see, many of the fallacies just discussed qualify as red herrings.

If you are reading this book as part of a course, there could be lots of discussion in class, and the discussion will involve disagreements. In addition, people will defend their positions with arguments. Perhaps you will find examples of these fallacies among the arguments you hear. You may even find an example or two in the arguments you read in this book.

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Philosophy begins in amazement and curiosity.

Most philosophical questions tend to fall into one of these five areas:

- *Questions related to being, existence, or reality.* **Metaphysics** is the branch of philosophy concerned with these questions. Basic questions of metaphysics include, What is being? What is real? What are the fundamental features and properties of reality? Metaphysics has little to do with astrology, Tarot cards, the occult, or similar things.
- *Questions related to knowledge*. **Epistemology,** the theory of knowledge, is the branch of philosophy concerned with these questions. What is the nature of knowledge, and what are its criteria, sources, and limits? These are basic questions of epistemology, and thus it includes such questions as: What is truth? and Is it possible to know anything with absolute certainty?
- *Questions related to values*. Included under this heading are primarily (1) **moral philosophy (ethics),** the philosophical study of moral judgments; (2) **social philosophy,** the philosophical study of society and its institutions; (3) **political philosophy,** which focuses on the state and seeks to determine its justification and ethically proper organization; and (4) **aesthetics,** the philosophical study of art and of value judgments about art.
- *Questions pertaining to the theory of correct inference,* otherwise known as **logic,** which seeks to investigate and establish the criteria of valid reasoning and demonstration.
- *Feminist philosophy,* which seeks to explore the questions raised earlier from a feminist perspective.

Part One of this book is devoted to metaphysics and epistemology, which are closely related. Part Two is concerned with questions of values, especially moral and political values. We talked a bit about logic earlier in this chapter.

Although philosophy has four main branches, they do not each contain an equal number of theories, concepts, or words. Your library probably has more holdings under political philosophy than under the other areas and the fewest under epistemology or aesthetics.

There are other ways of dividing philosophy. Many universities offer philosophy courses that examine the fundamental assumptions and methods of other disciplines and areas of intellectual inquiry, such as science (philosophy of a science), language (philosophy of language), and religion (philosophy of religion). Philosophy of science and philosophy of language are covered in Part One because most of the issues in these two areas are either metaphysical or epistemological issues. Part Three is devoted entirely to the philosophy of religion, with emphasis on the question of whether God's existence can be proved.

The fourth part of this book is called "More Voices," and in it we consider feminist philosophy, as well as influences and traditions beyond mainstream Western philosophy.

Also in this part of the book is a chapter on five important philosophical concerns: the problem of free will, what is consciousness, the problem of the gift, and what is art (and related issues in aesthetics).

We conclude the last chapter of this book with a brief essay on Philosophy and Disinformation. This speaks to an area of concern to philosophy and society in general.

What can you do with a background in philosophy? As our friend Troy Jollimore said, the list of things you *can't* do with a background in philosophy is shorter than the list of things you can do. Life favors people who have the skills philosophy students tend to have in abundance. Do an online search for something like Undergraduate Majors of Applicants to ABA-Approved Law Schools and you will find philosophy majors scoring at or near the top of the list of high scores on the LSAT. The LSAT is the Law School Admission Test. The ABA is the American Bar Association. You may have no intention of becoming a lawyer, but you know that, to be a lawyer, you must first be admitted to a law school, which requires no little mental ability. You will get similar results if you check out scores by major on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), or the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). You will find that philosophy majors do better on these aptitude tests than other majors in the humanities, business majors, political science majors, or just about any other major you can think of. This suggests that philosophy students have exceptional aptitude for some of the most useful of all skills, including analytical thinking, critical thinking, careful reasoning, problem solving, and communication. Now, one of the things you learn when you study philosophy is that cause and effect is difficult to establish, and it is an open question whether studying philosophy makes students better thinkers or whether better thinkers are attracted to philosophy in the first place. But philosophical training does emphasize the aforementioned skills. Finding answers to philosophical questions involves being good at exposition and logic, making nuanced distinctions, recognizing subtle similarities and differences, and detecting unstated assumptions.

More than this, those who have learned their philosophical lessons well may not be as prone as others to superficiality and dogmatism. Philosophy requires objectivity, reasonableness, and an open mind. These general attributes, along with the critical thinking skills that come with the practice of philosophizing, can stand one in good stead when faced with the problems life generously provides.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

aesthetics 11
appeal to emotion 10
argument 07
argumentum ad hominem 09
begging the question 09
counterargument 07
epistemology 11
fallacy 08
false dilemma 10
logic 07, 11
metaphysics 11
moral philosophy (ethics) 11
philosophy 02
political philosophy 11
red herring 10
reductio ad absurdum 08
social philosophy 11
Socratic method 07
straw man 09
switching the burden of proof 09
thought experiment 08

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REVIEW

1. Why do you want to study philosophy?
2. Now that you've read this chapter, is philosophy what you expected it to be?
3. Why is it that the most advanced degree in so many fields is the doctor of philosophy?

4. Which of the questions raised in this chapter is most interesting to you? What do you think the answer is?
5. Can two people both be correct if one says, "Recreational hunting is immoral," and the other says, "Recreational hunting is not immoral"? Explain.
6. If, by the time you become an adult, every molecule in your body has been replaced with a different one, are you-the-adult the same person as you-the-child?
7. Are all philosophical questions unanswerable? How about the question you mentioned in question 4?
8. Does it matter if God exists? Take a position, and defend it with an argument.
9. Does what is true depend on what your society believes is true? Was the world flat when people believed it was flat?
10. "2 + 2 = 4." Was this true before there were people (or other beings) around to think it? Explain.

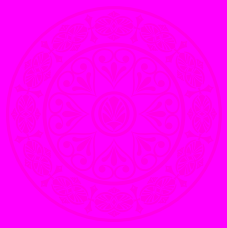
LINKS

http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html A guide to writing philosophy papers. We strongly encourage you to read it before you write your first paper.

http://www.ditext.com/encyc/frame.html This resource enables you to compare topics listed in major Internet encyclopedias of philosophy.

http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html An excellent encyclopedia of philosophy. You can look up most philosophical topics here.

http://www.askphilosophers.org Ask a question, get an answer, maybe.



2

Philosophical Quotations

Here are various philosophical quotations, arranged in no particular order. Some of them you will see again, later in the book.

Don't worry, you don't have to memorize them. Just browse through them from time to time and make a mental note of those (if any) that stand out for you.

As you read this book you might discover that the thoughts of the greatest philosophers often cannot be captured by isolated quotations.

Truth is simply a compliment paid to sentences seen to be paying their way. —Richard Rorty

Nobody steps in the same river twice: it's never the same river and it's never the same person. —Heraclitus

You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take.
—Attributed to Wayne Gretzsky by Michael Scott

When it all ends, all that matters is what you've done.
—Alexander the Great

What then is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I wish to explain it to one that asks, I know not. —Augustine of Hippo

The moral order is just as much a part of the fundamental nature of the universe as is the spatial or numerical structure expressed in the axioms of geometry or arithmetic. —W.D. Ross

There are many worlds and many systems of Universes existing all at the same time, all of them perishable. —Anaximander

There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. —Hamlet

Such is the nature of men, that though they may acknowledge many others to be more witty, or more eloquent or more learned; yet they will hardly believe there be many as wise as themselves. —Thomas Hobbes

Wood, stone, fire, water, flesh … these are things perceived by my senses; and things perceived by the senses are immediately perceived; and things immediately perceived are ideas; and ideas cannot exist outside the mind. —George Berkeley

Nothing exists except atoms and empty space; all else is opinion. —Democritus

We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back. —Malala Yousafzai

"Yes" and "No" are the two words that require the most thought. —Pythagoras

We have no way of identifying truths except to posit that the statements that are currently rationally accepted (by our lights) are true. —Hilary Putnam

Achilles can never overtake the tortoise: by the time he gets to where the tortoise was, the tortoise is no longer there. —Zeno of Elea

That tyranny is an outgrowth of democracy is plain. —Plato

…. it seems to me that a pleasurable Contemplation of Beauty has certainly an immeasurably greater value than mere Consciousness of Pleasure. —G.E. Moore

If I am asked 'what is good?' my answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked 'How is good to be defined?' my answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it. —G.E. Moore

If you aren't content with what you have, you won't be content with what you would like to have. —Socrates

People recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. —Herbert Marcuse

God cannot be conceived not to exist. For God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived. Therefore, anything which can be conceived not to exist is not God. —Anselm of Canterbury

Love is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies.
—Aristotle (Attributed to Aristotle by Diogenes Laertius)

If a man is given good evidence for a factual conclusion, he cannot just refuse to accept the conclusion on the ground that in his scheme of things this evidence is not evidence at all. With evaluations, however, it is different. An evaluation is not connected logically with the factual statements on which it is based.
—Philippa Foot

Entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity
—William of Ockham. *In other words, if two explanations of something are equally adequate, the simplest one—the one that postulates the fewest entities—is preferable. This is known as Ockham's Razor.*

Art is the final cunning of the human soul which would rather do anything than face the gods. —Iris Murdoch

If any two men desire the same thing which they cannot both have, they become enemies; and endeavor to destroy or subdue one another. —Thomas Hobbes

Free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves. —Herbert Marcuse

Without the presence of black people in America, European-Americans would not be white—they would be Irish, Italians, Poles, Welsh, and other engaged in class, ethnic, and gender struggles over resources and identity. —Cornel West

A screw is hard and sharp; wood by contrast is soft and yielding; force is applied to make a screw penetrate wood; a screw can be unscrewed and reused but wood—wherever a screw has embedded in it—is destroyed forever. —Stephanie Ross, in an essay entitled "How Words Hurt: Attitude, Metaphor, and Oppression"

[W]hen parties and elections are financed not by public funds but by private contributions, the political forum is so constrained by the wishes of the dominant interests that the basic measures needed to establish just constitutional rule are seldom properly presented. —John Rawls

Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains. —Karl Marx

On the other side of the fence, the grass is always greener.
—Old saying

Religion is a system of wishful illusions together with a disavowal of reality, such as we find nowhere else but in a state of blissful hallucinatory confusion. Religion's eleventh commandment is Thou shalt not question. —Sigmund Freud

If a lion could speak, we could not understand him. —Ludwig Wittgenstein

Death is of no concern, because as long as we exist, death is not here. And when it does come, we no longer exist. —Epicurus

From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs. —Karl Marx

Nature is not simply an organic body like a clock, which has no vital principle of motion in it; but it is a living body which has life and perception, which are much more exalted than a mere mechanism or a mechanical motion. —Viscountess Anne Conway

Humanity's moral conscience progresses, slowly yet surely. —Cheikh Anta Diop

The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. —Theodore Parker

If I say of myself that it is only from my own case that I know what the word pain means—must I not say the same of other people too? And how can I generalize the one case so irresponsibly? —Ludwig Wittgenstein

For a large class of cases—though not for all—... the meaning of a word is its use in the language. —Ludwig Wittgenstein

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. —Karl Marx

Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants. —Epictetus

What counts isn't who votes, it's who counts the votes. —Joseph Stalin

Experience and history teaches us that people and governments have never learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it. —Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

We could never have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it. —George Eliot

One's life has value as long as one attributes value to the life of others by means of love, friendship, and compassion.
—Simone de Beauvoir

Man is the measure of all things. —Protagoras

The ship of Theseus was preserved, because they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place; and the ship became an example among philosophers, one side holding the ship remained the same, and the other contending it was not the same. —Plutarch

The assumption that animals are without rights and the illusion that our treatment of them has no moral significance is a positively outrageous example of Western crudity and barbarity. Universal compassion is the only guarantee of morality.
—Arthur Schopenhauer

If a moving stone were conscious of its moving, it would believe itself to be completely free, and would think it continued in motion solely because of its own wish. —Baruch Spinoza

The totalitarian mass leaders based their propaganda on the correct psychological assumption that, under such conditions, one could make people believe the most fantastic statements one day, and trust that if the next day they were given irrefutable proof of their falsehood, they would take refuge in cynicism; instead of deserting the leaders who had lied to them, they would protest that they had known all along that the statement was a lie and would admire the leaders for their superior tactical cleverness." —Hannah Arendt

Every miserable fool who has nothing at all of which he can be proud, adopts as a last resource pride in the nation to which he belongs; he is ready and happy to defend all its faults and follies tooth and nail, thus reimbursing himself for his own inferiority. —Arthur Schopenhauer

The highest result of education is tolerance. —Helen Keller

All mankind ... being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions. —John Locke

And is not the best-ordered State that in which the greatest number of persons apply the terms "mine" and "not mine" in the same way to the same things? —Plato

[The rich] consume little more than the poor, and in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity ... divide with the poor the produce

of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species. —Adam Smith

We cannot escape anguish, because we are anguish.
—Jean-Paul Sartre

War is progress, peace is stagnation.
—Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

A man finds himself, to his great astonishment, suddenly existing, after thousands and thousands of years of non-existence: he lives for a little while; and then, again, comes an equally long period when he must exist no more. The heart rebels against this and feels that it cannot be true. —Arthur Schopenhauer

Pleasure is never as pleasant as we expected it to be and pain is always more painful. The pain in the world always outweighs the pleasure. If you don't believe it, compare the respective feelings of two animals, one of which is eating the other.
—Arthur Schopenhauer

You cannot know what is not, nor can you express it. What can be thought of and what can be—they are the same. —Parmenides

Motion being eternal, the first mover, if there is but one, will be eternal also. —Aristotle

I don't worry about the problem. I worry about the solution. —Shaquille O'Neal

If life—the craving for which is the very essence of our being—were possessed of any positive intrinsic value, there would be no such thing as boredom at all: mere existence would satisfy us in itself, and we should want for nothing. —Arthur Schopenhauer

The most important measure of how good a game I played was how much better I'd made my teammates play. —Bill Russell

We can regard our life as a uselessly disturbing episode in the blissful repose of nothingness. —Arthur Schopenhauer

These are my new shoes. They're good shoes. They won't make you rich like me, they won't make you rebound like me, they definitely won't make you handsome like me. They'll only make you have shoes like me. That's it. —Charles Barkley

If someone spends almost the whole day reading, and for relaxation devotes the intervals to a thoughtless pastime, they gradually lose the capacity for thinking; just as one who always rides at last forgets how to walk. This is the case with many learned persons: they have read themselves stupid.
—Arthur Schopenhauer

The safest way of not being very miserable is not to expect to be very happy. —Arthur Schopenhauer

In class society, everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class. —Mao Tse Tung

If possessing a higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human to use another for his or her own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit non-humans? —Peter Singer

Make it work no matter what you have to work with—that's something that stuck with me very early on as a point guard. Adjust. Get creative. Try a different angle, a different lane, a different move or a different shot—just make it work. —Stephen Curry

Man can do what he wills but he cannot will what he wills. —Arthur Schopenhauer

"Free speech and incitement of violence do not have an intersection." —Tim Cook

Everything that exists in your life, does so because of two things: something you did or something you didn't do. —Albert Einstein

... better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides. —John Stuart Mill

Believing in God is a wise bet. What harm will come to you if you gamble on the truth of faith and it proves false? If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Bet without hesitation that God exists. —Blaise Pascal

Thinking begins only when we have come to know that reason, glorified for centuries, is the stiff-necked adversary of thought. —Martin Heidegger

People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does. —Michel Foucault

Supposing there were a mechanism constructed to think, feel and have perception, we might enter it as into a mill. And this granted, we should only find on visiting it, pieces which push one against another, but never anything by which to explain a perception. This must be sought, therefore, in the simple substance, and not in the composite or in the machine. —Gottfried Wilhelm, Baron von Leibniz

The problem according to Leibniz is that there is a gap between concepts of modern neuroscience and those that we use to describe the brain such as thought, feeling, and perception. This means that the physical observation of the brain yields data in the wrong vocabulary even if we are convinced that the mind is the brain. —Bertrand Russell

An organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to *be* that organism—something it is like *for* the organism. —Thomas Nagel

Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man.
—Martin Heidegger

Spinoza (1634-1677) is the noblest and most lovable of the great philosophers. Intellectually, some others have surpassed him, but ethically he is supreme. As a natural consequence, he was considered, during his lifetime and for a century after his death, a man of appalling wickedness. —Bertrand Russell

Each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, [is] a good to the aggregate of all persons. —John Stuart Mill

Why is there anything at all rather than nothing whatsoever? — Gottfried Wilhelm, Baron von Leibniz

If the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the prince's past life, entered the body of a cobbler at the very moment the cobbler's consciousness of his past deserted him, the cobbler would be the same person as the prince, though nobody would say they were the same man. —John Locke

Gravity explains the motions of the planets, but it cannot explain who sets the planets in motion. —Isaac Newton

It all goes back, of course, to Adam and Eve—a story which shows among other things, that if you make a woman out of a man, you are bound to get into trouble. —Carol Gilligan

Since our awareness of others is considered our duty, the price we pay when things go wrong is guilt and self-hatred. And things always go wrong. We respond with apologies; we continue to apologize long after the event is forgotten—and even if it had no causal relation to anything we did to begin with.
—Nancy Chodorow

Grief is love's souvenir. —Glennon Doyle, *Love War*

You can't separate peace from freedom because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom. —Malcolm X

God's plan' is often a front for men's plans and a cover for inadequacy, ignorance, and evil. —Mary Daly

Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. —Immanuel Kant

Is e=mc2 a sexed equation? Perhaps it is. Let us make the hypothesis that it is insofar as it privileges the speed of light over other speeds that are vitally necessary to us. What seems to me to indicate the possible sexed nature of the equation is not directly its uses by nuclear weapons, rather it is having privileged what goes the fastest. —Luce Irigaray

One and God make a majority. —Frederick Douglass

People do not see you, they invent you and accuse you.
—Hélène Cixous

Certainly, a wild animal is cruel. But to be merciless is the privilege of civilized humans. —Sigmund Freud

Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words ... that's how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is ... A double distress, for even if she transgresses, her words fall almost always upon the deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine. —Hélène Cixous

Women will only be truly sexually liberated when we arrive at a place where we can see ourselves as having sexual value and agency irrespective of whether or not we are the objects of male desire. —bell hooks

There are three basic problems: how a mind can know the world of nature, how it is possible for one mind to know another, and how it is possible to know the contents of our own minds without resort to observation or evidence. It is a mistake ... to suppose

that these questions can be collapsed into two, or taken into isolation. —Donald Davidson

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek. —Barack Obama

Perhaps some women believe that being one of the guys... provides the guise of inclusion in the dominant group. But if women really held equal status with men, we wouldn't have to disappear into their term...can you think of one, just one, instance when a female term has been used to describe of a group of women and men? —Sherryl Kleinman

Space and time are the framework within which the mind is constrained to construct its experience of reality. —Immanuel Kant

God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? —Friedrich Nietzsche

We tend to believe the premises because we can see that their consequences are true, instead of believing the consequences because we know the premises to be true. —Bertrand Russell

Now the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine does just this. It maintains that there exist both bodies and minds; that there occur physical processes and mental processes; that there are mechanical causes of corporeal movements and mental causes of corporeal movements. I shall argue that these and other analogous conjunctions are absurd. —Gilbert Ryle

Though knowledge begins with experience, it doesn't follow that it all arises from experience ... it is possible that even our empirical knowledge is a compound of that which we perceive through sense impressions, and of that which our own faculty of knowledge (incited by sense impressions) supplies from itself... —Immanuel Kant

We dealt in the preceding chapter with the words "all" and "some"; in this chapter we shall consider the word "the" in the singular, and in the next chapter we shall consider the word "the" in the plural. It may be thought excessive to devote two chapters to one word, but to the philosophical mathematician it is a word of very great importance. —Bertrand Russell, in his *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*

[A] sentence is factually significant to any given person, if, and only if, he knows how to verify the proposition which it purports to express—that is, if he knows what observations would lead him, under certain conditions, to accept the proposition as being true, or reject it as being false. —A.J. Ayer

Morality is not properly the doctrine of how we should make ourselves happy, but how we should become worthy of happiness. —Immanuel Kant

A curious thing about the ontological problem is its simplicity. It can be put into three Anglo-Saxon monosyllables: 'What is there?' It can be answered, moreover, in a word—'Everything.' —W.V.O. Quine

It has been assumed knowledge must conform to objects.... We must ... consider whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. —Immanuel Kant

To be is to be the value of a bound variable. —W.V.O. Quine

The understanding can sense nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only through their union can knowledge arise. —Immanuel Kant

Thoughts without content are empty, perceptions without concepts are blind. —Immanuel Kant

God considers not the action, but the intent. —Peter Abelard

[E]ven if archeologists or geologists were to discover tomorrow some fossils conclusively showing the existence of animals in the past satisfying everything we know about unicorns from the myth of the unicorn, that would not show that there were unicorns. —Saul Kripke

Morals excite emotions and produce or prevent actions. *Reason* of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason. —David Hume

We never understand our home until we leave it. — Friedrich Hölderlin

When death crowns the ills of suffering man, what a fine consolation to be eaten by worms. —Voltaire

The worms, They crept in, and the worms, They crept out,
And sported his eyes and his temples about... —Mathew Lewis

[N]o testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavors to establish. —David Hume

From time to time our senses deceive us, and it is wise never to trust wholly that which has deceived us even once. —René Descartes

Although good can exist without evil, evil cannot exist without good. —Thomas Aquinas

In short, if we are brains in a vat, then 'we are brains in a vat' is false. So it is (necessarily) false. —Hilary Putnam

Every judgement of conscience, whether correct or incorrect, whether about things evil in themselves or morally not that way, is obligatory, and in such a way that anyone who acts against conscience always sins. —Thomas Aquinas

There are no facts, only interpretations. —Friedrich Nietzsche

People fight for superstition as quickly as for truth—often more quickly, because a superstition is too intangible to refute but truth is a point of view and so is changeable. —Hypatia

Mental events such as perceivings, rememberings, decisions, and actions resist capture in the net of physical theory. —Donald Davidson

Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. —Jean-Paul Sartre

Ignorance leads to fear, which leads to hate, which leads to violence. —Attributed to Averroes

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced. —James Baldwin

Life and death are nothing but the mind. Years, months, days, and hours are nothing but the mind. Dreams, illusions, and mirages are nothing but the mind. The bubbles of water and the flames of fire are nothing but the mind. The flowers of the spring and the moon of the autumn are nothing but the mind. Confusions and dangers are nothing but the mind. —Attributed to Dogen

Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful. —Attributed to Seneca

It is much safer to be feared than loved—love is preserved by the link of obligation which, owing to the baseness of men, is broken at

every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails. —Niccolo Machiavelli

The disease of men is this—that they neglect their own fields and go weed the fields of others. —Mencius

Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so. —John Stuart Mill

To mention Boston we use "Boston" or a synonym, and to mention "Boston" we use "'Boston"' or a synonym. "'Boston"' contains six letters and just one set of quotation marks; "Boston" contains six letters and no quotation marks; and Boston contains some 800,000 people. —W.V.O. Quine

The only existences of which we are certain, are perceptions…The only conclusion we can draw from the existence of one thing to that of another, is by means of the relation of cause and effect… But as no things are ever present to the mind but perceptions, it follows we may observe a conjunction between perceptions, but can never observe it between perceptions and objects. 'Tis impossible, therefore, that from the existence of any qualities of the former, we can every form any conclusion concerning the existence of the latter. —David Hume

Reason shows me that if my happiness is desirable and good, the equal happiness of any other person must be equally desirable. —Henry Sidgwick

A system cannot fail those it was never meant to protect. —W.E.B. Du Bois

I think; therefore I am. —René Descartes

When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land. —Attributed to Desmond Tutu

We can find nothing that possesses the quality of goodness which isn't related to human existence. —Henry Sidgwick

It must be some one impression that gives rise to every idea. But "self" is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference. If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same through the whole course of our lives … But there is no impression constant and invariable … There is no such idea. —David Hume

The only thing good in and of itself is the good will. —Immanuel Kant

I am accustomed to sleep and in my dreams to imagine the same things that lunatics imagine when awake. —René Descartes

Killing a bad monarch is not murder. —Mencius

QUESTIONS

1. Identify three or four of these quotations which jump out at you or resonate with you. Then explain in what sense they jumped out or resonated, and why.
2. Do you have any favorite philosophical quotations, old sayings, adages, bumper-stickers, or T-shirt slogans that you can share? If so, perhaps your instructor will have you do so.
3. Ask your instructor for their favorites either from this list or not.
4. Discuss what might be meant by the statement at the beginning of the chapter that the thoughts of the greatest philosophers often cannot be captured by isolated quotations.

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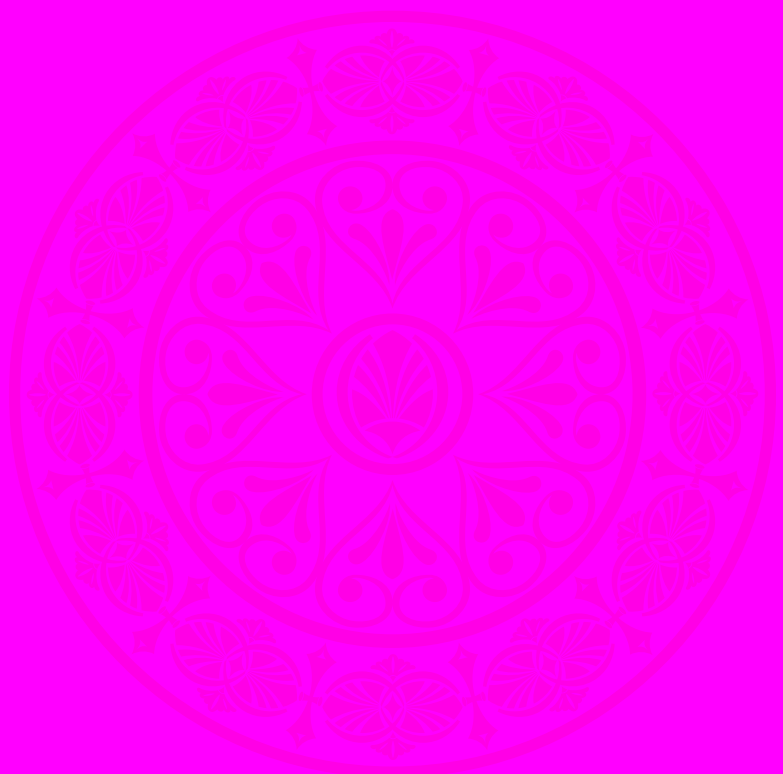
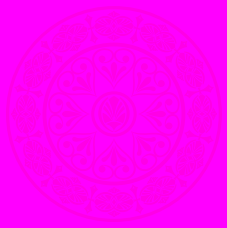
Part One

Metaphysics and Epistemology: Existence and Knowledge





3

The Pre-Socratics

You cannot know what is not, nor can you express it. What can be thought of and what can be—they are the same. —Parmenides

It is wise to agree that all things are one. —Heraclitus

You don't generally find metaphysics and epistemology very far apart. **Metaphysics**, as you know from Chapter 1, is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and fundamental properties of being or ultimate reality (we will use these concepts interchangeably). **Epistemology** is the branch that explores the sources, nature, limits, and criteria of knowledge. The first philosophers were mainly metaphysicians, so we shall begin by discussing metaphysics. When we look at Plato, whose vast philosophy covered all subjects, we shall take up epistemology.

In its popular usage, the word *metaphysics* has strange and forbidding associations. "Metaphysical bookstores," for example, specialize in all sorts of occult subjects, from channeling, harmonic convergence, and pyramid power to past-life hypnotic regression, psychic surgery, and spirit photography. However, the true history of metaphysics is quite different. Given the way in which the term was originally coined, you may find its popular association with the occult somewhat amusing. Here is the true story.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) produced a series of works on a wide variety of subjects from biology to poetry. One set of his writings is known as the *Physics,* from the Greek word *physika,* which means "the things of nature." Another set, to which Aristotle never gave an official title but to which he referred occasionally as "first philosophy" or "wisdom," was called simply "the books after the books on nature" (*ta meta ta physika biblia*) by later writers and particularly by Andronicus of Rhodes, who was the cataloger of Aristotle's works in the first century B.C.E. The word *metaphysics,* then, translates loosely as "after the *Physics.*"

The subjects Aristotle discussed in these works are more abstract and more difficult to understand than those he examined in the *Physics.* Hence, later authorities determined that

The Nature of Being

When a philosopher asks, What is the nature of being (ultimate reality)? he or she may have in mind any number of things, including one or more of the following:

- Is being a *property* of things, or is it *some kind of thing* itself? Or is there some third alternative?
- Is being basically *one,* or are there *many* beings?
- Is being *fixed* and *changeless,* or is it *constantly changing?* What is the relationship between *being* and *becoming?*
- Does everything have the *same kind* of being?
- What are the fundamental *categories* into which all existing things may be divided?
- Is there a fundamental *substance* out of which all else is composed? If so, does it have any properties? Must it have properties?
- What is the world like *in itself,* independent of our perception of it?
- What manner of existence do *particular things* have, as distinct from *properties, relations,* and *classes?* What manner of existence do *events* have? What manner do *numbers, minds, matter, space,* and *time* have? What manner do *facts* have?
- That a particular thing has a certain characteristic—is that a fact about the *thing?* Or is it a fact about the *characteristic?*

Several narrower questions may also properly be regarded as questions of metaphysics, such as: Does God exist? Is what happens determined? Is there life after death? Must events occur in space and time?

Some of these questions are none too clear, but they provide signposts for the directions a person might take in coming to answer the question, What is the nature of being? or in studying metaphysics. Because the possibilities are so numerous, we will have to make some choices about what topics to cover in the pages that follow. We cannot go on forever.

their proper place was indeed "after the *Physics,*" and thus *Metaphysics* has stuck as the official title of Aristotle's originally untitled work and, by extension, as the general name for the study of the topics treated there—and related subjects. Aristotle's works are the source of the term *metaphysics,* but Aristotle was not the first metaphysician. As we'll show in this chapter, philosophers before Aristotle had also discussed some of these things.

The fundamental question treated in Aristotle's *Metaphysics,* and thus the fundamental metaphysical question, can be put this way: *What is the nature of being?* A number of different subjects might qualify as "related" to this question, and in contemporary philosophical usage metaphysics is a rather broad and inclusive field. However, for most philosophers it does not include such subjects as astral projection, psychic surgery, or UFOs. Instead, it includes such questions as those in the box "The Nature of Being."

What is the nature of being? One of the authors used to ask his introductory classes to answer that question. The most common response, along with "Huh?" "What?" "Are you serious?" and "How do you drop this class?" was "What do you *mean,* 'What is the nature of being?'" People are troubled by what the question means and are uncertain what sort of thing is expected for an answer. This is the way, incidentally, with a lot of philosophical questions—it is difficult to know exactly what is being asked or what an answer might look like.

In this chapter, we explore several different approaches that have been taken to this question.

The first philosophers, or first Western philosophers at any rate, lived in Ionia, on the coast of Asia Minor, during the sixth century B.C.E. They are known collectively as the **pre-Socratic philosophers,** a loose chronological term applied to the Greek

philosophers who lived before Socrates (c. 470–399 B.C.E.). Most left little or nothing of their own writings, so scholars have had to reconstruct their views from what contemporaneous and later writers said about them.

Experience indicates that it is sometimes difficult to relate to people who lived so long ago. However, the thinking of these early philosophers has had a profound effect on our world today. During this period in Western history—ancient Greece before Socrates—a decisive change in perspective came about that ultimately made possible a deep understanding of the natural world. It was not inevitable that this change would occur.

According to tradition, **Thales** [Thay-leez] (c. 625–547 B.C.E.), a citizen of the wealthy Ionian Greek seaport town of Miletus, had the honor of being the first Western philosopher. And philosophy began when it occurred to Thales to consider whether there might be some *fundamental kind of stuff* out of which everything else is made. Today we are so accustomed to thinking of the complex world we experience as made up of a few basic substances (hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, and the other elements) that we are surprised there ever was a time when people did not think this. Thales deserves credit for helping to introduce this new and important idea into Western thought.

Thales also deserves credit for helping introduce a nonmythological way of looking at the world. The Greeks thought their gods were in charge of natural forces; Zeus, for example, the supreme god, was thought to sometimes alter the weather. Our own belief that nature runs itself according to fixed processes that govern underlying substances began to take shape about this time, and Thales' philosophizing contributed to this important change in outlook.

What is the basic substance, according to Thales? His answer was that *all is water.* This turns out to be wrong. But it was not an especially silly answer for him to have come up with. Imagine Thales looking about at the complicated world of nature and reasoning: "Well, if there is some underlying, more fundamental level than that of appearances, and some kind of substance exists at that level out of which everything else is made, then this basic substance would have to be something very flexible, something that could appear in many forms." And of the candidates Thales saw around him, the most flexible would have been water—something that can appear in three very different states. So we can imagine Thales thinking that, if water can appear in these three very different forms that we know about, it may be that water can also appear in many other forms that we do not understand. For example, when a piece of wood burns, it goes up in smoke, which looks like a form of steam. Perhaps, Thales might have speculated, the original piece of wood was actually water in one of its more exotic forms.

We are guessing about Thales' reasoning, of course. And in any case Thales did come to the wrong conclusion with the water idea. But it was not Thales' *conclusion* that was important—it was what Thales was *up* to. Thales attempted to explain the complex world that we see in terms of a simpler underlying reality. This attempt marks the beginning of metaphysics and, for that matter, of science. Science is largely just an effort to finish off what Thales started.

Ken Welsh/Design Pics

According to legend, Thales predicted a bumper crop of olives and became wealthy.

Two other Milesians at about this time advanced alternatives to Thales' theory that the basic stuff is water. One of these was **Anaximander** [an-nex-im-AN-der] (610–c. 547 B.C.E.), a pupil of Thales, who maintained that the basic substance out of which everything comes must be even more elementary than water and every other substance of which we have knowledge. The basic substance, he thought, must be ageless, boundless, and indeterminate. From the basic stuff, a nucleus of fire and dark mist formed; the mist solidified in its center, producing the world. The world is surrounded by fire, which we see as the stars and other heavenly bodies, through holes in the mist. The seasons change as powers of heat and cold and wetness and dryness alternate. Anaximander, as you can see, proposed a theory of the universe that explained things in terms of natural powers and processes.

The third great Milesian philosopher was **Anaximenes** [an-nex-IM-in-eez] (fl. c. 545 B.C.E.), who pronounced the basic substance to be air and said that air becomes different things through processes of condensation and rarefaction. When it is rarefied, air becomes fire; when it is condensed it becomes first wind, then (through additional condensation) clouds, water, earth, and, finally, stone. He said that the earth is flat and floats on air. It isn't hard to imagine why Anaximenes thought that air is the basic substance; after all, it is that which enables life to exist. Anaximenes attempted to explain natural occurrences with his theory, and his attempt to identify the basic principles of transformation of the underlying substance of the world continues to this day.