

contents

What Is Philosophy? 6

Chapter 1: Epistemology

Knowledge as Justified True Belief 12
Socrates 14
Cognitive Bias 16
Eastern Doubt 18
Plato 20
Western Doubt 22
Gettier Problems 24
What Were You Born Knowing? 26
Optical Illusions 28
Perception 30
The Problem of Self-Reference 32
Noam Chomsky 34
Three Theories of Truth 36
David Hume 40

Chapter 2: Ethics and Morality

Moral Dilemmas 44
Moral Choices 46
The Prisoners' Dilemma 48
The Golden Rule 50
Moral Relativism 52
Four Meta-Ethical Perspectives 54
Virtue: An Ethics of Character 56
Aristotle's Ethics 58
Rights: An Ethics of Persons 60
Utility and Pleasure 62
Care: An Ethics of Relationship 64
Ethics and Ecology 66
Spot that Meta-Ethical Perspective! 70
Confucian Virtues 72
Dwelling in Compassion 74

Chapter 3: Metaphysics and Spirituality

Appearance and Reality 78
Pythagoras 80
Aristotle's Metaphysics 82
Causal Powers 84
Modalities: Ways of Being 86
Space: Frontier Without Finality 88
Freedom and Necessity 90
This is Not a Bike 92
The Conflicts Within Plato's Soul 94
Bend Your Mind! 96
Mind Your Head! 98
The Philosopher's God 100
Did God Sing the Universe? 102
Good God! 104
Ultimate Choices 106
Gautama the Buddha 108

Chapter 4: Logic and Infinity

What is Logic? 112
What Makes a Good Argument? 114
Paradigms of Reason 116
Reduction and Induction 118
Fallacy Spotting 120
And And or And Not 122
On Conditions and Conditionals 124
Ludwig Wittgenstein 126
Quantifier Logic 128
Nested Circles 130
Gottlob Frege 132
Liar, Liar! 134
Kurt Gödel 138
The Set of Nothing 140
The Set of Everything 142
Paradoxes of Infinity 144
Infinity and Beyond 146
Stairways to Heaven 148
Georg Cantor 150

Index of Philosophers 152
Index 156
References 158

what is philosophy?

Whatever Happened to Good Old Philosophy?

Philosophy, of old the Queen of the Sciences, has come down a notch since her glory days. The rise of modern scientific methods, rather like Cesarean section, has forced the birth of her independent children, the sciences, and one after another they have dropped from her generous womb: first physics, with it physiology, then chemistry, followed later by the social and human sciences, psychology, economics, sociology, etc. Each in its turn abandoned her as they attained to the peerage of departmental status within the academies. Ironically, today she is reputed to be barren, like that ironical old midwife, Socrates himself.

Over the centuries, she has sometimes eked out a living as a handmaiden to the sciences, adding some over-wordy clarification here, performing rhetorical services there, itching rather than scratching out a marginal existence. After withering and puritanical self-criticism, followed by delusions of metaphysical grandeur, more artful and hopeful means of self-destruction were hit upon. Obscure scheming went on covertly to restore the crown of metaphysics to her aging head, with its deeply furrowed brow, but these efforts came to nothing and ended in narcissistic collapse. It is whispered that she spent time in a flophouse for aging beatniks, eating her own heart in existential worry. On last sighting, she had taken the form of an old mare, and was being led into the "desert landscapes" of Quinean ontology, where she is thought to have starved herself on a diet of words.



Scratching Your Head is Good Exercise

But in spite of her preoccupations, philosophy has not died. Her questions have never been the sole possession of elite minds. The big problems of existence have never gone away, and continue to gnaw at the public viscera. The average person with a house, a job, and a car still wonders what the hell it all means sometimes, and the questions of the have-nots are the same, only that much more urgent. The tomes of the scholars do not reach the wondering masses; their books are all too hard. Yes, there is *Philosophy Now* magazine. But what is needed is a new kind of philosophy book, a book of bite-sized enigmas, manageable mysteries, convenient head-scratchers one can get through in about the time it takes for a bathroom break. What is needed is a book that is not a book. The solution is now in your hands.



Philosophy Paints its Grays in Rainbow

This unbook offers an imaginative but very partial tour of the vast terrain of philosophy. The tone is exploratory and non-dogmatic, and throughout the chapters interactive exercises and critical-thinking asides are provided to get you thinking for yourself about the quandaries covered in its pages. An emphasis on the colorful lore of philosophy, as well as a free use of puzzles and narratives, is intended to offset the sometimes technical subject matter.

To begin, a map of the main divisions of philosophy is provided on the next pages. This map, totally contrary to convention, presumes philosophy is on friendly terms with all other disciplines, and accordingly includes them. Far from delimiting a remote and inaccessible region for the specialist philosopher, the net is cast wide, and issues of parallel concern in the various sciences are included, not to resume any imperial presumptions on the part of the dethroned Queen, but only to keep lines of interdisciplinary communication open and to cite landmarks that readers may already know. It is the generous spirit of co-operative tolerance, not any possessive pretensions, that represents philosophy as coextensive with all human knowing.

**Philosophy: Literally, the love of wisdom.
Also: The study of reality, knowledge,
and values.**

Subject	Major Divisions of Philosophy and key subdivisions	Crossover Points (showing points of relatedness despite the major division)
<p>REALITY: Being, god, nature, essence, causation, time, space, self, identity, freedom, infinity, number, necessity, possibility, becoming, function, fact, truth</p>	<p>Metaphysics: A branch of philosophy concerned with anything real, or apparently real.</p> <p>Ontology: The study of being (from <i>ontos</i>, the Greek for "being").</p> <p>Sample issues: Who we really are. What we really are. What there is. What is ultimate? How much do I contribute to my experience of reality? Is order imposed by mind or physical law?</p> <p>By this broad definition, physics is part of metaphysics, distinguished only by its scientific epistemology (its methods). Social science, as the study of social formations, is taken in broadly here.</p>	<p>Unless values or knowledge are real, they are illusions.</p> <p>Necessity makes certainty possible.</p> <p>Purpose and personhood are as much metaphysical as they are ethical concepts.</p> <p>Permission is ethical possibility.</p>



Subject	Major Divisions of Philosophy and key subdivisions	Crossover Points (showing points of relatedness despite the major division)
<p>KNOWLEDGE: Truth, method, doubt, certainty, perception, cognition, errors, bias, paradox, intuition</p>	<p>Epistemology: A branch of philosophy concerned with the conditions and nature of knowledge.</p> <p>Logic: The science of inference; the art of argument. How to reason.</p> <p>Sample issues: What can I know? What should I believe? How can I be sure? Is seeing believing? How is uncertainty to be reduced?</p> <p>By this broad definition, scientific methods are part of epistemology, as is cognitive neuroscience. Sociology of knowledge is another empirical approach to epistemology.</p>	<p>Unless reality or values are known, they are idle theory</p> <p>Issues of logic within metaphysics: Truth, form, necessity, set, infinity.</p> <p>Moral reasoning involves both logic and ethical values.</p>
<p>VALUES: Right, wrong, good, evil, virtue, purpose, dignity, health, happiness, beauty, the sublime, the Holy, money, precaution</p>	<p>Value Theory: A branch of philosophy containing all questions of value; includes, not limited to, aesthetics (theory of art and beauty).</p> <p>Ethics and Morality: Includes, but not limited to, political values (liberty, justice, equality, community) and spiritual values (faith, the sacred, piety, righteousness).</p> <p>Sample issues: What to live for. How to live. What do people want? What is permissible? What is obligatory? What is best? What can I amount to? What may I hope for?</p> <p>By this broad definition, philosophical questions arise also in economics, medicine, politics, and spirituality.</p>	<p>Unless there is value to philosophy, it should not be done.</p> <p>Responsibility is ethical necessity.</p> <p>Truth is a value. Faith is a knowledge claim.</p> <p>Wisdom (what to know) is the pinnacle of epistemology.</p> <p>Freedom is a metaphysical issue, but also a moral, political, and spiritual one.</p>