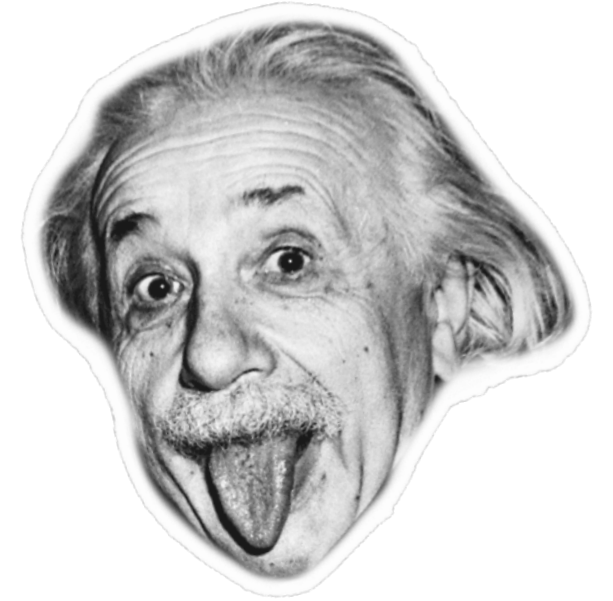


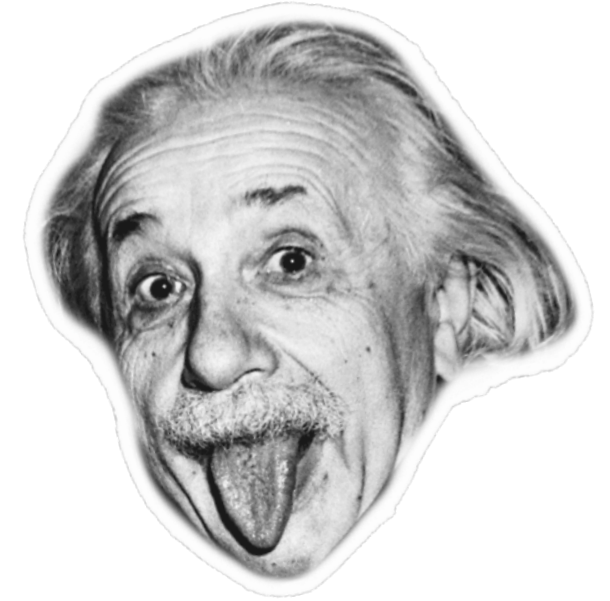
INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

SEBASTIAN SUNDAY GRÈVE
JULIUS SCHÖNHERR



*Peking University | Spring
Semester 2024*

1 INTRODUCTION



INTRO
PHIL

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Bertrand Russell
(1872 – 1970)

1

Appearance and Reality

IS THERE ANY KNOWLEDGE in the world which is so certain that no reasonable man could doubt it? This question, which at first sight might not seem difficult, is really one of the most difficult that can be asked. When we have realized the obstacles in the way of a straightforward and confident answer, we shall be well launched on the study of philosophy—for philosophy is merely the attempt to answer such ultimate questions, not carelessly and dogmatically, as we do in ordinary life and even in the sciences, but critically, after exploring all that makes such questions puzzling, and after realizing all the vagueness and confusion that underlie our ordinary ideas.



Thus what we directly see and feel is merely 'appearance', which we believe to be a sign of some 'reality' behind. But if the reality is not what appears, have we any means of knowing whether there is any reality at all? And if so, have we any means of finding out what it is like?

Such questions are bewildering, and it is difficult to know that even the strangest hypotheses may not be true. Thus our familiar table, which has roused but the slightest thoughts in us hitherto, has become a problem full of surprising possibilities. The one thing we know about it is that it is not what it seems. Beyond this modest result, so far, we have the most complete liberty of conjecture. Leibniz tells us it is a community of souls; Berkeley tells us it is an idea in the mind of God; sober science, scarcely less wonderful, tells us it is a vast collection of electric charges in violent motion.

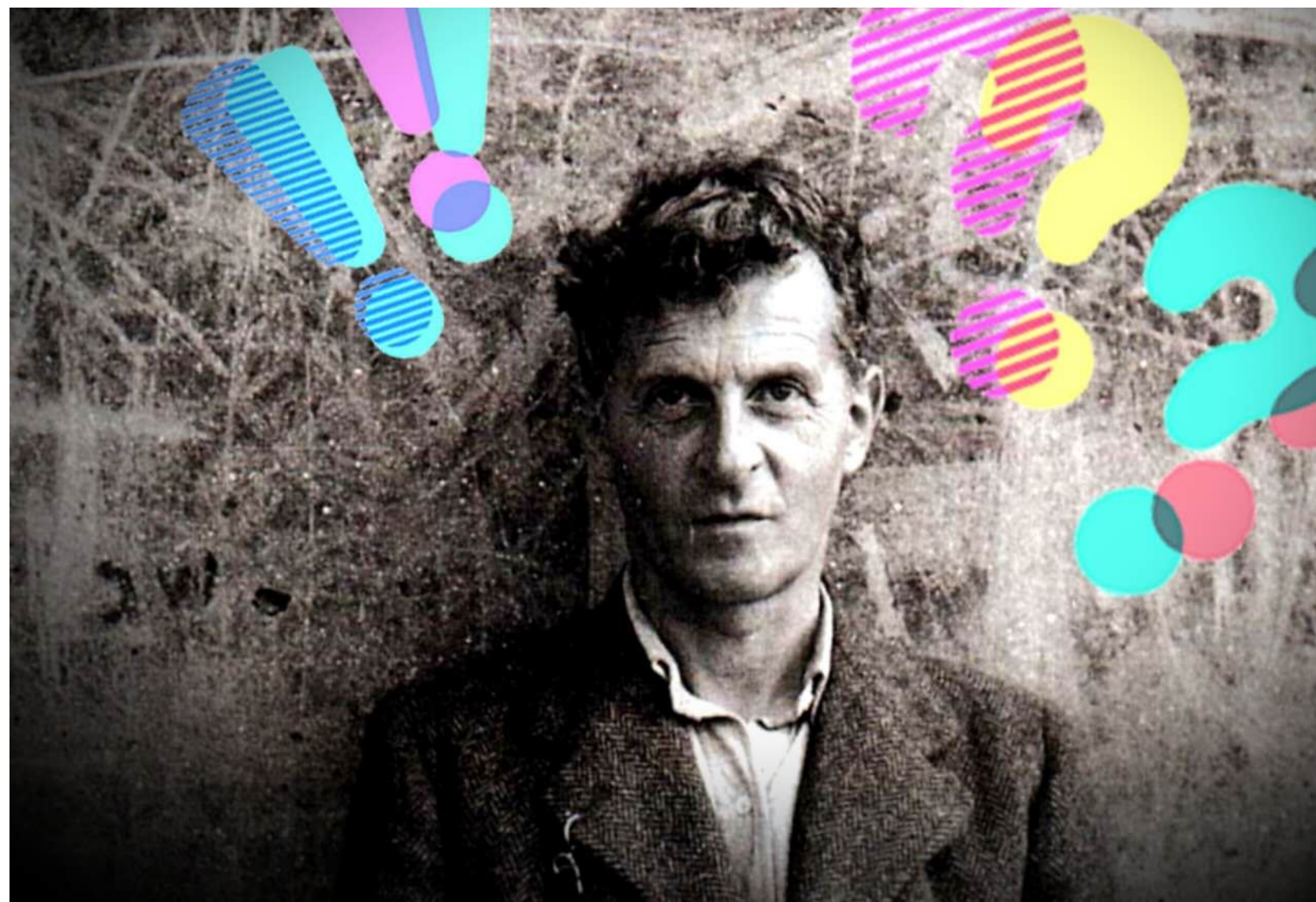
Among these surprising possibilities, doubt suggests that perhaps there is no table at all. Philosophy, if it cannot *answer* so many questions as we could wish, has at least the power of *asking* questions which increase the interest of the world, and show the strangeness and wonder lying just below the surface even in the commonest things of daily life.



The point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and to end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it.

Russell, 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism', 1918





Ludwig
Wittgenstein
(1889 – 1951)

What is philosophy?

‘What Is Analytic Philosophy?’

What is analysis?

What is intuition?

What is a paradox?

What is logic?

Analytic Philosophy

Western tradition

Beginning in Europe

Late 19th century – present

- Ideals

- Clarity of thought
- Objectivity of results

- Strategies

- Precision of expression
- Rigour of argument

- Method

- Analysis

- Tool

- Formal logic

Paradox

= *against, beyond + opinion, belief*

para

doxa

- Vs contradiction

- Interesting

Against common sense, belief deeply held

- Even more interesting

Intuitively true (yet beyond belief)

‘Analysis’

Ancient Greek ἀνάλυσις (analysis)

= loosening up, unravelling, taking apart

Some Famous Paradoxes

Paradox of Analysis

- 1) For any ' $A = B$ ', either ' A ' and ' B ' have the same meaning or not.
- 2) So, ' $A = B$ ' is either trivial or incorrect.

Moore's Paradox

- ❖ It is possible that it is raining and I do not believe it is raining; yet I cannot truly assert that this is actually so.

Russell's Paradox

- 1) For every predicate, there is a set which consists of all and only those objects that satisfy the predicate. (Naïve Comprehension)
- 2) But not for the predicate 'is a set which contains all and only those sets that do not contain themselves'!
- 3) So, Naïve Comprehension is false.

Barber Paradox

- ❖ There can exist no barber who shaves all and only those who do not shave themselves.

Liar Paradox

- ❖ 'This statement is a lie.'

Paradox of Omnipotence

- ❖ 'Can God create a stone too heavy for him to lift?'

Paradox of Inference

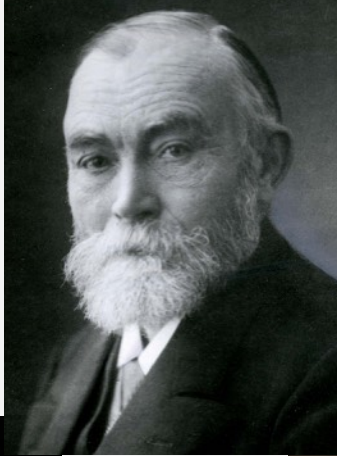
- 1) 'If A, B and C (if A and B, then Z), why Z?'
- 2) 'Because of D (if A, B and C, then Z)?'
- 3) 'Etc.' etc.

Gottlob Frege

1848 – 1925

Concept Script, 1879

'On Sense and Reference', 1892



Bertrand Russell

1872 – 1970

'On Denoting', 1905

Principia Mathematica, 1910



G. E. Moore

1873 – 1958

Principia Ethica, 1903

'Proof of an External World', 1939



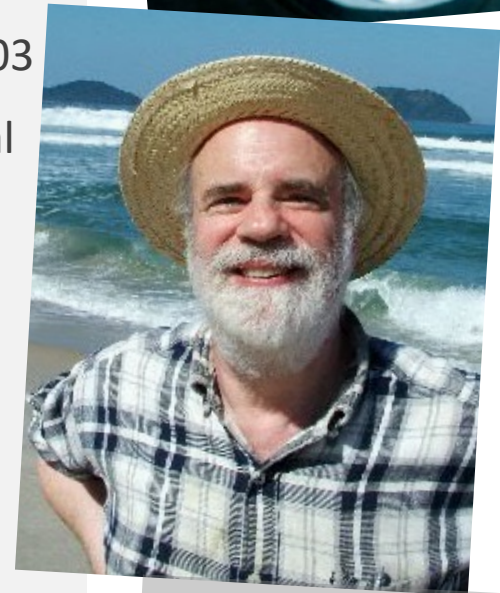
Ludwig Wittgenstein

1889 – 1951

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 1921

Philosophical Investigations, 1953

Timothy Williamson
(*1955)



Saul Kripke
(1940 – 2022)

Course

Introduction to Philosophy (哲学导论), Spring Semester 2024

Teachers

Sebastian SUNDAY GRÈVE, coordinator (ssg@pku.edu.cn) (by appointment)

Julius SCHÖNHERR (schoenherrjulius@gmail.com) (office hours: Wednesdays 15:00–17:00)

Teaching assistants

蒋凡一 JIANG Fanyi (Lucy), lead administrator (2000014916@stu.pku.edu.cn)

陈昱竹 CHEN Yuzhu (2301210992@stu.pku.edu.cn)

李羽基 LI Yuji (2201210992@stu.pku.edu.cn)

梁家铭 LIANG Jiaming (Frank) (2201210836@pku.edu.cn)

廖新媛 LIAO Xinyuan (2001110832@stu.pku.edu.cn)

谈知辰 TAN Zhichen (2301210997@stu.pku.edu.cn)

万舒婵 WAN Shuchan (2201110934@stu.pku.edu.cn)

王睿里 WANG Ruili (2201210991@stu.pku.edu.cn)

Locations

Lectures: Weeks 1–16, Tuesdays, 15:10–17:00, room tba

Discussion (required for 3 credits): Weeks 1–16, times to be determined, rooms tba



Level

Beginners; open to all students of the university; no prerequisites; auditors welcome

Description

This course is an introduction to philosophy in the Western tradition, with a focus on contemporary trends in analytic philosophy. It will cover topics in all of the main areas of philosophy including ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology.

Format

Weekly reading assignments will be limited to small amounts of text, on average less than ten pages; additional learning materials recommended by the teachers will be strictly optional. All students will receive extensive guidance on essay writing before they are given a choice of questions (at least one per studied topic) for the 500-word essay, which is to be written in the form of an exam in the second half of the semester. Students may take the course for either two or three credits. A third credit can be earned by participating in weekly discussion sections in addition to the lectures, including weekly written assignments of around 100 English words (which students can decide not to undertake at most three times); each section will be led by one of the teaching assistants, and individual groups will normally consist of no more than twelve students; there will be a choice of different discussion times, and students can choose their preferred discussion language (Chinese or English). Marking standards will differ between two-credit and three-credit students, so as to enable fair and objective evaluation of learning achievements according to the two different versions of the course.

Requirements

Weekly reading assignments, usually less than ten pages

Attendance (no more than three unexcused absences)

In addition, for a total of two credits

1 × 500-word essay, in-class, typically Week 13 (50% of the overall course mark)

1 × two-hour written examination, at the end of term (50%)

Alternatively, for a total of three credits

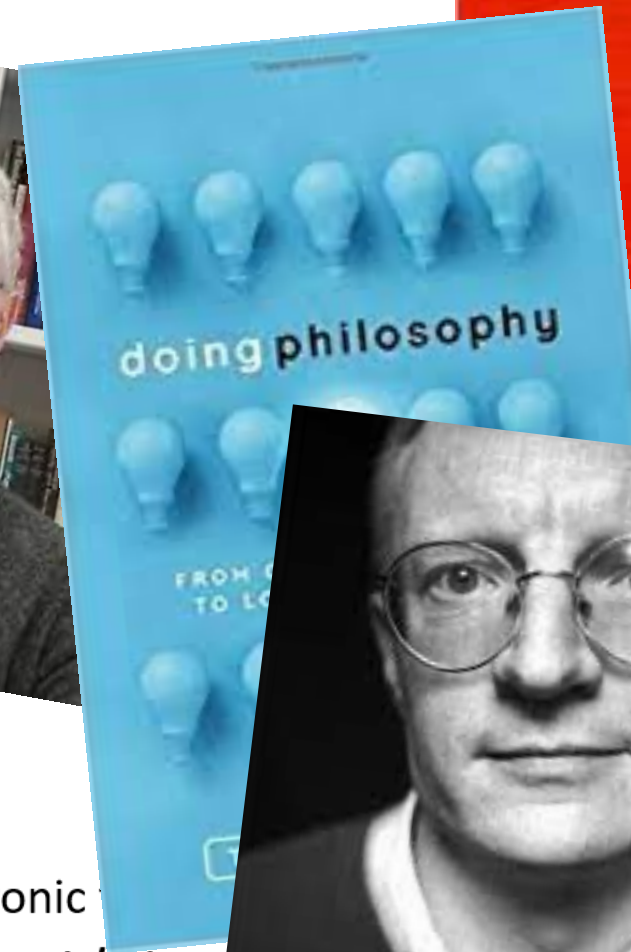
Participation in discussion sections (20%)

1 × 500-word essay, in-class, typically Week 13 (40%)

1 × two-hour written examination, at the end of term (40%)

Schedule of topics

- 1: Introduction: what is analytic philosophy?
- 2: Philosophical paradoxes
- 3: Science and philosophy
- 4: AI ethics
- 5: Dualism
- 6: Physicalism
- 7: Consciousness
- 8: Intentionality
- 9: The self
- 10: The analysis of knowledge
- 11: Truth
- 12: Nietzsche vs Socrates
- 13: Scepticism
- 14: Naming and necessity



Michael Beaney
**ANALYTIC
PHILOSOPHY**
A Very Short Introduction

OXFORD

Optional background reading

[In alphabetical order. All readings will be made available in electronic format.]

Beaney, Michael. 2017. *Analytic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Russell, Bertrand. 1912. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Williams and Norgate (Oxford UP, 1967).

Williamson, Timothy. 2018. *Doing Philosophy: From Common Curiosity to Logical Reasoning*. OUP.

Writing advice for the 500-word essay

[This advice mainly concerns essays in philosophy, but much of it applies equally to the writing of other kinds of text.]

It is essential that your essay presents an argument in support of an answer to the question it addresses, and that this argument is briefly defended against one or more possible objections.

Clarity and precision are ideals generally worth striving for. Here 'clarity' means that any intelligent person who has never before heard about the issues you are addressing can understand your essay. And 'precision' means that no advanced philosopher can reasonably complain that the terms of your argument are vague or not well defined.

The following four principles may be derived from these ideals.

- (1) Restrict the scope of your essay to offering just an interesting part or version of an answer to merely an interesting part or version of the question (trying to offer a comprehensive philosophical treatment of anything in a short essay tends to be a hopeless undertaking).
- (2) Reduce the number of specialist terms to a minimum (because each one requires an explanation when it is first introduced).
- (3) Prioritise rigour—technical repetition, schematism, etc.—over beauty (for example, continue to use the same word rather than varying it for purely aesthetic reasons).
- (4) Give many examples (any claim that is not absolutely obvious should ideally be accompanied by an example, but you do not have so many words available, so choose your examples wisely).

Improving one's philosophical writing takes time and effort. It is generally advisable to finish a first draft early, and revise it later with at least a few days in between.

Please feel free to approach the teachers with any writing-related questions anytime. You may also benefit from reading Michael Huemer's writing guide (<https://www.owl232.net/writing.htm>).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Sebastian SUNDAY GRÈVE



Sebastian (小塞)



Scan the QR Code to add me on WeChat

✉ ssg@pku.edu.cn

🔗 www.yhposolihp.com

Assistant Professor in Philosophy, Peking University
Faculty Member, Chinese Institute of Foreign Philosophy
Research Fellow, Berggruen Research Center

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