

What is Philosophy?

an introduction



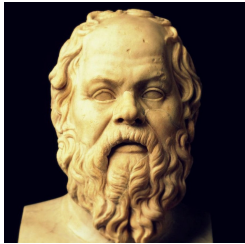
George Matthews, Pennsylvania College of Technology

2020

press "h" for help on keyboard controls

What is philosophy?

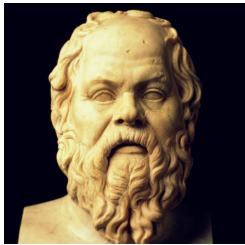
What is philosophy?



Socrates:
470-399 BCE

What is philosophy?

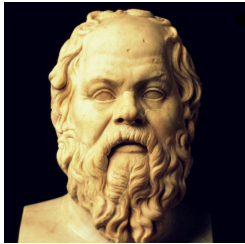
"The unexamined life is not worth living."



Socrates:
470-399 BCE

What is philosophy?

"The unexamined life is not worth living."

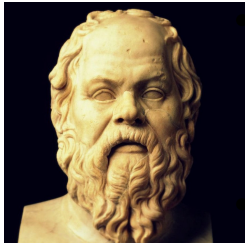


One of the founders of Western philosophy, Socrates spent his life encouraging others to critically examine their fundamental values and assumptions.

Socrates:
470-399 BCE

What is philosophy?

"The unexamined life is not worth living."



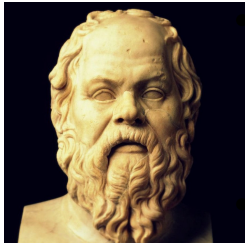
• One of the founders of Western philosophy, Socrates spent his life encouraging others to critically examine their fundamental values and assumptions.

• He was executed for "corrupting the youth."

Socrates:
470-399 BCE

What is philosophy?

"The unexamined life is not worth living."



• One of the founders of Western philosophy, Socrates spent his life encouraging others to critically examine their fundamental values and assumptions.

• He was executed for "corrupting the youth."

Socrates:
470-399 BCE

• Why did people find Socrates' questions so threatening that they killed an old man who would likely soon pass away anyway?

philo-sophia

philo-sophia

The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek words for "love of wisdom."

philo-sophia

The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek words for "love of wisdom."

- Philosophy seeks understanding of the nature of reality and the significance of our lives by applying critical reasoning to our deepest and most general beliefs.

philo-sophia

The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek words for "love of wisdom."

- Philosophy seeks understanding of the nature of reality and the significance of our lives by applying critical reasoning to our deepest and most general beliefs.
- It draws out basic assumptions, by asking questions with all of the wonder of children.

philo-sophia

The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek words for "love of wisdom."

- Philosophy seeks understanding of the nature of reality and the significance of our lives by applying critical reasoning to our deepest and most general beliefs.
- It draws out basic assumptions, by asking questions with all of the wonder of children.
- And it subjects them to careful analysis with all of the precision of a lawyer.

philo-sophia

Science also seeks to understand reality, but it differs from philosophy in its method of evaluating its claims.

philo-sophia

Science also seeks to understand reality, but it differs from philosophy in its method of evaluating its claims.

- If you are wrong in science your predictions fail, or you blow up the lab.

philo-sophia

Science also seeks to understand reality, but it differs from philosophy in its method of evaluating its claims.

- If you are wrong in science your predictions fail, or you blow up the lab.
- If you are wrong in philosophy, your principles and most general beliefs conflict with each other and your mind is at odds with itself.

philo-sophia

Science also seeks to understand reality, but it differs from philosophy in its method of evaluating its claims.

- If you are wrong in science your predictions fail, or you blow up the lab.
- If you are wrong in philosophy, your principles and most general beliefs conflict with each other and your mind is at odds with itself.
- Failure to clarify one's life philosophically may seem unimportant, yet for Socrates such an un-examined life misses what is most valuable about being human.

philo-sophia

Religion addresses the significance of our lives, but it differs from philosophy in how it proceeds.

philo-sophia

Religion addresses the significance of our lives, but it differs from philosophy in how it proceeds.

- Religion emerges from the spontaneous ways we make meaning in our lives. It often embraces mythical and magical thinking which places us at the center of life's drama.

philo-sophia

Religion addresses the significance of our lives, but it differs from philosophy in how it proceeds.

- Religion emerges from the spontaneous ways we make meaning in our lives. It often embraces mythical and magical thinking which places us at the center of life's drama.
- Philosophy seeks clarification and justification and asks how we might find meaning in a world even where it might not be all about us.

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

More value theory questions...



More value theory questions...



- Is morality in the eye of the beholder or are some things *really* right or wrong?

More value theory questions...



- Is morality in the eye of the beholder or are some things *really* right or wrong?
- Can the ends ever justify the means, or should some things just never be done?

More value theory questions...



- Is morality in the eye of the beholder or are some things *really* right or wrong?
- Can the ends ever justify the means, or should some things just never be done?
- What would a just society look like and how might we get there from here?

More value theory questions...



- Is morality in the eye of the beholder or are some things *really* right or wrong?
- Can the ends ever justify the means, or should some things just never be done?
- What would a just society look like and how might we get there from here?
- What is the value of art and should artists care about who their work might offend?

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

*More epistemological
questions...*



*More epistemological
questions...*



- How can we distinguish between appearances and reality?

*More epistemological
questions...*



- How can we distinguish between appearances and reality?
- What counts as evidence, proof, or disproof and how does logical reasoning work?

*More epistemological
questions...*



- How can we distinguish between appearances and reality?
- What counts as evidence, proof, or disproof and how does logical reasoning work?
- What is science and how do we distinguish it from pretenders to science?

*More epistemological
questions...*



- How can we distinguish between appearances and reality?
- What counts as evidence, proof, or disproof and how does logical reasoning work?
- What is science and how do we distinguish it from pretenders to science?
- What is truth and is it singular or plural?

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

Philosophical questions

More metaphysical questions...



More metaphysical questions...



- What sorts of things exist -- only matter, or minds/souls/disembodied spirits as well?

More metaphysical questions...



- What sorts of things exist -- only matter, or minds/souls/disembodied spirits as well?
- What is the relationship between minds and brains, and can we build an artificial brain that actually has a mind?

More metaphysical questions...



- What sorts of things exist -- only matter, or minds/souls/disembodied spirits as well?
- What is the relationship between minds and brains, and can we build an artificial brain that actually has a mind?
- How is freedom even possible in a world where everything that happens seems to have a cause outside of itself?

More metaphysical questions...



- What sorts of things exist -- only matter, or minds/souls/disembodied spirits as well?
- What is the relationship between minds and brains, and can we build an artificial brain that actually has a mind?
- How is freedom even possible in a world where everything that happens seems to have a cause outside of itself?
- Does God exist? This question is related to epistemological questions about religion (How can we know for sure?), and value theory questions (What does it matter?) as well.

The philosopher's toolkit

The philosopher's toolkit

Since philosophy potentially asks us to examine *all* of our assumptions, there can be no fixed method for doing philosophy - historically speaking there have been many.

The philosopher's toolkit

Since philosophy potentially asks us to examine *all* of our assumptions, there can be no fixed method for doing philosophy - historically speaking there have been many.

Over time, however, certain useful principles have been developed.

The philosopher's toolkit

Since philosophy potentially asks us to examine *all* of our assumptions, there can be no fixed method for doing philosophy - historically speaking there have been many.

Over time, however, certain useful principles have been developed.

- Explicitly state our assumptions -- this can be a challenge since they *are* assumptions.

The philosopher's toolkit

Since philosophy potentially asks us to examine *all* of our assumptions, there can be no fixed method for doing philosophy - historically speaking there have been many.

Over time, however, certain useful principles have been developed.

- Explicitly state our assumptions -- this can be a challenge since they *are* assumptions.
- Draw out their logical implications -- do theses fit well with each other or do they clash with other ideas we have?

The philosopher's toolkit

Since philosophy potentially asks us to examine *all* of our assumptions, there can be no fixed method for doing philosophy - historically speaking there have been many.

Over time, however, certain useful principles have been developed.

- Explicitly state our assumptions -- this can be a challenge since they *are* assumptions.
- Draw out their logical implications -- do theses fit well with each other or do they clash with other ideas we have?
- Make lots of distinctions. (Also the reason for the bad reputation of philosophers! Splitting hairs, or distinguishing real differences? It can be hard to tell.)

Socrates and Thrasymachus debate justice

Socrates and Thrasymachus debate justice

- As an example of how philosophical analysis proceeds, consider the following dialogue between Socrates and Thrasymachus, a contemporary of Socrates who held that philosophical questioning was irrelevant.

Socrates and Thrasymachus debate justice

- As an example of how philosophical analysis proceeds, consider the following dialogue between Socrates and Thrasymachus, a contemporary of Socrates who held that philosophical questioning was irrelevant.
- For Thrasymachus, might makes right in the sense that the powerful get to define what key ideas like "justice" really mean.

Socrates and Thrasymachus debate justice

- As an example of how philosophical analysis proceeds, consider the following dialogue between Socrates and Thrasymachus, a contemporary of Socrates who held that philosophical questioning was irrelevant.
- For Thrasymachus, might makes right in the sense that the powerful get to define what key ideas like "justice" really mean.
- Socrates, on the other hand highlights how true wisdom alone can guide us and so we must let logic lead the way.

Socrates and Thrasymachus debate justice

Socrates and Thrasymachus debate justice

Socrates and Thrasymachus debate justice

Socrates and Thrasymachus debate justice

Socrates and Thrasymachus debate justice

Find out more

Socrates on self-confidence and questioning others about their values. A great video outlining the motivation for doing philosophy in the first place.



Credits

Built with:

Rstudio

xarignan html presentation framework

[download this presentation](#) or [print it](#)

[editorial suggestions and comments](#): requires a (free) GitHub account.