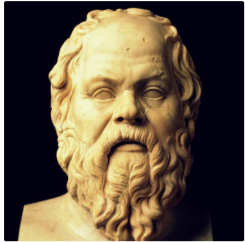# *What is Philosophy?*

the examined life

Jacques-Louis David "The Death of Socrates"

George Matthews, Plymouth State University

2020

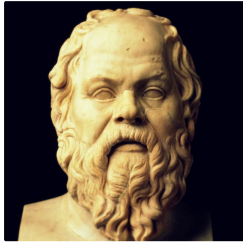*What is philosophy?*

What is philosophy?

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470-399 BCE
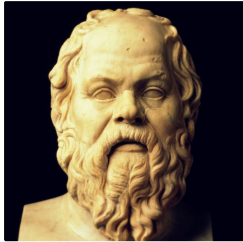
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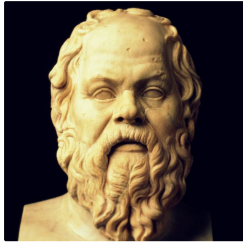
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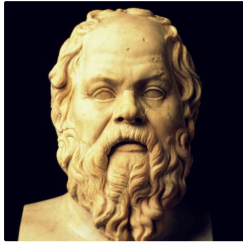
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? *Why did people find Socrates' questions so threatening that they killed an old man who would likely soon pass away anyway?*

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? *What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge? Can one know things without being wise or the other way around?*

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- Failure to clarify one's life philosophically may seem unimportant, yet for Socrates not doing so is to lead an "unexamined life" and miss out on what is most valuable and unique about being human.

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- Philosophy is fundamentally "humanistic" since it trusts our ability to figure things out, while religion often appeals to faith, emphasizing the limits of our ability to comprehend things.
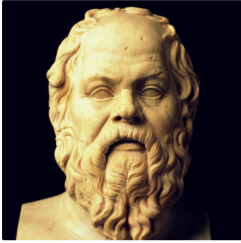
Philosophical questions

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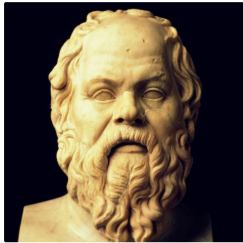
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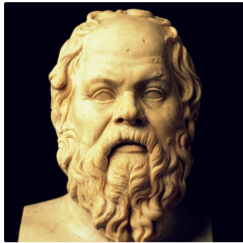470-399 BCE

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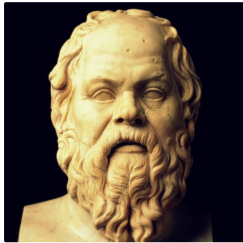
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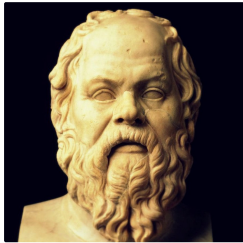
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- Such *normative* questions challenge us to give an account of ourselves, our values and our assumptions.

- Socrates' question is a question in the sub-field of philosophy called value theory or axiology.

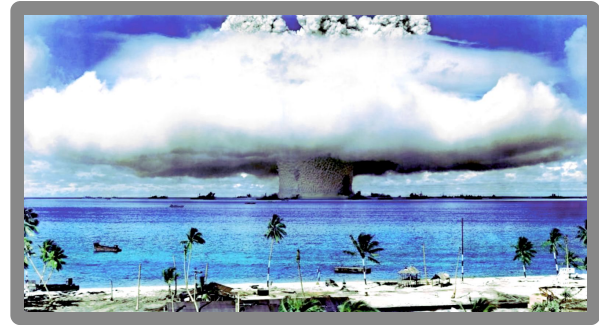*Value theory questions about science*
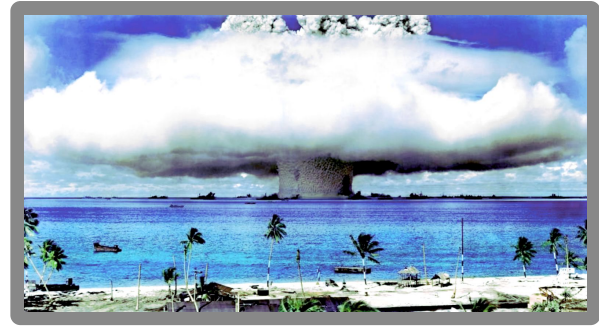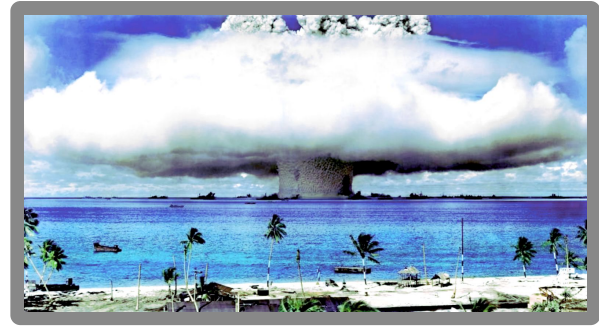
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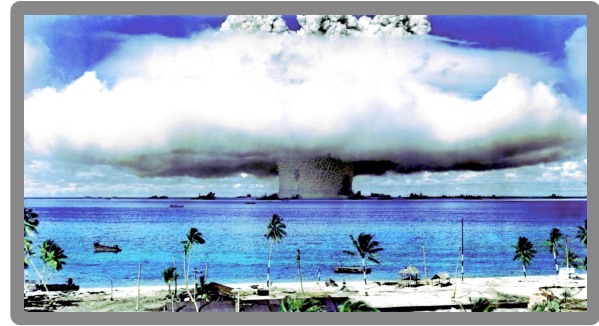
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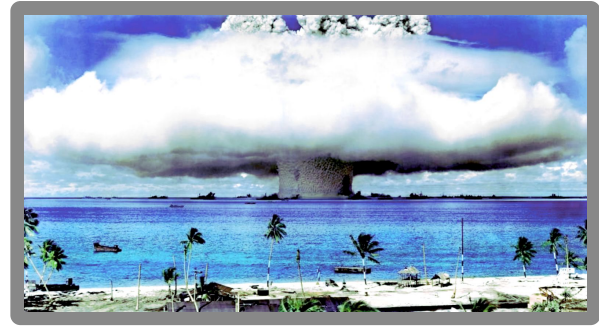
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- What role should scientific findings play in social policy?

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Rene Descartes
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- This is a question in the sub-field of philosophy called epistemology or theory of knowledge.
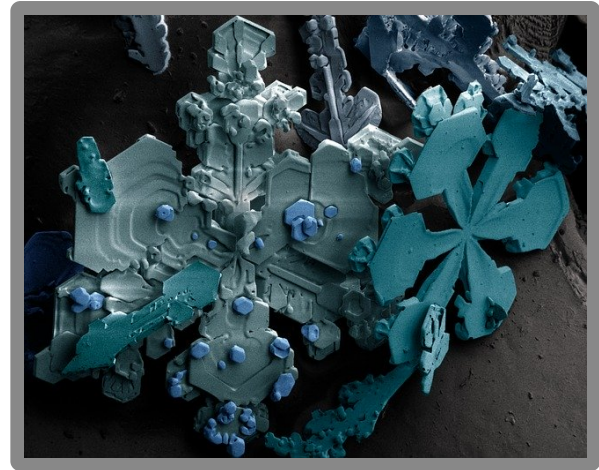
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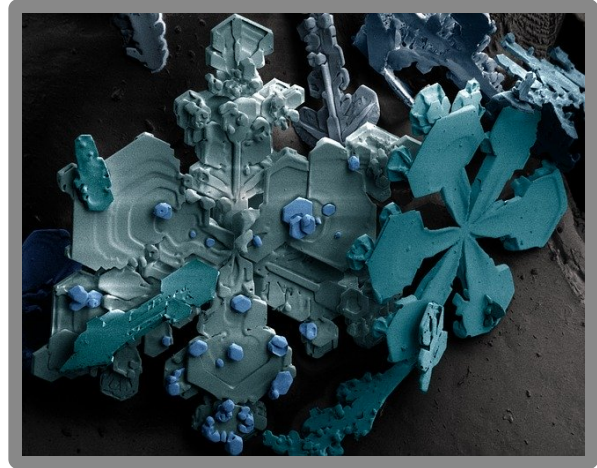
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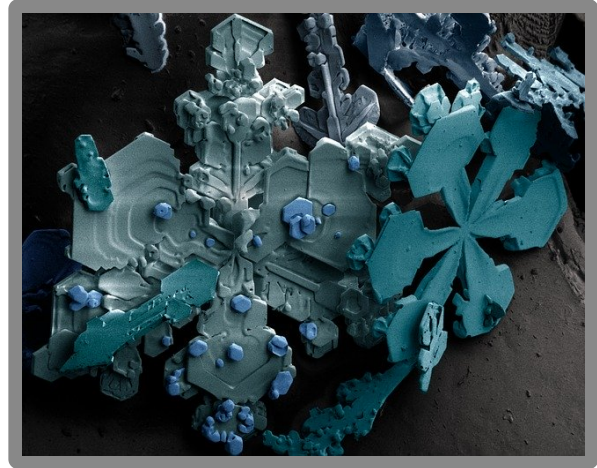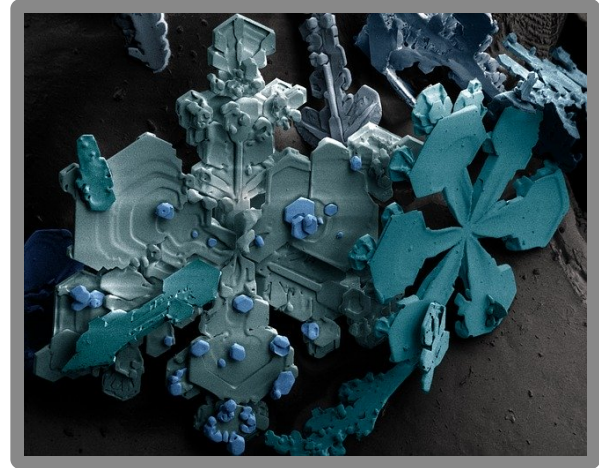
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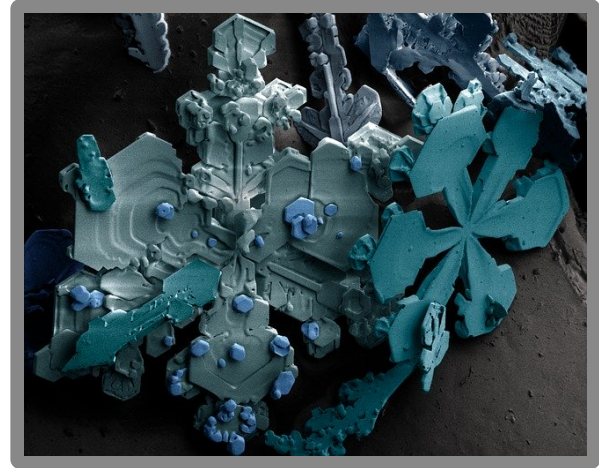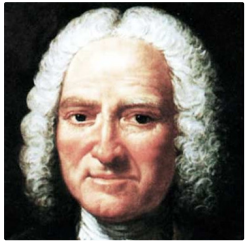
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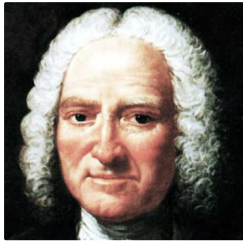
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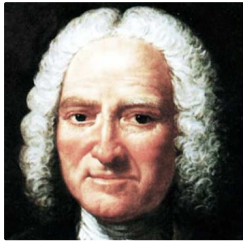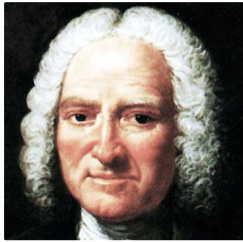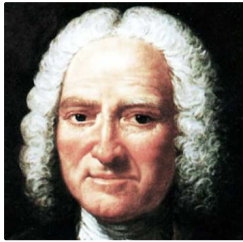
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- This is a question in the sub-field of philosophy called metaphysics or ontology which seeks an account of the basic nature of reality.

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- Are purposes built-in to things or imposed on them by us?

The philosopher's toolkit

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- Make lots of distinctions. (Philosophers have a bad reputation for "splitting hairs," but we think it is important to be precise in our use of language.)

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.

What is Philosophy?: The Crash Course is a series of short, entertaining and infromative videos produced by the Green bothers John and Hank. Here Hank Green gives his take on what philosophy is.

How to Argue: the second video in the Crash Course Philosophy series outlines the basics of philosophical reasoning and argumentation.

Rembrandt "Anatomy Lesson"

Credits

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xarignan html presentation framework

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