

# *What is Philosophy?*

*the examined life*



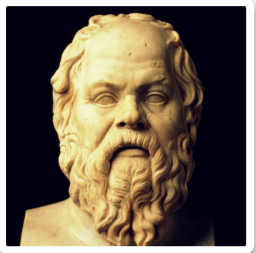
Jacques-Louis David "The Death of Socrates"

George Matthews, Plymouth State University

2020

*What is philosophy?*

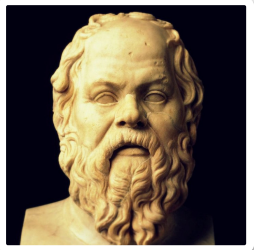
# *What is philosophy?*



Socrates  
470-399 BCE

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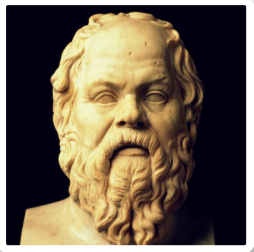
"The unexamined life is not worth living."



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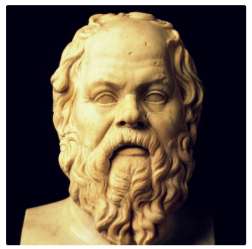


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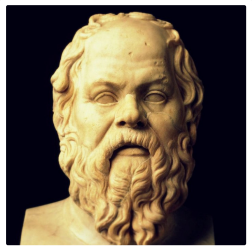


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*Why did people find Socrates' questions so threatening that they killed an old man who would likely soon pass away anyway?*

*philo-sophia*



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

*philo-sophia*



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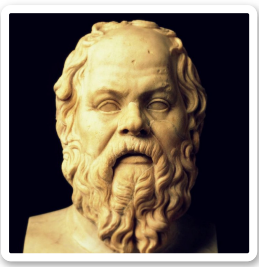


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- Philosophy seeks clarification and justification and asks how we might find meaning, even in a world where we are not at the center of things.
- Philosophy is fundamentally "humanistic" since it trusts our ability to figure things out, while religion often appeals to faith, emphasizing the limits of our ability to comprehend things.

## *Philosophical questions*

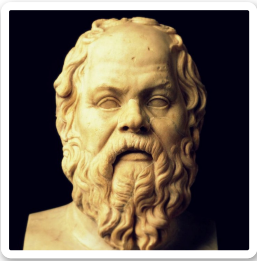
## *Philosophical questions*



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"How should I live my life? In pursuit of power and money or in pursuit of wisdom?"

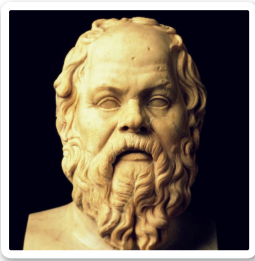


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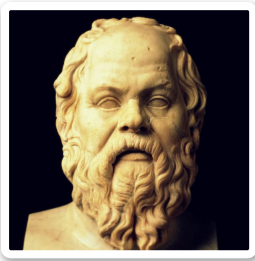


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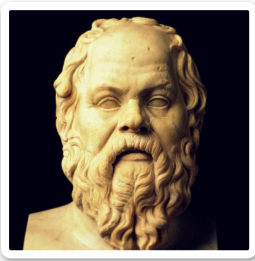


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- Socrates' question is a question in the sub-field of philosophy called **value theory** or **axiology**.

*Value theory questions about science*



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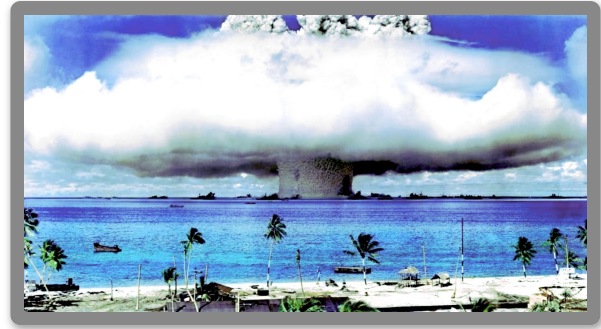
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- Is it ever wrong to pursue knowledge and is it sometimes just best *not* to know?
- Is science value neutral, with moral questions only relevant to the application of scientific findings?
- Is scientific knowledge public or private, and who should profit from new discoveries?
- What role should scientific findings play in social policy?



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1596-1650

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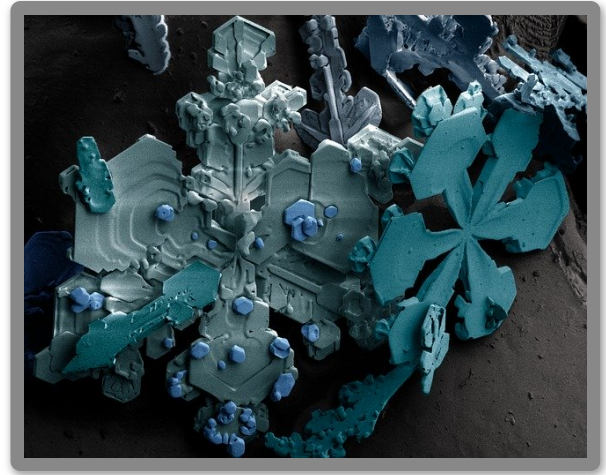
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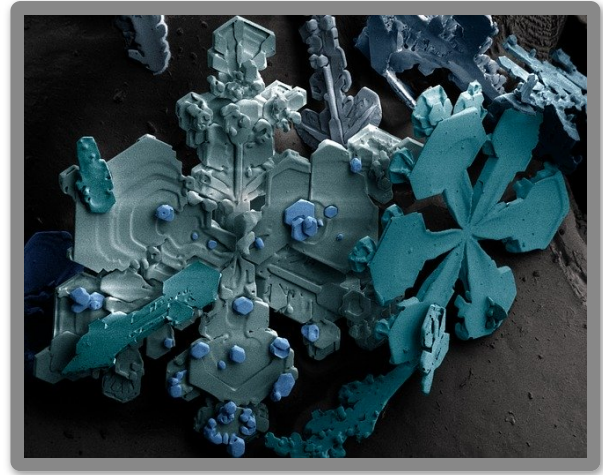
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- Descartes asked this question at the beginning of the Scientific Revolution when old "certainties" were revealed to be based on false assumptions.
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- This is a question in the sub-field of philosophy called **epistemology** or **theory of knowledge**.

*More epistemological questions...*

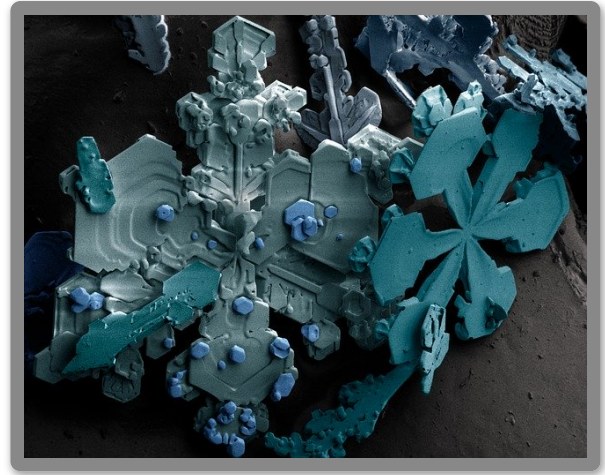


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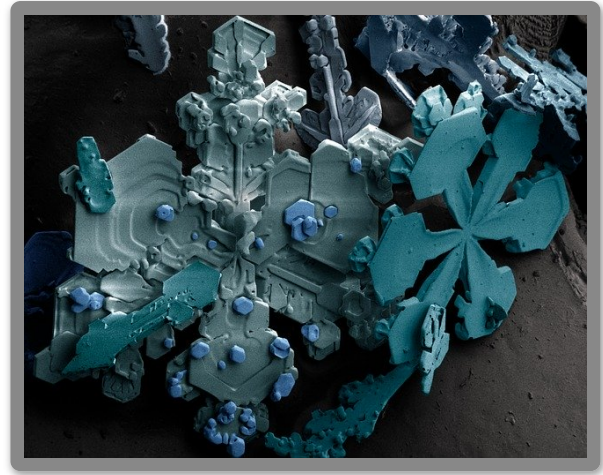
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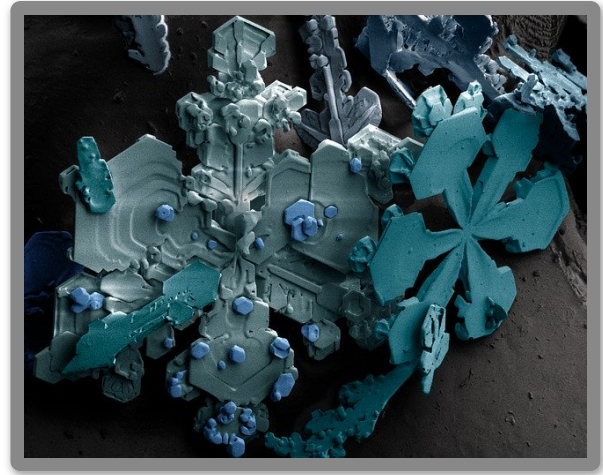


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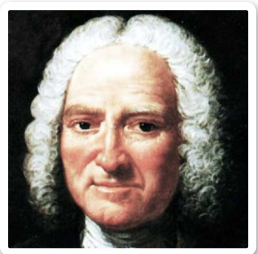
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- What is truth and is it singular or plural?

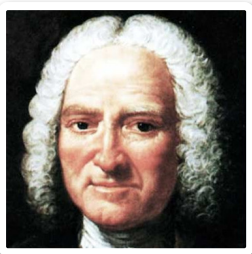
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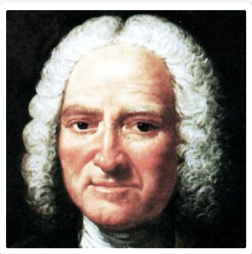
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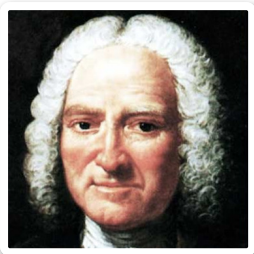
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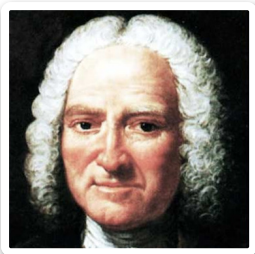


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- Science seeks answers to particular questions about the regularities in the world of our experience and shrinks away from such general questions as this.
- This is a question in the sub-field of philosophy called **metaphysics** or **ontology** which seeks an account of the basic nature of reality.

*More metaphysical questions*





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

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- Explicitly state our assumptions -- this can be a challenge since they *are* assumptions after all.
- Draw out their logical implications -- do these assumptions fit well with each other and do they clash with other ideas we have?
- 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 informative videos produced by the Green brothers 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

*Built with:*

**Rstudio**

**xarignan** html presentation framework

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**editorial suggestions and comments:** requires a (free) GitHub account.