

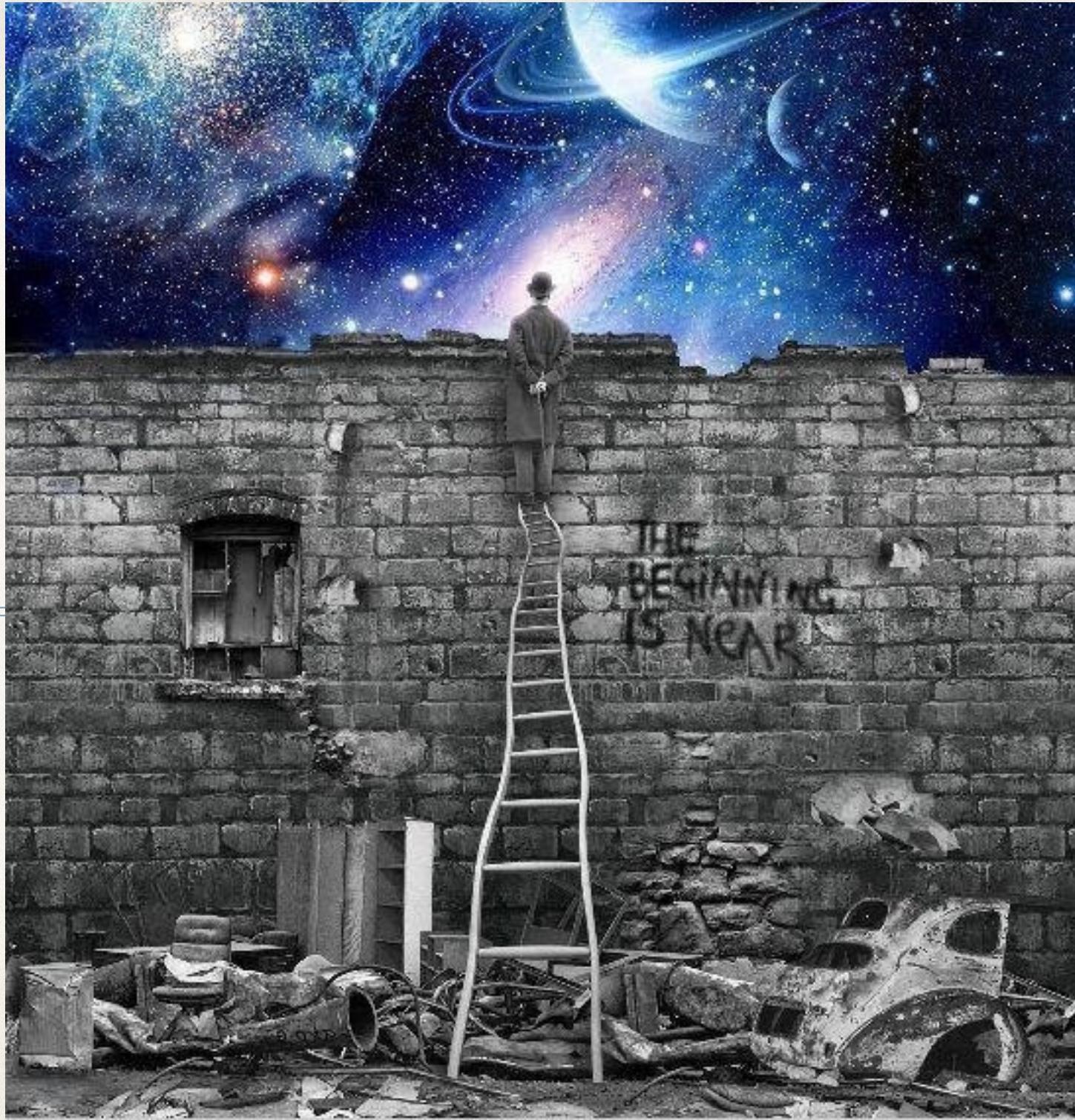
PHI 171

Problems of Philosophy

Marcello Di Bello

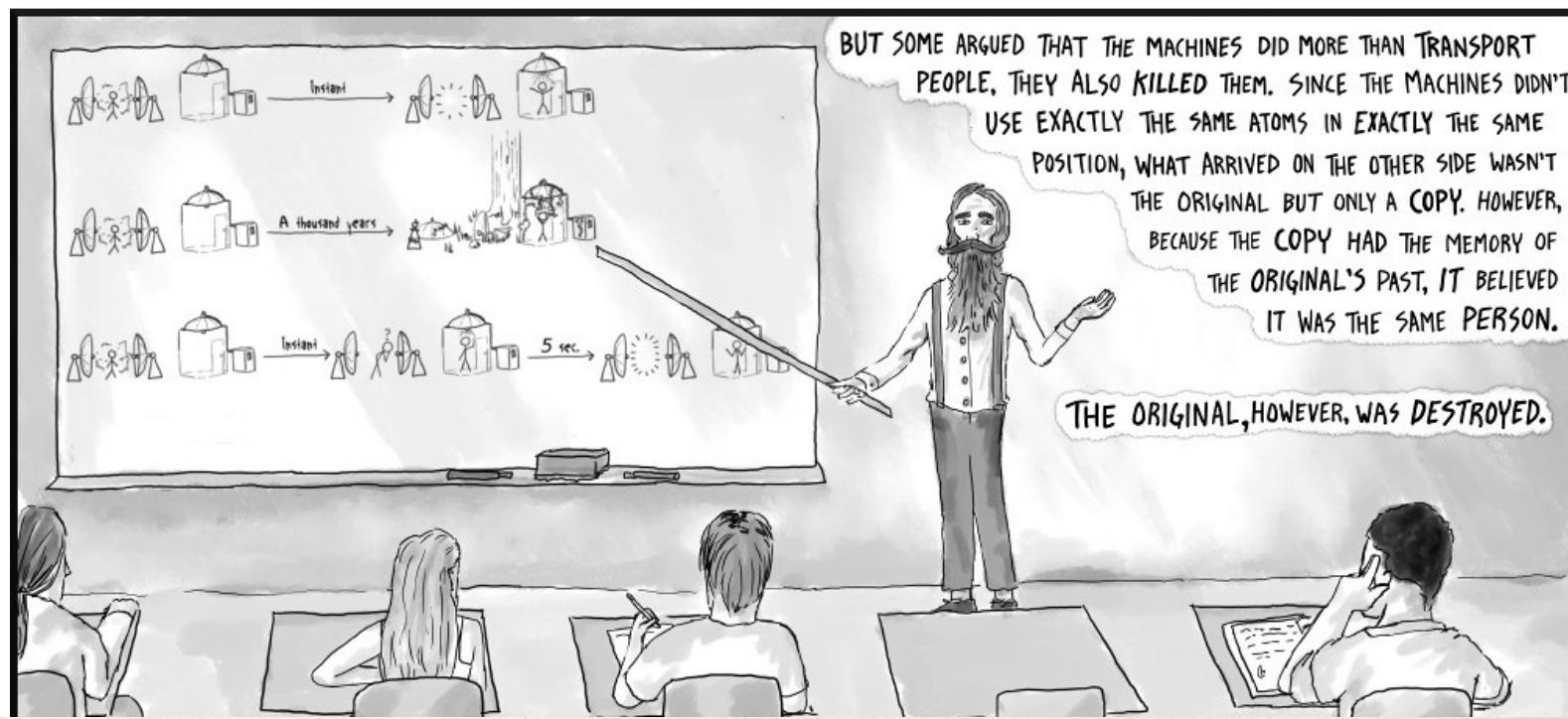
Lehman College
CUNY

Fall 2014

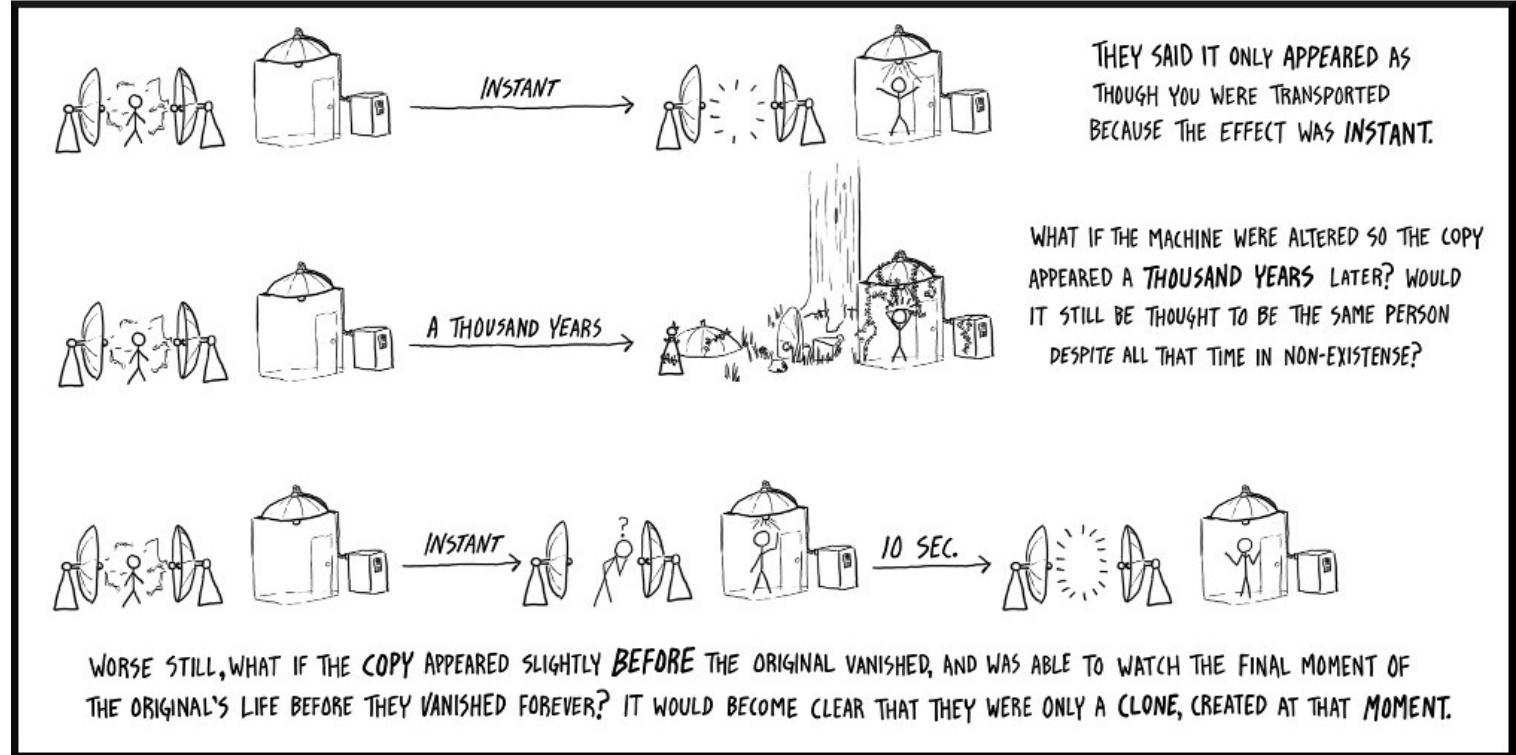


Let's Begin With Some
Philosophy for You...

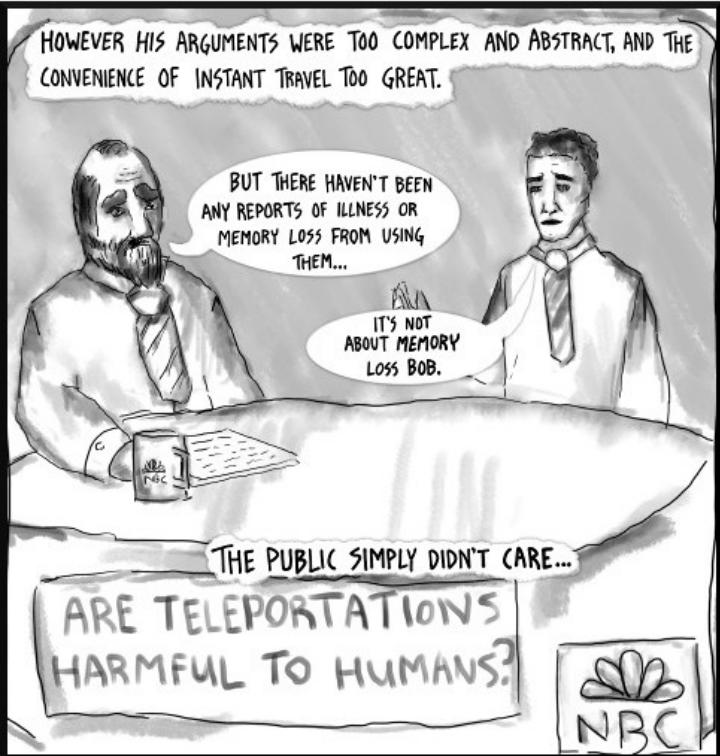
Existential Comics (1)



Existential Comics (2)



Existential Comics (3)



Existential Comics (4)



Existential Comics (5)



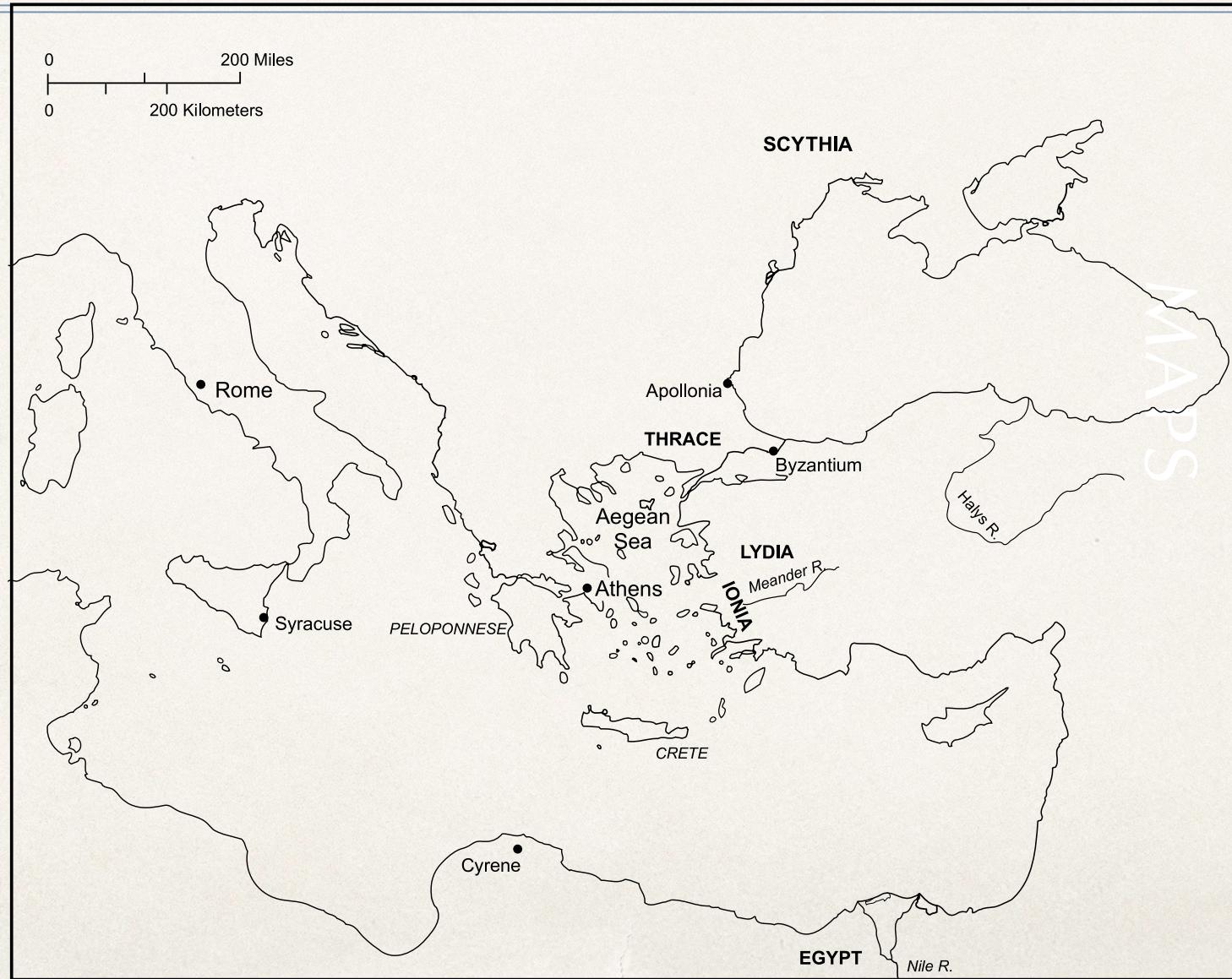
What is Death Then? Can we Experience Death?

Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present. Our life has no end in just the way in which our visual field has no limits.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

This Was Just a Taste of Philosophy...
Now Some History and Geography

Western Philosophy Began in Ancient Greece in the Sixth Century BC



A PRESOCRATICS READER

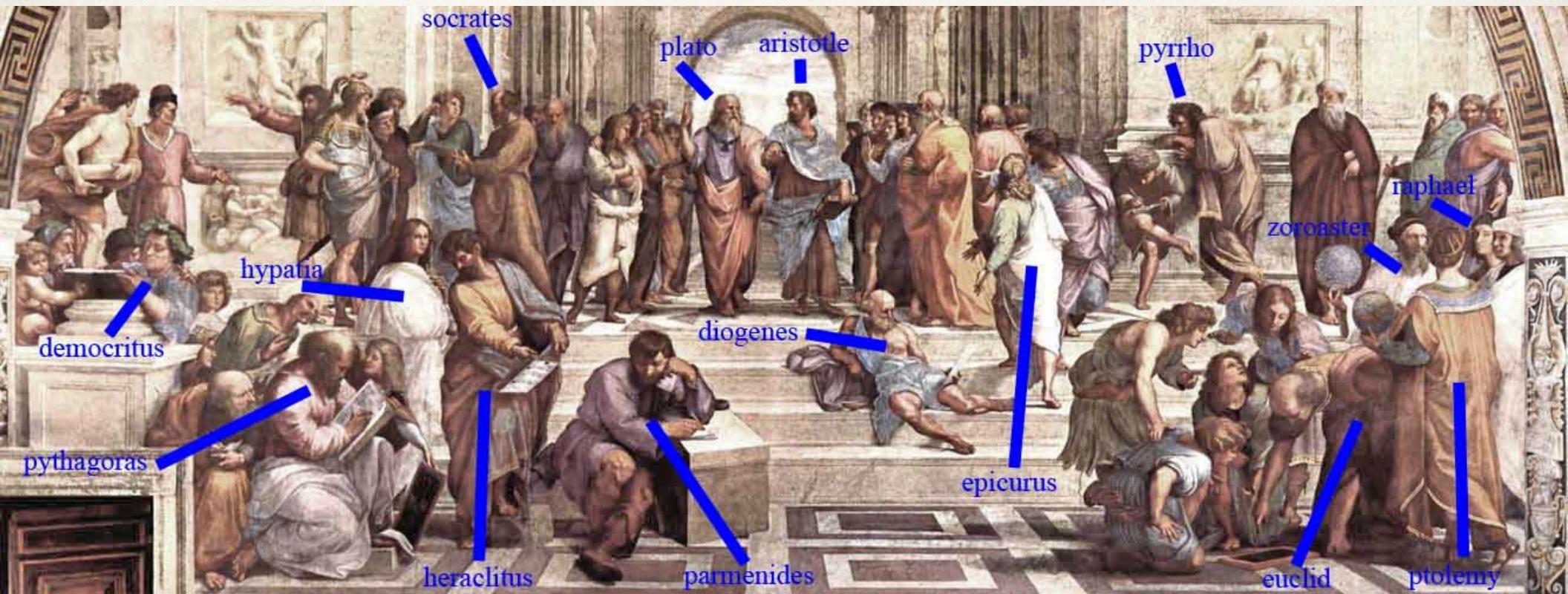
MAPS

X

The School of Athens by Raphael



Some Names of Ancient Greek Philosophers



Quotations from Anaximander

*...the principle of the reality [=arche] is neither water nor any of the other things called elements, but some nature which is **Infinity** [=apeiron], out of which come to be all the heavens and the worlds in them. Infinity is eternal and ageless and surrounds all the worlds.*

....in the beginning humans were born from animals of a different kind, since other animals quickly manage on their own, and humans alone require lengthy nursing. For this reason they would not have survived if they had been like this at the beginning.

Quotations from Heraclitus

The road up and the road down are one and the same.

It is not possible to step twice into the same river. . . . It scatters and again comes together, and approaches and recedes.

We step into and we do not step into the same rivers. We are and we are not.

You would not discover the limits of the soul although you traveled every road: so deep a logos does it have.

War is the father of all and king of all, and some he shows as gods, others as humans; some he makes slaves, others free.

And in China?

While Western philosophy was developing in Ancient Greece in the VI century BC, at the same in China...

Lao-Tze

*Mastering others is strength.
Mastering yourself is true power.

By letting it go it all gets done. The
world is won by those who let it go.
But when you try and try. The world
is beyond the winning.

If you realize that all things change,
there is nothing you will try to hold
on to. If you are not afraid of dying,
there is nothing you cannot achieve.*

Lao Tze, Tao Te Ching



Confucius

The profound person understands what is moral. The small person understands what is profitable. (4.16)

Do not look at, do not listen to, do not speak of, do not do whatever is contrary to ritual propriety. (12.1)

Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, a father a father, and a son a son. (12.11)

Confucius, *Analectas*



And in India?

While philosophy was developing in Ancient Greece and in China in the VI century BC, at the same in India..

Some Questions the Buddha Refused to Answer

Is the world eternal?

...or not?

...or both?

...or neither?

Is the world finite?

...or not?

...or both?

...or neither?

Is the self identical with the body?

...or is it different from the body?

These are precisely some of the questions that Western philosophers have struggled to address. Why did the Buddha refuse to answer them?

But, more than 2000 years later, the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote

“What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.”

Why did Wittgenstein say that?

The Buddhist Parable of the Arrow

It's just as if a man were wounded with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. His friends and companions, kinsmen & relatives would provide him with a surgeon, and the man would say, "I won't have this arrow removed until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble warrior, a priest, a merchant, or a worker." He would say, "I won't have this arrow removed until I know the given name and clan name of the man who wounded me... until I know whether he was tall, medium, or short... until I know whether he was dark, ruddy-brown, or golden-colored... until I know his home village, town, or city... until I know whether the bow with which I was wounded was a long bow or a crossbow... until I know whether the feathers of the shaft with which I was wounded were those of a vulture, a stork, a hawk, a peacock, or another bird... etc."

The man would die and those things would still remain unknown to him.

What Is Philosophy Then?

Using human rationality to ask questions about the essence of reality, human nature and the principles governing society

Realizing the limits of human rational inquiry (*recall the Buddhist parable of the arrow*)

Philosophical Questions That We Will Explore in This Course

Time and Change

Is time real? Is time an illusion?

Does the world change? Or is change just an appearance?

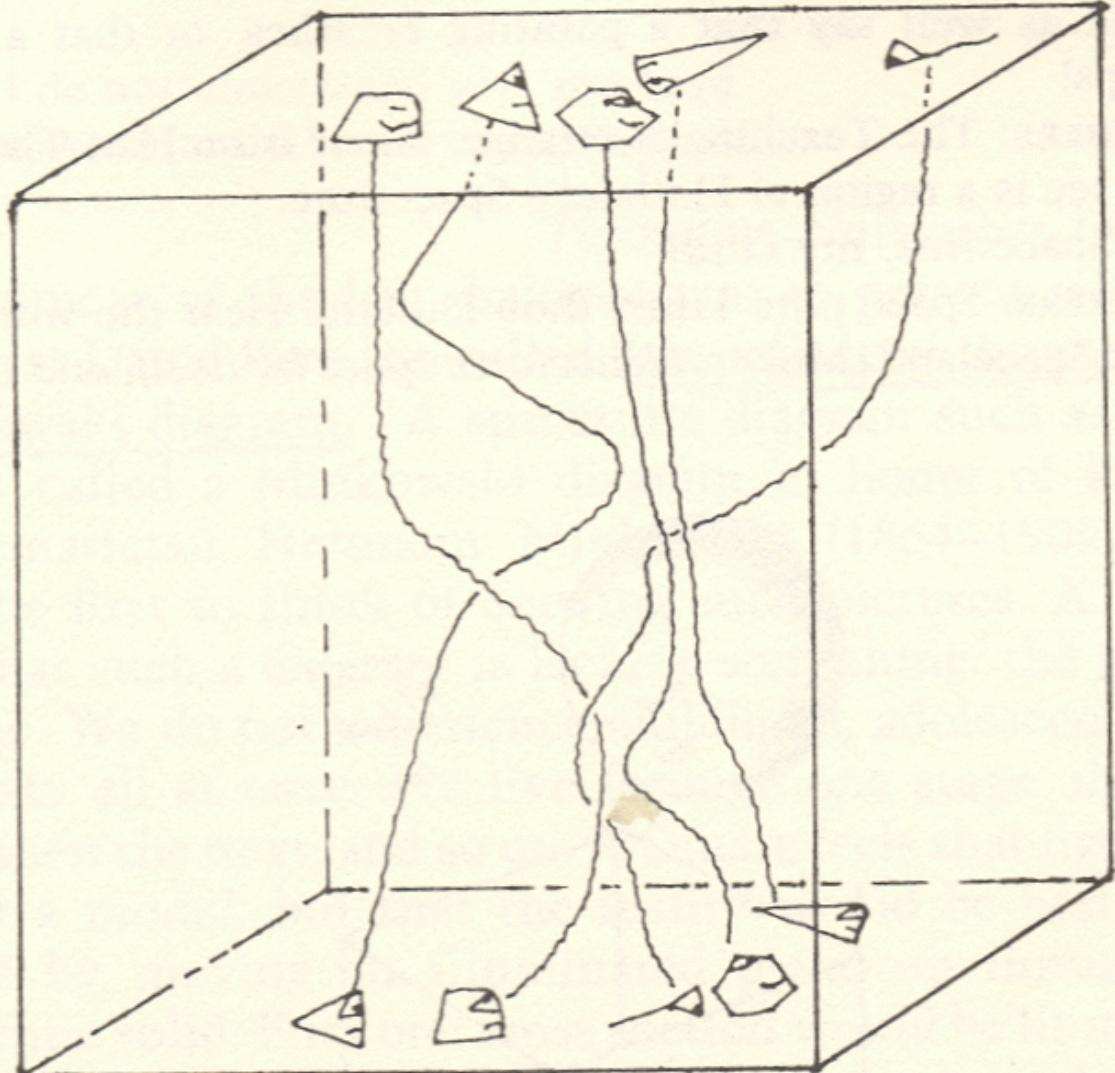
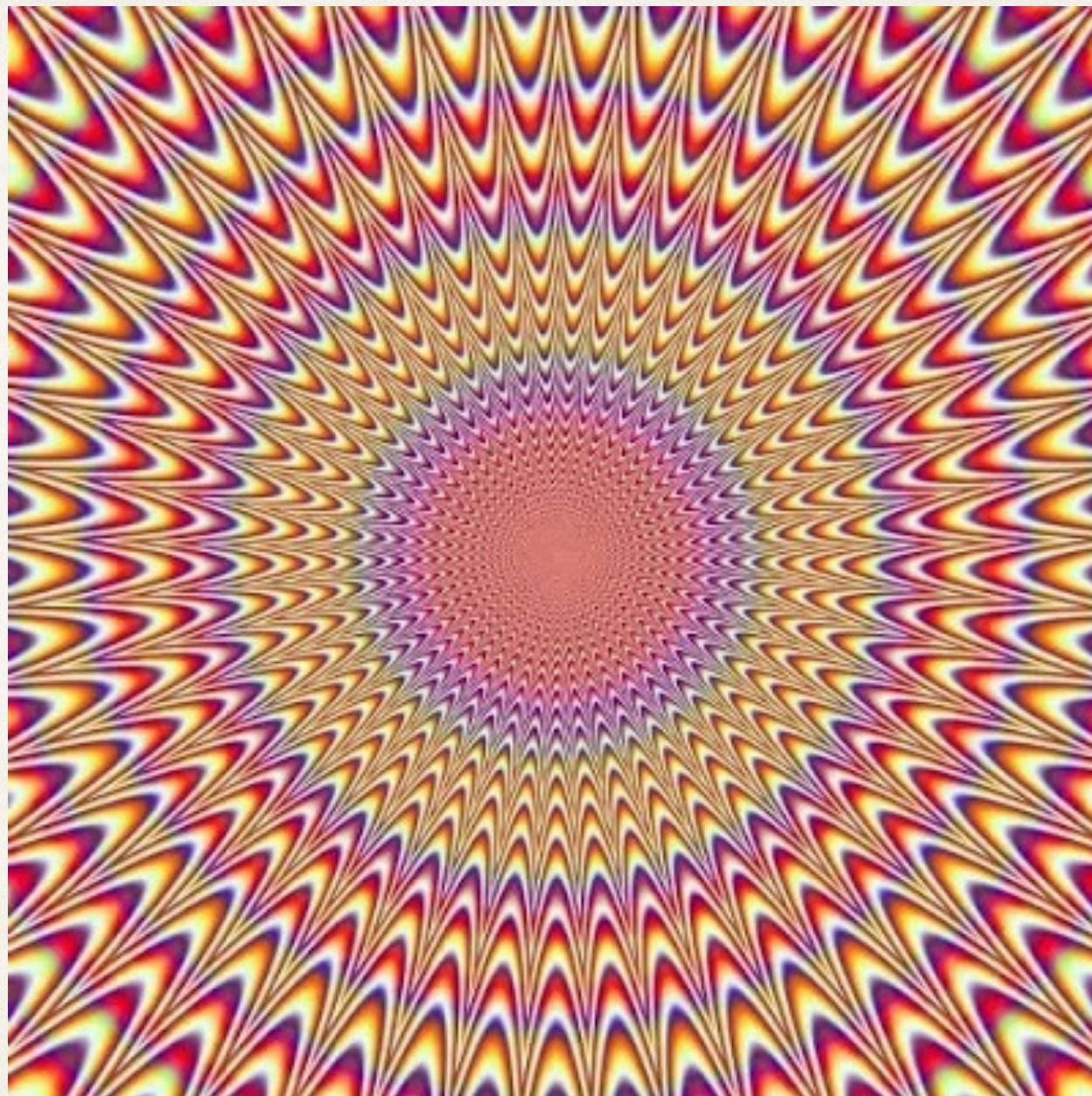
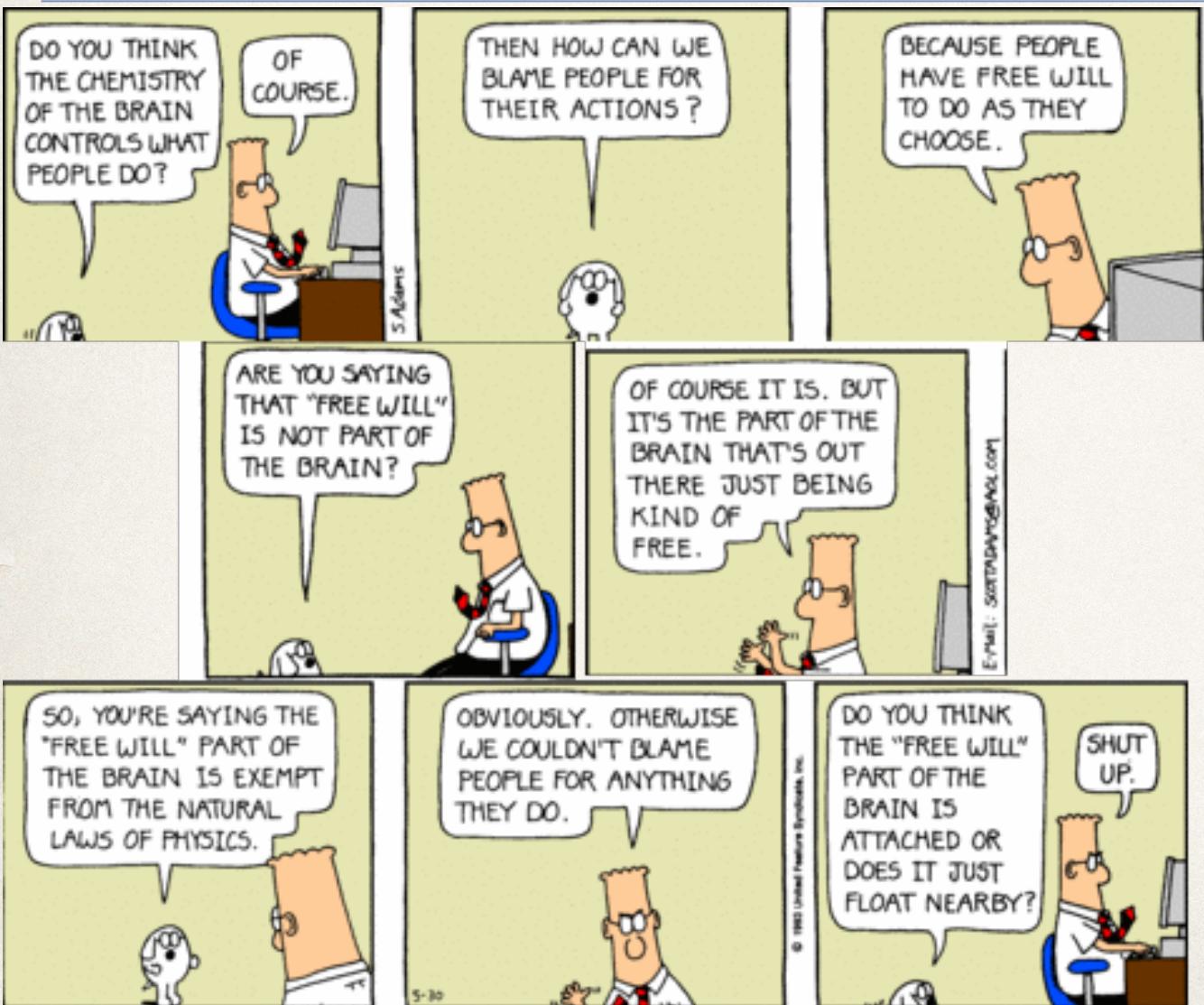


Fig. 140. A tangled tale.



Free Will and the Future

Is the future
predetermined?



Do we have
free will? Are
we free to
choose?

Consciousness and Artificial Intelligence

Can
consciousness
be physical?

Are we just our
bodies?

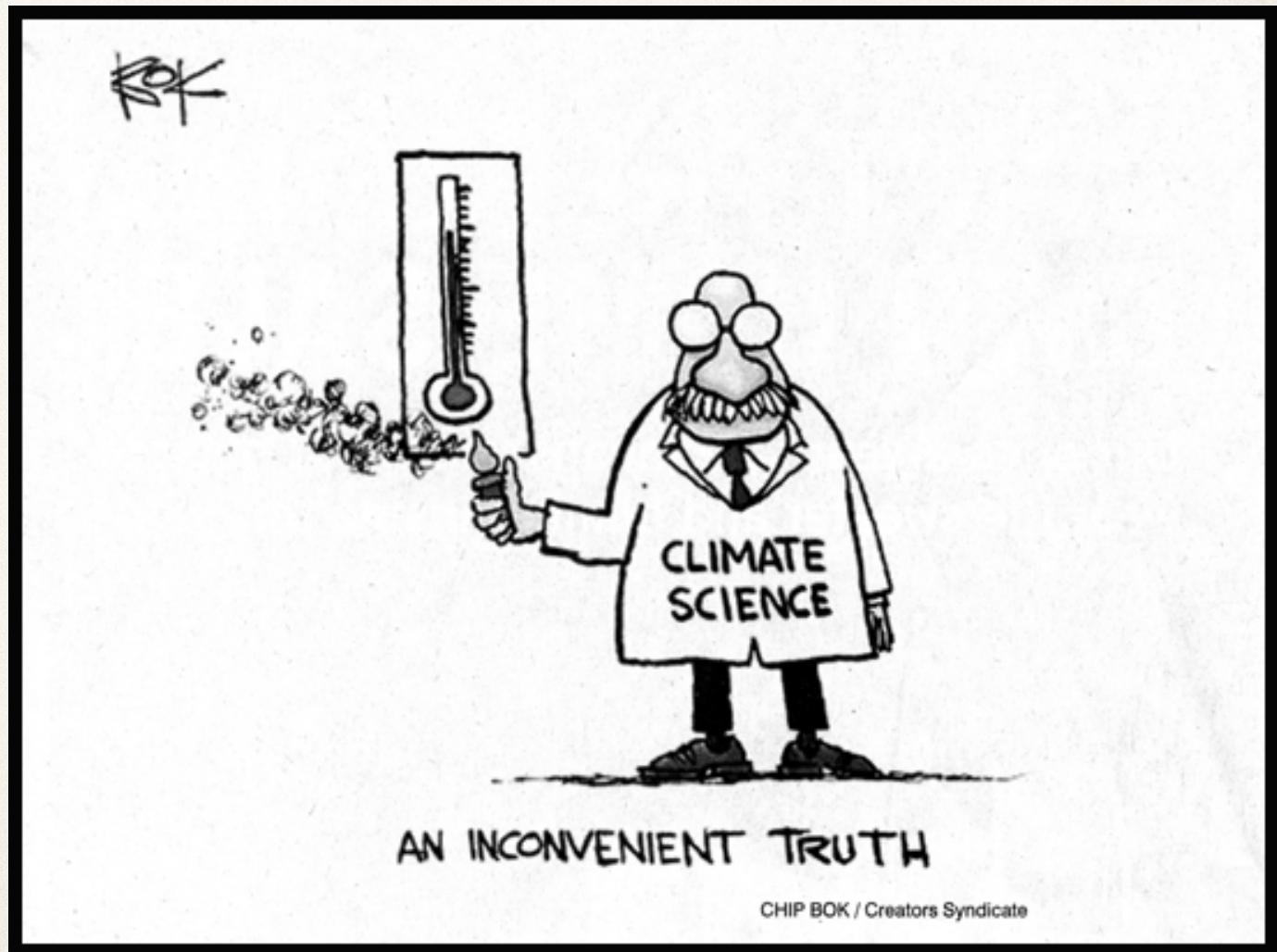
Can a machine
think and
understand?



Beliefs and Skepticism

How do we
justify our
beliefs?

Can everything
we believe be
false?



God, Suffering and Faith

Can we prove
that God exists?

If God exists,
why is there
suffering in the
world?

Can we do
away with
faith?



Bruegel the Elder, *Tower of Babel*



The Good and Justice

Angono, Philippines
Lester Garcia for
National Geographic

What's the right thing
to do? Should we
donate our money to
the poor or be selfish?

What is a just society?
Can economic
inequalities be
justified?

Other Topics

- ✿ Please explain anything else you would like to discuss in this course—anything that interests you...

Mechanics of the Course

- ✿ Course website
www.marcellodibello.com/PHI171/
- ✿ Readings and assignments available electronically
- ✿ Three writing assignments: each 20% of the grade
- ✿ Dialogue participation: 20 % of the grade
- ✿ Final quiz/exam: 20% of the grade

Reading for next Monday

- ✿ Read Augustine's *Confessions*, 11, on the mystery of time. The reading is available on the course website.