



TRUTH

I THINK,
THEREFORE
I AM



WHAT IS REALITY?



DO THE
ENDS
JUSTIFY
THE MEANS?



HEADS UP

PHILOSOPHY

I KNOW NOTHING



EARTHLY
KNOWLEDGE
IS BUT
SHADOW



REASONING

RIGHT & WRONG

What is **PHILOSOPHY**?

WHY IS THERE ANYTHING AT ALL? WHAT MAKES THINGS RIGHT AND WRONG? DOES GOD EXIST? IN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE, REALITY, AND EXISTENCE, PHILOSOPHY TACKLES SOME OF THE GREATEST MYSTERIES OF ALL. MANY SUCH QUESTIONS HAVE PUZZLED PHILOSOPHERS FOR CENTURIES. PHILOSOPHY DEVELOPED TO QUESTION WHAT PEOPLE OFTEN TAKE FOR GRANTED.



Many philosophical questions appear to be beyond the scope of science. Take moral questions, for instance. It's true that scientists can make morally significant discoveries. They can build nuclear weapons, or make it possible for us to design a baby by choosing his or her eye and hair color, and so on. But science cannot tell us whether we ought or ought not to use such new technologies. Science, it seems, is ultimately restricted to telling us how things are, whereas moral philosophy is concerned with how things *ought* to be. Doing philosophy involves trying to figure out as best we can what is true by using our powers of reason, or logical thought. It is an activity: a great way to learn how to think well—about anything. And the skills you pick up doing philosophy are skills you will find useful in all kinds of areas, from giving



a presentation to negotiating an important business deal. Philosophers also question our beliefs. We might not realize it, but we all hold a great many philosophical beliefs. These, of course, include moral beliefs: Many believe the universe was created by God, and that there is some form of life after death. Others believe the opposite. Often, we acquire our beliefs from our cultures, communities, and traditions. But these beliefs can change. Not so long ago, most Westerners thought it was morally acceptable to own slaves, and to prevent women from voting. Now, we know better. It is the role of the philosopher to try to establish whether or not such beliefs are true. In doing so, philosophers may be considered an annoyance. But it is important that we ask these questions. After all, the answers really do matter.

What do PHILOSOPHERS DO?



Many schools, colleges, and universities offer courses in philosophy, leading to formal degrees. Philosophy is sometimes taught as a part of courses in other subjects, such as politics, economics, theology, and psychology.

There is a growing interest in philosophy as a hobby, and philosophy groups have become popular, allowing like-minded people to meet and discuss philosophy in an informal setting. Evening classes are also available in many areas.

HOW CAN I LEARN ABOUT PHILOSOPHY?

Academic courses

Discussion groups



Philosophy is all about reasoning—rational thought. Learning about philosophy, and discussing philosophical problems with others, is good exercise for the mind, and teaches us the skills of clear and logical thinking.

Philosophical debate is a good way to develop the skills of presenting an argument. In addition to providing good reasons for an opinion, a convincing argument has to be presented logically, using unambiguous language.

WHAT SKILLS CAN PHILOSOPHY GIVE ME?

Clear thinking

Presentation skills



The skills of argument and a knowledge of moral philosophy are very useful in the legal profession. Many philosophers have become lawyers and judges, as well as mediators, and they also advise on ethics in science, medicine, and business.

Some philosophers have taken up careers as politicians, political advisers, or activists. Many also work in the civil service, advising the government on economic, social, and international policy, and how it can be implemented.

WHAT CAREER PATHS DO PHILOSOPHERS FOLLOW?

Law

Public policy

VERY FEW PEOPLE EARN THEIR LIVING AS FULL-TIME PHILOSOPHERS, EITHER WRITING PHILOSOPHICAL BOOKS OR TEACHING AND RESEARCHING IN UNIVERSITIES. STUDYING PHILOSOPHY, HOWEVER, HELPS US DEVELOP SKILLS THAT ARE USEFUL IN MANY DIFFERENT JOBS, AND PHILOSOPHERS FOLLOW A WIDE VARIETY OF CAREER PATHS. ALSO, A LOT OF PEOPLE SIMPLY ENJOY PHILOSOPHY FOR ITS OWN SAKE, AS A HOBBY.



There are some philosophy magazines aimed at the general reader—these are usually available by subscription rather than at bookstores. They may also be available online, along with a number of blogs about philosophy.

Magazines and blogs



No matter how you choose to learn about philosophy, you'll want to browse your library or bookstore for books by philosophers. There are also several encyclopedias and dictionaries of philosophy, and many of the best are available online.

Books

One of the core skills of philosophy is being able to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of an argument. Often, this involves seeing things from both sides, and finding the middle ground between two opposing views.



Negotiating and mediating

Logic in particular teaches us practical thinking skills, techniques that help us make rational decisions. These are useful in approaching tasks in a systematic, methodical way, and organizing and planning solutions to problems.

Problem solving

Above all, philosophy teaches us not simply to accept conventional wisdom. Philosophers demand rational justification rather than faith or prejudice, and can offer new ideas as well as challenge beliefs.

Independent thinking

Reporters, investigative journalists, political commentators, and editors need to be able to get to the heart of a story quickly and present it clearly through the media. Philosophy provides many of the skills required for a career in journalism.

Journalism

While some philosophers have chosen to become entrepreneurs, many more have found that philosophy has provided them with skills that can be applied to marketing and advertising, or to business organization and human resources.

Business

The philosophy of mind has obvious connections with psychology, and many psychologists and neuroscientists have studied philosophy. Some philosophy students have also trained to become psychotherapists and counselors.

Mental health

In addition to professional philosophers, who generally work in universities and colleges, there are many students of philosophy working in education, as teachers of a variety of subjects, but also as educational theorists.

Education