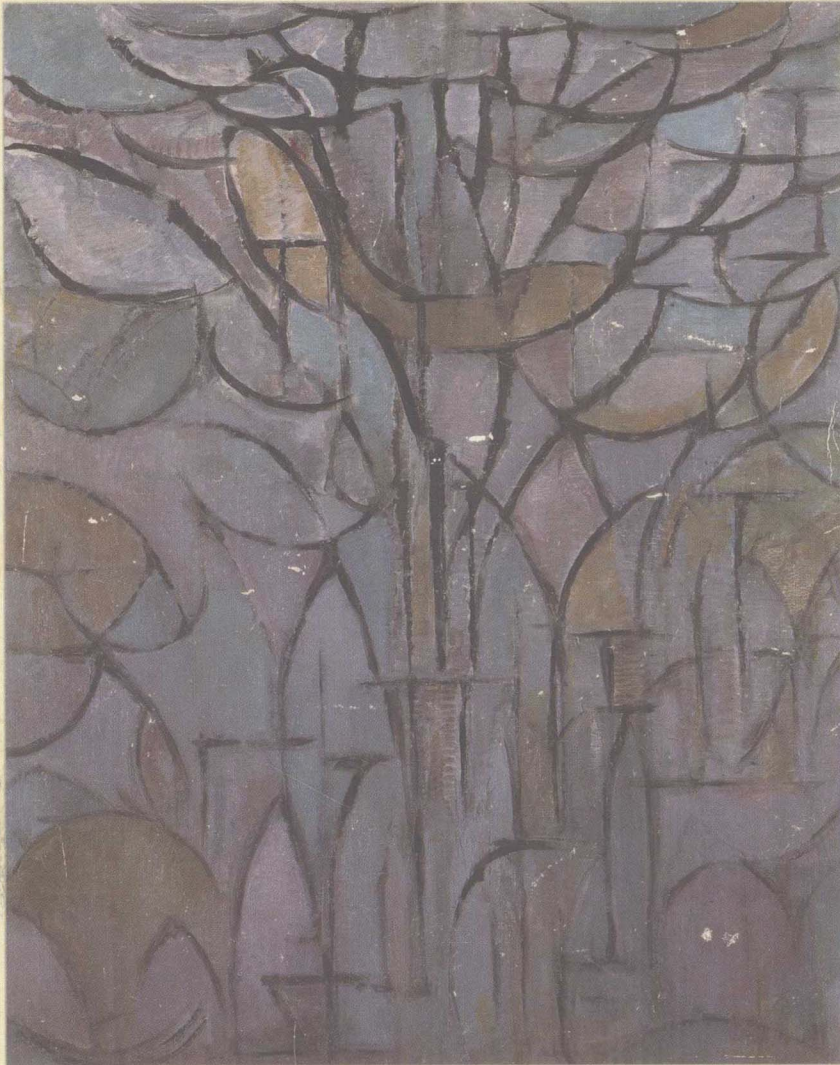


Voices of Wisdom

A MULTICULTURAL PHILOSOPHY READER



GARY E. KESSLER

SECOND EDITION

VOICES OF WISDOM

A Multicultural Philosophy Reader

Second Edition

Gary E. Kessler
California State University, Bakersfield

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*For my daughters Amy and Sara
From whose voices I have learned much*

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Preface

The unique feature of this introductory reader is its multicultural character. Practically all of the introductory readers available today treat philosophy as if it were entirely an Anglo-European male phenomenon. Little or no attention is given to Hindu, Buddhist, Chinese, African, Native American, Latin American, and feminist philosophy. This text remedies that situation, offering to those who wish it the possibility of assigning significant readings that represent the global nature of philosophizing.

It is often said that philosophizing is a natural human activity. If we are reflective at all, we cannot help but wonder about issues fundamental to human existence. And yet, beginning philosophy courses often appear far removed from the concerns of students and, by the very material excluded, strongly imply that only European and North American answers to fundamental questions are worth studying. This textbook covers some of the philosophical problems beginning students often find stimulating and provides an opportunity for them to see that at least some of these problems are indeed universal and fundamental to *all* of humanity. They will also learn that ideas from other cultures are worth pondering and that these ideas make important contributions to human understanding.

Pedagogical Features

I agree with John Dewey's often-repeated comment that we learn by doing. In my experience, the more I can get my students to do for themselves, the more they learn. Thus, rather than providing summaries of the selections (which discourage careful reading by the students), I provide instead the background information needed to understand the selections, and I supply questions that are designed to guide the students' reading *prior* to the selections. This approach encourages students to formulate their own analytical and critical questions about the material. It also gives instructors an opportunity to require the students to answer the questions in a philosophical "notebook" before class meetings. The questions and the students' responses can then be used as the basis for class discussion. This requires students to become actively engaged in the process of figuring out what a text means and allows instructors to correct students' misunderstandings, to clarify particularly difficult points, and to provide alternative interpretations in class.

I have written the introductory material in an informal, engaging, and, I trust, clear manner. I hope to engage students in the thinking process by connecting the selections to questions and issues the students have already begun to encounter. The selections themselves have been classroom-tested and represent different degrees of difficulty. Most will challenge beginning students to think in more depth and in a more precise way.

Topics

Voices of Wisdom includes much philosophical material that has come to be regarded as "classic" in the West. This material is included for two reasons. First, most students

take an introductory philosophy course in conjunction with general education and, as part of that experience, it is important that they read philosophical writing significant to the Western cultural tradition. Second, this writing is good philosophy (that is why it has become “classic”), and students should experience the ideas of profound philosophical minds. But profound philosophical minds exist all over the world, and, while other styles of thinking and other traditions may be very different, they are no less important.

I begin with a **Prelude** that sets the tone of philosophical wonder which I sustain throughout the book. In **Chapter 1**, I discuss the nature of philosophy, the meaning of rationality, and how to read philosophy. The section on the meaning of rationality has been completely revised in this second edition. Some basic principles of critical reasoning and a glossary of technical terms are provided in two appendixes. The appendix on critical thinking provides students with the minimal tools of logic necessary for them to engage in critical analysis of different sorts of arguments. I have placed this material in an appendix so that instructors may assign it at the points in their courses where they think it is most appropriate. I recommend assigning it near the beginning because so much of what is included in the text requires students to use analytical and critical skills.

In most chapters the material is arranged chronologically. Sometimes, however, another sort of arrangement is more pedagogically useful, and so I have not restricted myself to the chronological pattern in all cases.

Some critics of the first edition have argued that one should begin with epistemology or metaphysics rather than with moral issues, because so many ethical theories presuppose metaphysical and epistemological views. This is a strong argument. However, I have decided to retain the order of the chapters from the first edition because it is, in my experience, more pedagogically effective. Of course instructors can order the chapters any way they think best. I have begun with the questions “How should one live?” and “How can we know what is right?” (**Chapters 2 and 3**) because these are fundamental questions that have received much global attention. Further, these are questions with which students can connect existentially, thereby allowing for immediate values clarification. I have shortened some of the selections, rewritten the introductions to some, used some new translations, and replaced an old selection with a new one. **Chapter 4** “What Makes a Society Just?” is now totally devoted to political philosophy with four new selections; and a new **Chapter 5** “Is Justice for All Possible?” has been created to deal with applied ethics and social issues in a pro/con format. **Chapter 6** “Are We Free or Determined?” has been completely revised and forms a transition from moral issues of responsibility to metaphysical concerns.

I take up ontological and epistemological questions directly in **Chapter 7**, “What Is Really Real?” and **Chapter 8**, “Is Knowledge Possible?” because the answers to moral problems reflect views on what is real and how we might know it is. The division between moral, metaphysical, and epistemological issues may be useful for purposes of organization, but the problems and questions are logically connected. Questions about how we distinguish appearance from reality lead naturally into questions about how we distinguish error from truth. Both chapters have been revised with the addition of new materials.

Religious issues come next. **Chapter 9** “Is There a God?” and **Chapter 10** “Why Evil?” have been partially revised. I construe the question about the existence of God

as, in part, a question about what (who) caused the universe. Hence, issues of science and its relationship to religion are discussed. Since the problem of evil is one of the most serious challenges to the assertion that an all-powerful and perfectly good God exists, I take it up next. Unfortunately, space constraints have forced me to drop the chapter from the first edition dealing with the problem of faith and/or reason. Many users reported not covering this topic and wanted coverage of other topics.

The mind-body problem is closely related to issues of personal identity and life after death; thus I have placed these issues together in an extensively revised **Chapter 11** “Who Am I and Can I Survive Death?” Although the issue of immortality might be treated as a separate religious problem, it presupposes a number of important philosophical ideas relating to dualism and personal identity.

I close with a completely new **Postscript** that addresses the issue of multicultural education, its justification, and value. In it, students are invited to stand back from their experience and reflect on the issue of multiculturalism. A number of issues addressed in the book (such as relativism and comparative cultural evaluation) arise again here. Hence this postscript can be used to draw together various concerns and problems that have surfaced in the other parts of the book.

Philosophy in a Multicultural Perspective

Although I wish to stress the universal nature of philosophizing, I am well aware of the dangers of anachronism. A text of this sort not only faces the problems associated with anachronism in the historical sense, but also with what we might term “cultural” anachronism. The writings of ancient philosophers mingle with modern texts, and thinkers from alien cultures are brought together. The student may get the impression that Plato, Buddha, Mill, Confucius, Descartes, and Aristotle are all contemporaries discussing the same issues with the same concepts in English! There *are* similarities. But there are also vast differences. Where appropriate, the important differences are stressed in my introductory remarks.

Historical and cultural comparisons are inevitable, and I encourage them. However, I wish to stress that this reader is not meant primarily to be an exercise in comparative philosophy. It is meant to serve a course that introduces students to “doing” philosophy by drawing on *multicultural* resources. The students who read this text should be impressed with the rich diversity that comprises global philosophizing and should learn the art of philosophizing in a broader and more inclusive context than is usual.

I do wish to stress that it is *global* philosophizing with which I am concerned. Some associate the word “multicultural” almost exclusively with “multiethnic” and “minorities.” Those who do so will expect more African American, Latin American, Native American, and feminist philosophers than I have included. These voices also need to be heard, and I have included some. But my primary concern has been to provide sources that promote an *international* perspective. I believe it is important to educate students for a new century in which an understanding of the interconnectedness of all peoples will be increasingly important in determining the policies and practices of nations.

My selection of issues betrays my own Anglo-European perspective. While many of the topics are fundamental and universal (How should one live? What is really real? What is good?), their importance and centrality differ from tradition to tradition. The

mind-body problem, the puzzle of freedom and determinism, the problem of evil—these are not necessarily the central problems that gripped the minds of Chinese or Hindu philosophers. Just as Anglo-European philosophers have not had much to say about Karma, Buddhist thinkers have not been overly concerned with reconciling the existence of evil with an all-good creator God.

However, I do believe this Western way of organizing the material is justified in this instance. Even though the significance of the problems and the way they are formulated differ from culture to culture, many of the underlying issues are the same. One cannot reflect for long on Karma and reincarnation without addressing issues relating to freedom and human identity. Furthermore, I think it best, for introductory and practical purposes, to organize the material around traditional Anglo-European philosophical themes. Many students already have some concern with these issues (e.g., the existence of God). In addition, most introductory courses deal with these themes, and this book allows instructors to continue that practice; but some new and different voices are added, thereby enriching philosophical thinking.

It should be noted that there exists no culturally neutral set of categories for organizing the material. If I had used the dominant concerns of, let us say, the Hindu tradition (concerns such as release from suffering, duty and the stages of life, the nature of bondage) to organize the selections, I would not have thereby escaped a cultural perspective. Perhaps, as a multicultural approach becomes more commonplace in introductory courses and as Western philosophy becomes more open and diverse, new categories will emerge. However, until that day, the sources need to be organized in some fashion. What is important is that we are aware of the limitations of our categories and that we continually remind ourselves of the diverse and subtle ways long-held biases influence our thinking as well as the way we select and organize materials.

John Stuart Mill in his essay *On Liberty* spoke of how the European family of nations had benefited from the interaction of a variety of ideas:

What has made the European family of nations an improving, instead of a stationary, portion of mankind? Not any superior excellence in them which, when it exists, exists as the effect, not as the cause, but their remarkable diversity of character and culture. Individuals, classes, nations have been extremely unlike one another: they have struck out a great variety of paths, each leading to something valuable; and although at every period those who travelled in different paths have been intolerant of one another, and each would have thought it an excellent thing if all the rest would have been compelled to travel his road, their attempts to thwart each other's development have rarely had any permanent success, and each has in time endured to receive the good which the others have offered. Europe is, in my judgement, wholly indebted to this plurality of paths for its progressive and many sided development.

And so too, I might add, is the United States indebted to cultural plurality.

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A book like this is written, edited, and revised by many people. The reviewers of my first edition were particularly helpful in the selection of topics and suggestions of readings. I wish it were possible to follow all of their valuable suggestions. Tammy Goldfeld's enthusiasm, suggestions, and support have been immensely valuable. The staff

at Wadsworth has been most accommodating and patient. They have kept me from many errors. Whatever errors remain are of my own doing.

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A very special thanks goes to my wife Katy, whose ideas, critical insights, and loving support made this book possible.

I also wish to thank all of you who used the first edition. Your responses have been gratifying and reinforce my hope that one day a multicultural approach to the study, teaching, and doing of philosophy will be commonplace. I hope this second edition (which includes over 23 new selections based on careful consideration of the advice of those of you who have used the first edition) proves more useful than the first, and I would appreciate hearing your responses to this new edition—about how it works and how it can be improved.

Gary E. Kessler

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Prelude

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED whether you are awake or dreaming you are awake? Have you ever wondered whether there was any truly objective perspective from which all arguments could be definitely settled? Have you ever thought that perhaps all views of the world, even those that seem to contradict each other, might somehow be in harmony with one another? If you have, you are not alone.

Zhuangzi lived in China somewhere between 399 and 295 B.C.E. You might have heard of him under the name of Chuang-Tzu or Chuang Chou (I'm using the Pinyin spelling of his name, the spelling used in China, and I will be using the Pinyin spelling of Chinese words in the rest of this book). If you have heard of him, you might also know he was a Daoist philosopher. Daoist philosophers are very much interested in nature and in the **Dao** (you may have encountered this word spelled *Tao*, which is in accord with the Wade-Giles system, a system named after its inventors and used in many of the translations I have selected). The *Dao* is the Way of nature (for more on the *Dao* see Section 7.1). Zhuangzi viewed nature as a universal process of constant change, binding all things together into a vast, natural harmony. He taught that we should live freely, naturally, and spontaneously in accord with the *Dao*.

Some of Zhuangzi's writings were collected in a book that bears his name. The selection that follows comes from a section of that book entitled "The Equality of Things." In this section he is concerned with whether there might be some absolutely objective point of view from which we might firmly and finally distinguish right from wrong, truth from error, reality from appearance. He suggests that if we look at things from the point of view of nature they appear equal or relative to one another—relative in the sense that they depend on one another. Further, our views are relative in the sense that every view reflects some particular and limited perspective. This insight does not lead Zhuangzi to despair, however, because once we realize the relativity and equality of things we can forget about distinctions and "relax in the realm of the infinite." In other words, we can realize harmony with the *Dao*.

Before you read this selection think about how you might answer this question: How do you *know* you are not now dreaming?

The Equality of Things

ZHUANGZI

"HOW DO I KNOW THAT the love of life is not a delusion? And how do I know that the hate of death is not like a man who lost his home when young and does not know where his home is to return to? Li Chi was the daughter of the border warden of Ai. When the Duke of Chin first got her, she wept until the bosom of her dress was drenched with tears. But when she came to the royal residence, shared with the Duke his luxurious couch and ate delicate food, she regretted that she had wept. How do I know that the dead will not repent having previously craved for life?

"Those who dream of the banquet may weep the next morning, and those who dream of weeping may go out to hunt after dawn. When we dream, we do not know that we are dreaming. In our dreams we may even interpret our dreams. Only after we are awake do we know we have dreamed. Finally there comes a great awakening, and then we know life is a great dream. But the stupid think they are awake all the time and believe they know it distinctly. Are we (honorable) rulers? Are we (humble) shepherds? How vulgar! Both Confucius and you were dreaming. When I say you were dreaming, I am also dreaming. This way of talking may be called perfectly strange. If after ten thousand generations we could meet one great sage who can explain this, it would be like meeting him in as short a time as in a single morning or evening.

"Suppose you and I argue. If you beat me instead of my beating you, are you really right and am I really wrong? If I beat you instead of your beating me, am I really right and are you really wrong? Or are we both partly right and partly wrong? Or are we both wholly right and wholly wrong? Since between us neither you nor I know which is right, others are naturally in

the dark. Whom shall we ask to arbitrate? If we ask someone who agrees with you, since he has already agreed with you, how can he arbitrate? If we ask someone who agrees with me, since he has already agreed with me, how can he arbitrate? If we ask someone who disagrees with both you and me to arbitrate, since he has already disagreed with you and me, how can he arbitrate? If we ask someone who agrees with both you and me to arbitrate, since he has already agreed with you and me, how can he arbitrate? Thus among you, me, and others, none knows which is right. Shall we wait for still others? The great variety of sounds are relative to each other just as much as they are not relative to each other. To harmonize them in the functioning of Nature and leave them in the process of infinite evolution is the way to complete our lifetime."

"What is meant by harmonizing them with the functioning of Nature?"

"We say this is right or wrong, and is so or is not so. If the right is really right, then the fact that it is different from the wrong leaves no room for argument. If what is so is really so, then the fact that it is different from what is not so leaves no room for argument. Forget the passage of time (life and death) and forget the distinction of right and wrong. Relax in the realm of the infinite and thus abide in the realm of the infinite."

The Shade asks the Shadow, "A little while ago you moved, and now you stop. A little while ago you sat down and now you stand up. Why this instability of purpose?"

"Do I depend on something else to be this way?" answered the Shadow. "Does that something on which I depend also depend on something else? Do I depend on anything any more than a snake depends on its discarded scale or a

cicada on its new wings? How can I tell why I am so or why I am not so?"

Once I, Chuang Chou, dreamed that I was a butterfly and was happy as a butterfly. I was conscious that I was quite pleased with myself, but I did not know that I was Chou. Suddenly I awoke,

and there I was, visibly Chou. I do not know whether it was Chou dreaming that he was a butterfly or the butterfly dreaming that it was Chou. Between Chou and the butterfly there must be some distinction. [But one may be the other.] This is called the transformation of things.

Chapter 1

What Is Philosophy?

“... those who are eager to learn because they wonder at things are lovers of wisdom (philosophoi).”

ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS

1.1. A Definition of Philosophy

Have you ever wondered about why you are here? Have you ever been curious about what you can believe? Have you ever marveled at the beauty of nature or been puzzled and upset by the suffering of good people? Have you ever thought about what you can know or what you ought to do or whether there is any point to life? When you hear the word “philosophy,” what do you think it means? Think about it awhile and write down your answer.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) was a Greek philosopher and a contemporary of Zhuangzi. While Zhuangzi was wondering about dreaming, Aristotle was claiming that philosophy begins in wonder. Aristotle was impressed by the ability of human beings to think. In fact he defined humans as “rational animals.” Aristotle claimed that from this ability to reflect on our experiences, to wonder and be curious about what happens to us and our environment, philosophy arises.

Of course this is not the sole cause of philosophizing. Sufficient leisure must be available to engage in reflection, and hence economic and cultural factors play an important role in promoting and influencing human curiosity. But without the human capacity to wonder and be curious, it is doubtful that philosophical thinking would occur. I hope that this text will stimulate your natural ability to wonder, teach you something of the art of wondering, and help you learn how to live in wonder. Cultivating the art of wondering is important, Aristotle believed, because such an art leads us along the path toward wisdom.

The word “philosophy” comes from a combination of two Greek words—*philos* meaning “love” and *sophia* meaning “wisdom.” Etymologically “philosophy” means the love of wisdom. The sort of love indicated by the word *philos* is the kind of love that exists between close friends. So the philosopher is the lover of or the close friend