

Introduction to **PHILOSOPHY**

Revised Edition

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Introduction to PHILOSOPHY

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PREFACE

I want to take this opportunity to say a few words about what's in this book and how it is organized. I also want to describe the criteria that guided me in selecting these items. Finally, I want to mention something about the history of the collection.

I

The first selection (by James L. Christian) is the Introduction to his extremely successful textbook, *philosophy: an introduction to the art of wondering*. In this article, Christian discusses his views about the nature of philosophy. Although I don't entirely agree with what Christian says, I think his remarks provide a very useful basis for a discussion of the nature of philosophy.

The rest of the selections are organized into four sections. The first section concerns the puzzle about freedom and determinism.. How is it possible for human beings to act freely if everything we do is caused? The second section contains articles about what I call 'philosophical anthropology'. (Others call this 'the mind-body problem'.) The issue here is the nature of persons. Is each person just a physical object—his or her own body? Or is a person more complex than that, containing also a non-physical soul or mind? The third section contains articles about the existence of God. The first three essays contain arguments for the existence of God. The final essay of the third section contains an argument against the existence of God, based on the existence of evil in the world. The fourth section of the book is about knowledge and skepticism. I have included some classic skeptical arguments designed to show that we cannot know lots of things we may think we know. I have also included some classic attempts to explain how these arguments can be refuted.

II

Now let me turn to the criteria I had in mind as I chose the articles. As I made my selections, I had several different (and not always compatible) aims in mind.

fatalism is, similarly, clear and vigorous.

Perhaps my central aim was this: I tried to find articles that contained *clear*, *vigorous* presentations of classic positions on the issues under consideration in the collection. This aim is well illustrated by the selections in the first section, on freedom and dterminism. Hard determinism is forcefully defended in the article by Paul Ree. Soft determinism is defended with equal clarity and zeal by A.J. Ayer. In his article, Roderick Chisholm presents a magnificently persuasive and lucid account of libertarianism. Richard Taylor's chapter on

Since in my own course I especially like to discuss the arguments philosophers use to attack or defend various doctrines, I also sought out articles that contain persuasive or interesting argumentation. David Armstrong's article contains some very serious arguments against Descartes' views about the nature of persons. The articles by Leibniz, Anselm, and Paley contain classic arguments for the existence of God. The article by Mackie contains a remarkably spirited presentation of an argument against the existence of God based on the existence of evil. Taylor's article contains a profoundly puzzling argument for fatalism. Many of the other selections also contain important and interesting arguments. The selection from Sextus Empiricus contains an amazing collection of arguments apparently designed to show that we don't know anywhere near as much as we may think we know.

Another aim here is *diversity*. While I did not try to find articles representing every possible position on each of the issues, I did try to find articles that would illustrate the most important positions. Thus, in the section on free will and determinism, there is an article by a hard determinist (Ree), a soft determinist (Ayer), a libertarian (Chisholm), and a fatalist (Taylor). In the section on philosophical anthropology, there are two articles by dualists (Ryle and Armstrong). In the section on the existence of God, there is an example of a teleological argument (Paley), a cosmological argument (Leibniz), an ontological argument (Anselm), and an argument against the existence of God (Mackie).

While seeking diversity, I also sought to avoid redundancy. thus, there are very few cases in which two articles present fundamentally similar lines of thought. Each article here makes a unique contribution to the collection as a whole.

Philosophy does not have to be dull. At its best, philosophical writing can be lively and exciting. Sometimes it can be pretty funny, too. As I made my selections, I sought articles that would be *fun to read*. I think that many of the selections are funny. Many passages in Sextus Empiricus are truly nutty; Gaunilon's reply to Anselm seems to me to be the work of a witty fellow; Taylor's story of Osmo and the amazing book is also amusing. Plato's description of the death of Socrates can hardly be called funny, but it is a marvelous piece of writing— a moving and profound discussion of death, philosophy, and the nature of persons. Descartes' *Meditations* are acknowledged classics of philosophical writing.

A final aim was historical importance. I wanted, where possible to choose essays by important figures in the history of philosophy. Equally, where possible I wanted to include essays that are themselves well-known and highly regarded. Where possible, I preferred the original presentation of some important doctrine or argument, rather than some derivative version. Considerations of this sort played some role in my choice of the selections from Plato, Descartes, Leibniz, Sextus Empiricus, Anselm, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume.

I have also included one essay that I wrote especially for this volume. I cannot claim that I included it because of its historical importance. The essay has not previously been published. Nor is it outstandingly original. All the main ideas were taken from a series of essays that was published quite a few years ago in the British journal *Mind*. Someone—I don't know who—came up with the puzzle about the great falsifier. Subsequent contributors tried to explain where the argument goes wrong. I have attempted to simplify the puzzle, and to bring it up to date. I certainly do not think that the argument succeeds; on the other hand it is not easy to explain precisely where it goes wrong. It is included primarily because I think readers might have some fun with it.

III

Several years ago, it became necessary for me to revise the curriculum for my course in introduction to philosophy. At first, I thought I would make use of one of the popular anthologies. After reviewing the available choices, I settled on an excellent and very widely used collection. It contained several essays that I wanted to use. Unfortunately, it also contained a very large number of essays that I did not want to use. The book was large, heavy, and expensive. My students justifiably complained. They were required to buy a fairly costly book, even though they were going to read only a small fraction of the essays in that book.

Furthermore, since the book did not contain all the articles I wanted to use in my course, I had to make and distribute copies of a few extra articles. This was a nuisance for me, and an extra expense for my students.

Subsequently, a representative of a local copyshop convinced me that he could produce a much less expensive anthology containing all and only the items I used in my course. This seemed to me to be a great idea, and I signed on. The new anthology was produced, and we used it for a few semesters. In some ways it was a big improvement over the old and too-expensive volume.

Nevertheless, there were still problems. One problem was that the quality of the copying was pretty bad. Another was that the binding was poor. The main problem, however, was that the whole business was entirely illegal. The copyshop had not secured permission to reproduce copywritten materials.

Then a friend told me about McGraw-Hill Custom Publishing. He told me that they could produce a much higher quality anthology at a very low price. He also told me that they would secure all the necessary permissions so that the book would be legal. He also said that their system is flexible, so that if it should later become necessary to alter the contents of the anthology, it could easily be done. This seemed to me to be a great idea and so I agreed to have McGraw-Hill take over the job of producing the anthology for my course. That is how this book came into existence.

The earliest version of this collection contained a certain combination of essays. Students liked some of the essays; they didn't like others. Teaching assistants found it satisfying to teach some of the essays; they did not enjoy teaching others. The successful essays remained; the unsuccessful ones were declared "unfit"—they did not survive. As time went by, new selections were added. In some cases, as I recall, the new selections were originally suggested by teaching assistants.

I am very grateful to all my friends, colleagues, and former teaching assistants who played a role in the construction of this anthology. As in the case of the evolution of plants and animals, some of the facts about the evolution of this book are shrouded in the mists of time. I no longer know who is responsible for the selections that remain in the book. I know that David Cowles has been extremely helpful. I know that I discussed the book on many occasions with Ned Markosian, Eric Moore, Asli Gocer, Kevin Moon, Julie Petty, Neil Feit, Geoff Goddu, and several other former teaching assistants. I wish I could mention here all the people who deserve my thanks. Unfortunately, my memory is not up to the task.

I am also grateful to my friend Michael Fried who encouraged me to let McGraw-Hill produce the book. I am extremely grateful to the editor at McGraw-Hill, Margaret Hollander, who did an extraordinarily good job of putting this collection together quickly and efficiently. I have truly enjoyed working with her on this project.

Fred Feldman Amherst, Massachusetts November, 1992

WHAT DO YOU MEAN PHILOSOPHY???

James L. Christian
Santa Ana College

Sometime, at your leisure—if you want to know what philosophy is—go into a large bookstore and browse. Check a variety of books in psychology, anthropology, physics, chemistry, archeology, astronomy, and other nonfiction fields. Look at the last chapter in each book. In a surprising number of cases, you will find that the author has chosen to round out his work with a final summation of what the book is all about. That is, having written a whole book on a specialized subject in which he is probably an authority, he finds that he also has ideas about the larger meaning of the facts that he has written about. The final chapter may be called "Conclusions," "Epilogue," "Postscript," "My Personal View," "Implications," "Comments," "Speculations," or (as in one case) "So What?" But in every instance, the author is trying to elucidate the larger implications of his subject matter and to clarify how he thinks it relates to other fields or to life. He has an urge to tell us the meaning of all his facts taken together. He wants to share with us the philosophic implications of what he has written.

When he does this, the author has moved beyond the role of a field specialist. He is a philosopher.

This is a textbook in synoptic° philosophy. It is an invitation to ponder, in the largest possible perspective, the weightier, more stubborn problems of human existence. It is an invitation to think—to wonder, to question, to speculate, to reason, even to fantasize—in the eternal search for wisdom. In a word, synoptic philosophy is an attempt to weave interconnecting lines of illumination between all the disparate realms of human thought in the hope that, like a thousand dawnings, new insights will burst through.

By its very nature, philosophy is a do-it-yourself enterprise. There is a common misunderstanding that philosophy—like chemistry or history—has a content to offer, a content which a teacher is to teach and a student is to learn. This is not the case. There are no facts, no theories, certainly no final truths which go by the name of "philosophy" and which one is supposed to accept and believe. Rather, philosophy is a skill—more akin to mathematics and music; it is something that one learns to do.

Philosophy, that is, is a method. It is learning how to ask and re-ask questions until meaningful answers begin to appear. It is learning how to relate materials. It is learning where to go for the most dependable, up-to-date information that might shed light on some problem. It is learning how to double check fact-claims in order to verify or falsify them. It is learning how to reject fallacious fact-claims—to reject them no matter how prestigious the authority who holds them or how deeply one would personally like to believe them.

Introduction from PHILOSOPHY: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF WONDERING, Second Edition, by James L. Christian, copyright © 1977 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., reprinted by permission of the publisher.

[°]Synoptic. From the Greek sunoptikos, "seeing the whole together" or "taking a comprehensive view." The attempt to achieve an all-inclusive overview of one's subject matter.

3 The student should be aware that philosophy has never been just one kind of activity with a single approach to a single task. Rather, there have been many kinds of philosophy: the quiet philosophy of the sage who sees much but speaks little because language cannot hold life; the articulate, noisy dialectics of Socrates; the calm, logical apologetics of Aquinas; the mystical philosophy of Plotinus and Chuang-tzu; the mathematical philosophy of Russell and Wittgenstein.

Each school of philosophy has concentrated upon some aspect of man's knowledge. Logical/analytical philosophy has worked long and hard on the confusion which vitiates so much of our thinking and communicating. Pragmatism has concentrated on finding solutions to problems of man's social existence. Existential philosophy has been concerned with making life meaningful to each, unique individual. Activist schools argue that philosophers spend too much time trying to make sense of the world and too little time trying to change it. Several schools of philosophy, Eastern and Western, challenge the individual to turn away from an alienating society and to seek harmony with Nature or Ultimate Reality.

Each kind of philosophy has made an immense contribution to its area of concern. Each was doubtless a part of the Zeitgeist—"the spirit of the age"—which gave it birth and to which it spoke.

The present unhappy condition of human knowledge calls for the application of a synoptic methodology. We now possess vast accumulations of specialized knowledge in countless fields, but these fields remain isolated from one another. Yet it is increasingly clear that many of our urgent problems can be understood only when the specialized information from a variety of these separate fields is integrated and "seen together"—synoptically. It is only then that we can develop realistic solutions to these complex problems.

4 It is often said that philosophers engage in two basic tasks: "taking apart"—analyzing ideas to discover if we truly know what we think we know (and we don't)—and "putting together"—synthesizing all our knowledge to find if we can attain a larger and better view of life (we can).

But in practice philosophers do a lot more than this. They talk a lot. They carry on dialogues with anyone who comes within range. And they argue a great deal. Not the usual kinds of argument in which egos fight to win, but philosophical arguments in which they attempt to clarify the reasoning that lies behind their statements; and no one cares about winning since, in philosophical arguments, everyone wins.

They also ask one another for definitions to be sure they're thinking clearly; and they push one another to pursue the implications of their ideas and statements. They prod themselves and others to examine the basic assumptions upon which their beliefs and arguments rest.

Philosophers are persistent explorers in the nooks and crannies of human knowledge which are commonly overlooked or deliberately ignored. It is an exciting but restless adventure of the mind.

Philosophers, however, do not engage in this critical task just to make nuisances of themselves. Indeed, the central aim of philosophers has always been . . . to construct a picture of the whole of reality, in which every element of man's knowledge and every aspect of man's experience will find its proper place. Philosophy, in short, is man's quest for the unity of knowledge: it consists in a perpetual struggle to create the concepts in which the universe can be conceived as a universe and not a multiverse. The history of philosophy is attempt is made to grasp this total unity. . . .

It cannot be denied that this attempt stands without rival as the most audacious enterprise in which the mind of man has ever engaged. Just reflect for a moment: Here is man, surrounded by the vastness of a universe in which he is only a tiny and perhaps insignificant part—and he wants to understand it. . . .

> WILLIAM HALVERSON A Concise Introduction to Philosophy (1967, Random House, Inc., p. 18ff)

In one respect, philosophic material can be deceptive. Since it deals with life by examining 6 the sort of questions we ask every day, some of the subject matter will have an easy, familiar ring.

The fact is that synoptic philosophy must be as diligently studied as any other subject, not to remember data, but to set the mind in motion toward developing larger concepts, connecting

ideas, and seeing through and beyond mere words and facts.

In a sense, intellectual growth happens to us; it is not really something that we do. But it happens to us only when our minds are given a chance to operate on their terms. They take their own time to process information and to begin developing a web of interconnecting lines of illumination among their materials. This undertaking is partly conscious, of course; but largely it is an unconscious process. This is why much philosophic insight just happens, as though the light moves from the depths upward and not from the rational conscious downward.

Only disciplined study with an open mind will produce philosophic awareness. Insight and consciousness still come only with relentless labor. In this age of instant everything, there is still no instant wisdom, unfortunately.

No two of us possess precisely the same information, or see things from the same viewpoint, or share the same values. Therefore, each of us must do synoptic philosophy in his own unique and personal way. A student entering upon the activity of philosophizing may need to be on guard against developing a world-view which resembles, a bit too closely, the prepackaged philosophy of life belonging to someone else or to some institution. Most of us are philosophically lazy, and it is easy to appropriate another's thoughts and rationalize our theft. The British logician Wittgenstein warned us that "a thought which is not independent is a thought only half understood." Similarly, a philosophy of life that is not the authentic product of one's own experience is a philosophy only half understood.

Nor will any of us succeed in developing a finished philosophy; for as one changes with life, so does one's thinking. A philosophy of life must change with life. Doing philosophy is an

endless activity.

For this reason, this textbook is merely an example of synoptic philosophy. This is the way I have had to do it because of my perspectives, my interests, my areas of knowledge, my personal concerns, and my limitations. But your world-view will be different because it will be yours, and yours alone.

This is why my attempt to do synoptic philosophy is, at most, a guideline showing how it might be done; at least, the expression of a hope that, someday, in your own way, you will resolve the contradictions of your own existence—both of knowing and of being—and proceed to see life in a larger, more fulfilling way.

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PART ONE

THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM

DETERMINISM AND THE ILLUSION OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Paul Rée

1. Nothing Happens without a Cause

... To say that the will is not free means that it is subject to the law of causality. Every act of will is in fact preceded by a sufficient cause. Without such a cause the act of will cannot occur; and, if the sufficient cause is present, the act of will must occur.

To say that the will is free would mean that it is not subject to the law of causality. In that case every act of will would be an absolute beginning [a first cause] and not a link [in a

chain of events]: it would not be the effect of preceding causes.

The reflections that follow may serve to clarify what is meant by saying that the will is not free . . . Every object—a stone, an animal, a human being—can pass from its present state to another one. The stone that now lies in front of me may, in the next moment, fly through the air, or it may disintegrate into dust or roll along the ground. If, however, one of these *possible* states is to be *realized*, its sufficient cause must first be present. The stone will fly through the air if it is tossed. It will roll if a force acts upon it. It will disintegrate into dust, given that some object hits and crushes it.

It is helpful to use the terms "potential" and "actual" in this connection. At any moment there are innumerably many potential states. At a given time, however, only *one* can become

actual, namely, the one that is triggered by its sufficient cause.

The situation is no different in the case of an animal. The donkey that now stands motionless between two piles of hay may, in the next moment, turn to the left or to the right, or he may jump into the air or put his head between his legs. But here, too, the sufficient cause must first be present if of the *possible* modes of behavior one is to be *realized*.

Let us analyze one of these modes of behavior. We shall assume that the donkey has turned toward the bundle on his right. This turning presupposes that certain muscles were contracted. The cause of this muscular contraction is the excitation of the nerves that lead to them. The cause of this excitation of the nerves is a state of the brain. It was in a state of decision. But how did the brain come to be in that condition? Let us trace the states of the donkey back a little farther.

This selection consists of the major portions of Chapters 1 and 2 of Paul Rée's Die Illusion der Willensfreiheit, a work published in Berlin in 1885. The third chapter of Rée's booklet, which is omitted here, is a detailed critique of Kant's views on the subject.

The subtitles in this translation were supplied by the editor; the first and fifth take the place of chapter headings in the original text. Cuts have been indicated by the use of dots. The translator has supplied a few minor emendations; these have been put in square brackets.

From Die Illusion der Willensfreiheit by Paul Rée (first published in 1885), translated by Stefan Bauer-Mengelberg. Copyright © 1973 by Stefan Bauer-Mengelberg, Paul Edwards and Pauline Pap. Reprinted with permission.

A few moments before he turned, his brain was not yet so constituted as to yield the sufficient cause for the excitation of the nerves in question and for the contraction of the muscles; for otherwise the movement would have occurred. The donkey had not yet "decided" to turn. If he then moved at some subsequent time, his brain must in the meantime have become so constituted as to bring about the excitation of the nerves and the movement of the muscles. Hence the brain underwent some change. To what causes is this change to be attributed? To the effectiveness of an impression that acts as an external stimulus, or to a sensation that arose internally; for example, the sensation of hunger and the idea of the bundle on the right, by jointly affecting the brain, change the way in which it is constituted so that it now yields the sufficient cause for the excitation of the nerves and the contraction of the muscles. The donkey now "wants" to turn to the right; he now turns to the right.

Hence, just as the position and constitution of the stone, on the one hand, and the strength and direction of the force that acts upon it, on the other, necessarily determine the kind and length of its flight, so the movement of the donkey—his turning to the bundle on the right—is no less necessarily the result of the way in which the donkey's brain and the stimulus are constituted at a given moment. That the donkey turned toward this particular bundle was determined by something trivial. If the bundle that the donkey did not choose had been positioned just a bit differently, or if it had smelled different, or if the subjective factor—the donkey's sense of smell or his visual organs—had developed in a somewhat different way, then, so we may assume, the donkey would have turned to the left. But the cause was not complete there, and that is why the effect could not occur, while with respect to the other side, where the cause was complete, the effect could not fail to appear.

For the donkey, consequently, just as for the stone, there are innumerably many potential states at any moment; he may walk or run or jump, or move to the left, to the right, or straight ahead. But only the one whose sufficient cause is present can ever become actual.

At the same time, there is a difference between the donkey and the stone in that the donkey moves because he wants to move, while the stone moves because it is moved. We do not deny this difference. There are, after all, a good many other differences between the donkey and the stone. We do not by any means intend to prove that this dissimilarity does not exist. We do not assert that the donkey is a stone, but only that the donkey's every movement and act of will has causes just as the motion of the stone does. The donkey moves because he wants to move. But that he wants to move at a given moment, and in this particular direction, is causally determined.

Could it be that there was no sufficient cause for the donkey's wanting to turn around—that he simply wanted to turn around? His act of will would then be an absolute beginning. An assumption of that kind is contradicted by experience and the universal validity of the law of causality. By experience, since observation teaches us that for every act of will some causes were the determining factors. By the universal validity of the law of causality, since, after all, nothing happens anywhere in the world without a sufficient cause. Why, then, of all things should a donkey's act of will come into being without a cause? Besides, the state of willing, the one that immediately precedes the excitation of the motor nerves, is no different in principle from other states—that of indifference, of lassitude, or of weariness. Would anyone believe that all of these states exist without a cause? And if one does not believe that, why should just the state of willing be thought to occur without a sufficient cause?

It is easy to explain why it seems to us that the motion of the stone is necessary while the donkey's act of will is not. The causes that move the stone are, after all, external and visible. But the causes of the donkey's act of will are internal and invisible; between us and the locus of

their effectiveness lies the skull of the donkey. Let us consider this difference somewhat more closely. The stone lies before us as it is constituted. We can also see the force acting upon it, and from these two factors, the constitution of the stone and the force, there results, likewise visible, the rolling of the stone. The case of the donkey is different. The state of his brain is hidden from our view. And, while the bundle of hay is visible, its effectiveness is not. It is an internal process. The bundle does not come into visible contact with the brain but acts at a distance. Hence the subjective and the objective factor—the brain and the impact that the bundle has upon it—are invisible.

Let us suppose that we could depict the donkey's soul in high relief, taking account of and making visible all those states, attitudes, and feelings that characterize it before the donkey turns. Suppose further that we could see how an image detaches itself from the bundle of hay and, describing a visible path through the air, intrudes upon the donkey's brain and how it produces a change there in consequence of which certain nerves and muscles move. Suppose, finally, that we could repeat this experiment arbitrarily often, that, if we returned the donkey's soul into the state preceding his turning and let exactly the same impression act upon it, we should always observe the very same result. Then we would regard the donkey's turning to the right as necessary. We would come to realize that the brain, constituted as it was at that moment, had to react to such an impression in precisely that way.

In the absence of this experiment it seems as though the donkey's act of will were not causally determined. We just do not see its being causally determined and consequently believe that no such determination takes place. The act of will, it is said, is the cause of the turning, but

it is not itself determined; it is said to be an absolute beginning.

The opinion that the donkey's act of will is not causally determined is held not only by the outsider; the donkey himself, had he the gift of reflection, would share it. The causes of his act of will would elude him, too, since in part they do not become conscious at all and in part pass through consciousness fleetingly, with the speed of lightning. If, for example, what tipped the scales was that he was closer by a hair's breadth to the bundle on the right, or that it smelled a shade better, how should the donkey notice something so trivial, something that so totally fails to force itself upon his consciousness?

In one sense, of course, the donkey is right in thinking "I could have turned to the left." His state at the moment, his position relative to the bundle, or its constitution need merely have been somewhat different, and he really would have turned to the left. The statement "I could have acted otherwise" is, accordingly, true in this sense: turning to the left is one of the movements possible for me (in contrast, for example, to the movement of flying); it lies within

the realm of my possibilities.

We arrive at the same result if we take the law of inertia as our point of departure. It reads: every object strives to remain in its present state. Expressed negatively this becomes: without a sufficient cause no object can pass from its present state to another one. The stone will lie forever just as it is lying now; it will not undergo the slightest change if no causes such as the weather or a force—act upon it to bring about a change. The donkey's brain will remain in the same state unchanged for all eternity if no causes—the feeling of hunger or fatigue, say, or external impressions—bring about a change.

If we reflect upon the entire life of the donkey sub specie necessitatis, we arrive at the following result. The donkey came into the world with certain properties of mind and body, his genetic inheritance. Since the day of his birth, impressions—of the companions with whom he frolicked or worked, his feed, the climate—have acted upon these properties. These two factors, his inborn constitution and the way in which it was formed through the impressions of