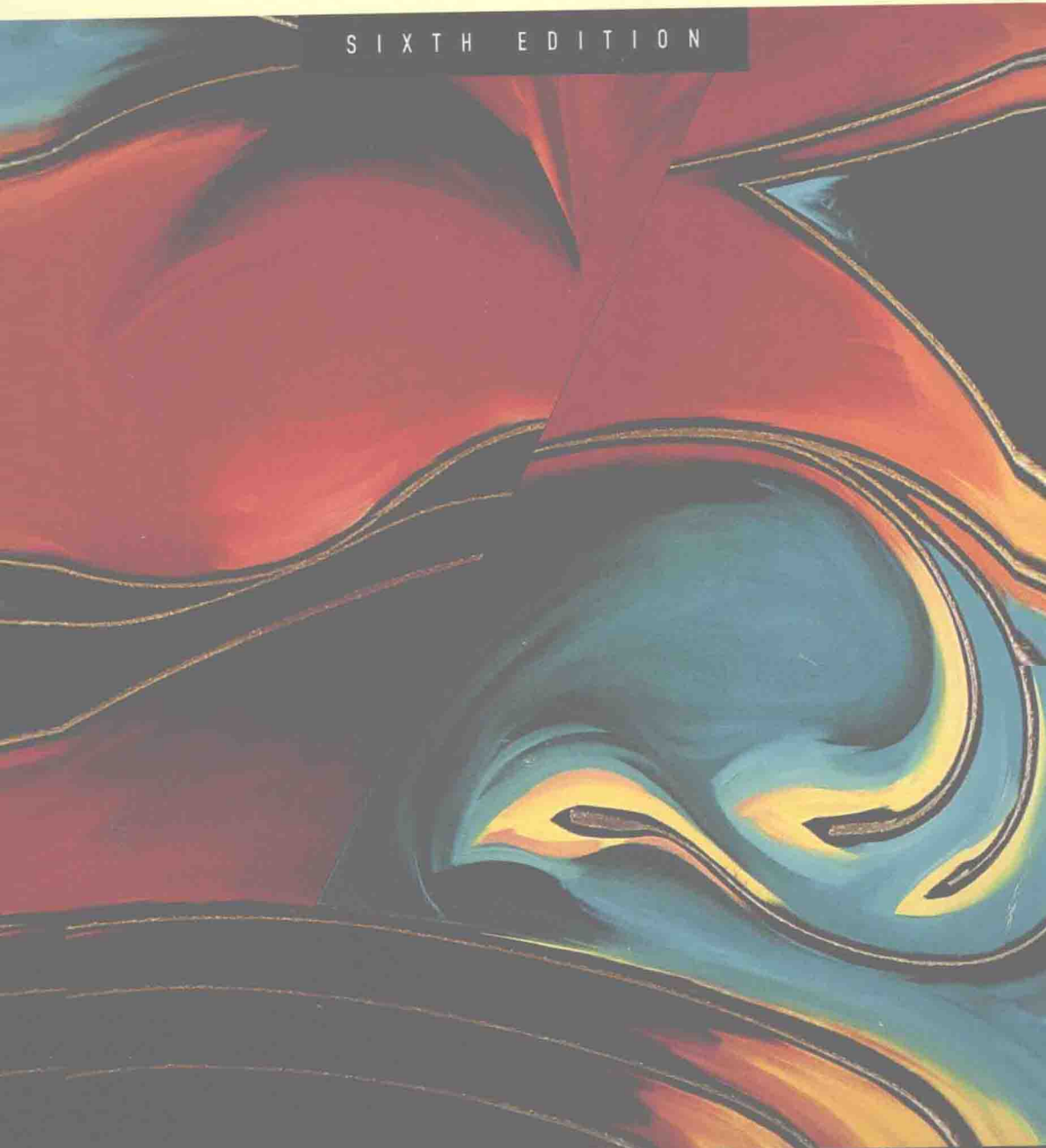


Introducing Philosophy

A TEXT WITH INTEGRATED READINGS

SIXTH EDITION



ROBERT C. SOLOMON

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University of Texas at Austin

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Introducing Philosophy

*For Vita P. Solomon
She brought me into life
and taught me it was art.*

PREFACE

Introducing Philosophy: A Text with Integrated Readings presupposes no background in the subject and no special abilities. Intended primarily as a textbook for a one- or two-semester introductory course, the book provides the course materials from which instructors and students can focus on a variety of problems and perspectives. The point of this textbook is to present students with alternatives on every issue and let them arrive at their own conclusions. These conclusions should be based on arguments in class and with friends or classmates, as well as on the discussions in this book. The purpose of philosophy is to encourage each person to think for himself or herself; no single source of arguments or information can take the place of personal dialogues and discussions. A textbook is ultimately a sourcebook; everything in it is to be taken as a cause for further argument, not as a final statement of results. This book does not attempt to sway students toward any particular philosophical positions, but rather presents basic philosophical problems and powerful philosophical arguments to encourage students to think for themselves.

This book derives from thirty years of teaching in very different schools in various cities and states. It is based on the belief that philosophy is a genuinely exciting subject, accessible not only to specialists and a few gifted undergraduate majors but to everyone. Everyone is a philosopher, whether enrolled in a philosophy course or not. Most of us are concerned with the same basic problems and use the same essential arguments. The difference is that someone who has studied philosophy has the advantage of having encountered stronger and more varied arguments than might have been available otherwise. In this book, the views of the major philosophers of the past twenty-five hundred years are used to give students these various arguments. This approach offers introductory students direct contact with substantial readings from significant works in the history of philosophy, but removes the unreasonable demand that they confront these often difficult works in full and without commentary or editing, as they would in the originals or in most anthologies. This book is not, however, a historical introduction but rather an introduction to the problems of philosophy and the various ways in which they have been answered. The history of philosophy thus serves to illuminate these problems and replies, not the other way around.

Although the language of philosophy is often specialized and sometimes difficult, this book is as free of jargon and special terminology as possible. Where necessary, the most important and widely used philosophical terms are carefully introduced

within the text and also summarized in glossaries at the end of each chapter. Brief biographies of the philosophers discussed are provided at the end of the book. Although the book deals principally with the philosophers' ideas rather than with their lives, it is valuable to have the student learn their place in history.

Responses to the first five editions of *Introducing Philosophy* have been both gratifying and helpful in the preparation of this revision for a new generation of students. In the sixth edition, the most obvious change is a thorough editing and reorganization of the book and the readings. By the fifth edition, the various additions had accumulated to the point where the sheer size and weight of the book had become intimidating to most students and some instructors. Accordingly, we decided that the best way to improve the book, in addition to bringing some of the "hotter" areas of philosophy up-to-date, was to put it through a rigorous weight-reduction regime. For example, the first two chapters of the previous editions (on Reality, ancient and modern) have been consolidated into one. The readings have been edited for clarity and conciseness, the additions of feminist and "multicultural" material have been better integrated into the text, long chapters have been split apart, and sections have been more clearly defined. These improvements will give the instructor greater ease and flexibility in creating his or her own course with the text, using some sections of a chapter but not others, or rearranging the order of treatment from the one that appears here. A new and more descriptive table of contents should make the availability of such choices and arrangements more evident and efficient.

Chapters 1 and 2 are now combined into a single chapter on metaphysics, beginning with the pre-Socratic Greeks and some contemporary discussions from early philosophers in the Eastern Mediterranean, India, and China. In what is now Chapter 2, I have added some material on feminism, Indian epistemology, and skepticism. I have again re-written Chapter 3 to further emphasize the problem of relativism. Chapter 5 now gives more emphasis to the great variety of world religions, including Islam and other non-Western religions. I have separated two former chapters to form Chapters 6 and 7 and updated material in the relatively new field of "cognitive science." Chapters 8 through 11 have been reworked to reflect feminist and non-Western concerns with freedom, ethics, justice, and, especially, art. In many cases, I have replaced difficult texts with simpler and shorter readings. The following section will make clear the various possibilities for using the sixth edition of *Introducing Philosophy* as a beginning philosophy textbook.

For the Instructor: How to Use This Book

Introducing Philosophy is written for a complete course, and the chapters build on one another in logical sequence. Nevertheless, each chapter has been written as an independent unit so that it is possible to use the book in a variety of ways and for a variety of courses. Within each chapter, too, various sections can be selected for shorter discussion. For example, some instructors may want to use only the first sections of Chapter 5 (Religion) or only a few key sections from Chapter 6 (Self-Identity) and Chapter 8 (Freedom). Some may want to emphasize the multicultural

material. Others may choose to omit this material and focus on more classical Western philosophy.

A full course might include the Introduction and all eleven chapters, but this may be a heavy load for an average one-term course. At the other extreme, a short course (for example, a summer term or a class that meets only once a week, a quarter system, or a class that prefers to treat a few central issues in detail) might only use half the chapters. The following outlines are suggestions for a variety of uses of the book adapted to different lengths and kinds of classes:

MAXIMUM COURSE (one very full term):

Introduction; Chapters 1–11

MINIMUM COURSE (summer, part-time, quarter):

Introduction; Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8; possibly 9

TWO-TERM COURSE:

First term: Introduction; Chapters 1–5

Second term: Introduction; Chapters 6–11

AVERAGE COURSE (14–16 week term; chapters in parentheses are optional):

Introduction; Chapters 1, 2, (3), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, (9), (10), (11)

ETHICS AND RELIGION COURSE

Introduction; Chapters 5, 6, 9, (10), (11)

METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY COURSE:

Introduction; Chapters 1, 2, 3, (4), (5), (6), (7), 8

Chapters 3 and 4 are the most difficult and thus may be the first deleted by some classes. Other classes may prefer to begin with either Chapter 5 (Religion) or Chapter 9 (Ethics) and reorder the sequence of chapters. The basic course—tailored to the average one-term, 14–16 week class meeting three times a week—would be:

Introduction; Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9

The remaining chapters can be added as time and interest permit.

In this edition, I have used alphabetic letters to designate sections and subsections within the chapters. Because some of the most important chapters (e.g., Knowledge, Self-Identity, Freedom, and Ethics) are longer and more involved, many instructors prefer to assign a few sections rather than an entire chapter. For instance, in Chapter 3 some instructors may prefer to deal only with the standard three theories of truth and dispense with the material on European philosophy (Kant and following) in the sections that follow. Others may prefer to delete the theories of truth and launch right into Kant following the discussion of Hume. So, too, some instructors may prefer to deal with the arguments concerning God's existence but dispense with the problem of evil; some may want to talk only about the basic problem of freedom versus determinism without subjecting students to the (comparative) subtleties and intrigue of the variations of "soft determinism." Other instructors may want to teach a brief history of ethics (Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Mill) without treating such general

topics as ethical relativism. I am confident that this new edition makes all of this much easier to do.

For the Student: Doing Philosophy

Your attempt to develop your own thoughts—to “do” philosophy as well as to read what others have done—is central to any study of philosophy. Philosophy, more than any other field, is not so much a subject as it is a way of thinking, one that can be appreciated fully only by joining in. While reading each section, therefore, do not hesitate to put down the book at any time and do your own thinking and writing. When reading about metaphysics, for example, think about how you would develop your own view of reality and how you would answer the questions raised by the first philosophers of ancient Greece or the Orient. When confronted by an argument, consider how you might argue for or against a given position. When facing an idea that seems foreign, try to put it in your own terms and understand the vision that lies behind it. And when facing a problem, always offer your own answer as well as the answers offered by earlier thinkers. In philosophy, unlike physics or biology, your own answer may be just as legitimate as those given by the philosophers of the past, and there may be equally interesting answers from different traditions. That is what makes philosophy so difficult to learn at first, but it is also what makes it so personally valuable and enjoyable.

Writing Philosophy

With the foregoing ideas in mind, it should be obvious why talking about philosophy with friends and classmates, raising important questions and objections in class, and writing down ideas are so very important. Articulation reinforces comprehension, and arguing against objections broadens understanding. Writing papers in philosophy is a particularly important part of any philosophy course, and there are certain general guidelines to keep in mind:

1. Begin your essay with a leading question. “Thinking about” some philosophical issue can be fun, but too easily loses direction and purpose. For instance, thinking about “freedom” involves far too many different problems and perspectives. Asking such questions as “Is freedom of action compatible with scientific determinism?” or “Can there be freedom in a socialist state?” gives your thinking a specific orientation and way of proceeding.
2. Be clear about the difficulties you face in tackling the question. Are the terms of the question clear? It is not always necessary or possible to define terms at the start of your essay. Indeed, defining the key term might be the basic and most difficult conclusion you reach. Also, it is often a poor idea to depend on a dictionary (even a good one) for clarifying your question. Dictionaries are not written by philosophers and generally reflect popular usage—which may include just such philosophical misunderstandings as you are attempting to correct.

3. Clarify the position you are arguing. Don't force the reader (your instructor) to guess where you are going. When you are clear about the question you ask, it will help you clarify the answer you intend to give, and vice versa. In fact, you may well change your mind—both about the question and the answer—several times while you are writing; this is the real danger of attempting a one-draft-the-night-before approach to essay writing.
4. Argue your case. Demonstrate why you hold the position you do. The most frequent criticism of student papers is, "This is your assertion: where is the argument?" When an exam question asks you to discuss an idea or a quotation "critically," this does not mean that you must attack it or find fault with it, but rather that you need to consider the merits and possible inadequacies, consider the reasons given, and give your own reasons for what you say.
5. Anticipate objections to your position and to your arguments, and take the offensive against rival positions. If you don't know what your position is opposed to, it is doubtful you are clear about what your own position is. If you can't imagine how anyone could possibly disagree with you, you probably haven't thought through your position carefully.
6. Don't be afraid to be yourself, to be humorous, or charming, or sincere, or personal. The most powerful philosophical writings, those that have endured for centuries, often reflect the author's deepest concerns and attitudes toward life. However, remember that no philosophical writing can be just humorous, or charming, or sincere, or personal. Make sure your jokes—and everything you write—is relevant to the topic at hand. What makes your writing philosophical is that it involves general concerns and careful arguments while attempting to prove an important point and answer one of the age-old questions.

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This book and its five previous editions have been made possible through the encouragement and help of many people, most importantly the several thousand introductory students I have had the pleasure of meeting and teaching over the past decade. For the original edition, I thank Susan Zaleski for her very special insights and criticism of the manuscript in its early stages. I also thank Robert Fogelin, John McDermott, George Cronk, and Roland D. Zimany for their encouragement and helpful suggestions. And I thank Terry Boswell, Lisa Erlich, David Blumenfeld, Paul Woodruff, Harry O'Hara, Stephanie Lewis, and Barbara Barratt for their time and good advice. Revisions for the second edition were suggested by Paul Woodruff, Billy Joe Lucas, and Cheshire Calhoun. I benefited in the third edition from advice given by Peter Hutcheson, Richard Palmer, Norman Thomas, Greta Reed, Edward Johnson, Paul Woodruff, Don Branson, Hoke Robinson, Robert Fogelin, Meredith Michaels, Bruce Paternoster, Maxine Morphis, and Bruce Ballard. In the fourth edition, I was grateful for the constructive suggestions of Jeffery Coombs, Timothy Owen Davis, Conrad Gromada, Gregory Landini, Dan Bonevac, Paul Woodruff, Steven Phillips, Kathleen Higgins, and Kristy Bartlett. For the fifth edition, I owe a

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