FIFTY

Readings in Philosophy

DONALD C. ABEL

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Donald C. Abel
St. Norbert College

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About the Author

DONALD C. ABEL teaches philosophy at St. Norbert College, where he is an associate professor. Prior to his appointment at St. Norbert, he was an editor at the Great Books Foundation. He holds a B.A. in Philosophy from Gonzaga University, an M.A. in Philosophy from Tulane University, a Ph.L. in Philosophy from St. Michael's Institute, an M.Div. in Theology from Loyola University of Chicago, and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Northwestern University. He is the author of *Freud on Instinct and Morality* (1989) and *Theories of Human Nature: Classical and Contemporary Readings* (McGraw-Hill, 1992). Professor Abel has received two awards for excellence in teaching, and an award for outstanding scholarship. He is a member of the American Philosophical Association, the American Catholic Philosophical Association, the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, and the Society for Philosophy and Psychology.

Preface

This anthology is designed for an introductory course in philosophy. It contains classical and contemporary readings organized according to seven basic topics: the nature of philosophy, philosophy of religion, theories of knowledge, philosophy of mind, freedom and determinism, ethics, and political and social philosophy.

The fifty readings in this book were selected on the basis of their cogency of thought, clarity of expression, historical significance, diversity, and accessibility. Most of the selections are taken from works by classical Western philosophers or by contemporary philosophers writing in that tradition. To enable students to see some alternative approaches to philosophical issues, I have also included selections from non-Western, feminist, and minority authors. Some of the readings in this latter category are (to the best of my knowledge) from works excerpted here for the first time in an introductory philosophy anthology—namely, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology" by Alison M. Jaggar (Reading 19), "Feminism, Feelings and Philosophy" by Morwenna Griffiths (Reading 24), *The Middle-Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Reading 25), *The Nature of the Self* by Risieri Frondizi (Reading 28), and *Rights and Goods* by Virginia Held (Reading 50).

Each of the seven chapters is an independent unit; neither the chapter introduction nor the readings within the chapter presuppose familiarity with any prior section of the book. It is therefore possible to take the chapters in a different order or to omit some of them.

The readings in each chapter (or chapter subsection) are arranged chronologically except when it seemed pedagogically beneficial to juxtapose similar or contrasting views from the same historical period (Readings 5–6, 32–35, 45–46, and 49–50). Each reading in a chapter, together with its headnote, is a self-contained unit: The headnote provides enough background for students to understand the selection even when the author builds on or criticizes a theory presented earlier in the chapter. This feature enables instructors to vary the order of the readings or to omit some of them. Berkeley's theory of knowledge (Reading 15), for example, can be taken without first reading Locke's (Reading 14).

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As a former editor at the Great Books Foundation, I have long been committed to the use of primary texts in the classroom. But my experience as a teacher has made it clear that most beginning philosophy students need assistance in reading primary works. It is the instructor's task, of course, to provide such help. The task is greatly facilitated, however, if the readings in the textbook have been carefully edited and annotated with the students' needs in mind. *Fifty Readings in Philosophy* attempts to meet this standard in the following ways:

- *Chapter Introductions:* Each of the seven chapter introductions presents an overview of the topic and states the basic position taken by each author in the chapter. The overviews focus on fundamental questions intended to generate the students' interest; the brief summaries of the authors' positions show students the diversity of opinion on these questions and will, I hope, encourage students to enter into the ongoing philosophical dialogue and to formulate their own views on the topic.
- *Length of Readings:* Each reading is long enough to present a self-contained argument but not so lengthy that students lose track of the author's main point. In some cases, this required including more material than is typically excerpted. In Reading 27, for example, Hume's widely anthologized discussion of personal identity (*Treatise,* Book I, Part IV, Section VI) is preceded by an excerpt from the beginning of the *Treatise* (Book I, Part I, Section I) that gives the epistemological suppositions on which his argument rests. In other cases, such as James's "The Will to Believe" (Reading 11), this meant deleting sections that are interesting but not essential to the main argument being advanced.
- *Biographies:* To help students see the author of the reading as a human being rather than as a disembodied intellect, each headnote begins with a biographical sketch. To obtain fuller information about contemporary authors than is available from public sources, I contacted them directly. The following graciously supplied biographical information for this anthology: Annette C. Baier, Richard Dawkins, Jerry A. Fodor, Morwenna Griffiths, Virginia Held, John Hick, John Hospers, Alison M. Jaggar, Robert Nozick, and Richard Taylor. In addition, R. S. Downie sent information about his former colleague C. A. Campbell, and Penelope Mackie provided information about her late father, J. L. Mackie.
- *Summaries of Readings:* The headnotes end with a summary of the reading. The summaries are detailed enough to help guide students through the main arguments presented in the reading, but not so detailed as to serve as a substitute for reading the text itself. Such summaries can help students approach the text with greater confidence.
- *Explanatory Notes:* Nearly all the readings contain some terms and references that are likely to be unfamiliar to beginning students. I explain these matters in notes printed at the end of the reading. The endnotes sometimes include notes by the author or by the editor or translator of the work. The author of each note is indicated by bracketed initials at the end of the note.

- *Retention of Original Headings:* To help students better understand the context and organization of each reading, all the original headings and subheadings of the work are included. This format also makes it easier for students to locate the excerpt in the original work.
- *Stylistic Modernization:* To make the selections from Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Paley more accessible, I have revised archaic punctuation, capitalizations, and spellings.

I wish to thank Cynthia Ward, the philosophy editor at McGraw-Hill, whose advice and support throughout this project have been invaluable. I am also grateful to those persons, mentioned earlier, who provided biographical information for this anthology. In addition to supplying biographical data, Professor Baier sent me material not included in the originally published version of her article and granted permission to include it here, and Professor Hospers supplied me with the original title of his article, which was not used when it was first published. Diane Legomsky, Robert Vanden Burgt, and Cheryl Carpenter, all of St. Norbert College, and Julie McDonald of St. Joseph's University kindly shared their expertise with me. McGraw-Hill's anonymous readers provided valuable comments on my initial list of fifty readings. I am grateful to St. Norbert College for reducing my teaching load during the spring semester of 1993 so that I could devote more time to the anthology. I thank Tom Holton of McGraw-Hill for his expert supervision of the copyediting, design, and production of the book. Finally, I would like to thank the publishers and authors (listed at the end of the book) who granted permission to reproduce copyrighted material.

Donald C. Abel

Fifty Readings in Philosophy

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CHAPTER 1 What Is Philosophy?

The ancient Greek thinkers who explored fundamental questions about the world and about human existence called themselves *philosophoi,* "lovers of wisdom." They took time to stop and wonder about such things as the nature of the universe, the purpose of life, and the meaning of "good" and "bad." In their search for wisdom, they were not content to rely on answers provided by religious and cultural tradition; they used reason and evidence gained from their own experience to formulate new hypotheses. While not all the Greek philosophers thought it possible to find the ultimate answers to their questions, they all believed that the very activity of seeking wisdom is highly worthwhile. The philosopher Socrates was so convinced of the importance of philosophizing that he declared: "The unexamined life is not worth living for a human being."

The Greek conception of philosophy as the "love of wisdom" is still valid today. Philosophy now, as then, begins with the realization that we know very little about the most important things in life. Philosophers continue to ponder basic questions about the universe and human existence. They are aware of the answers provided by common sense and by authority (religious or secular), but know that such answers can be partially or entirely mistaken. Philosophers are "skeptical" in the root sense of "taking a close look" (*skepesthai* in Greek) at an idea before accepting it. They seek answers based on reason and experience, realizing that any proposed answer (including their own) is tentative and subject to debate. In fact, practically every major philosophical question is still energetically disputed, even after centuries of debate. The lack of

definitive answers in philosophy may seem frustrating until we come to see that the value of philosophizing lies not so much in the theories it produces as in the very activity of seeking wisdom. To engage in philosophy is to deepen our understanding of fundamental issues and thereby enrich our lives.

The readings in this book present the reflections of classical and contemporary philosophers on seven basic topics. The readings in Chapter 1 deal with the nature and value of philosophy. (Paradoxically, to ask what philosophy is, is itself a philosophical question, since to understand the nature and importance of the search for wisdom is itself a part of wisdom.) The balance of the book will present differing—and often opposing—views on six topics: the existence of God and the rationality of religious belief (Chapter 2), the nature and grounds of human knowledge (Chapter 3), the relation of the mind to the body and the existence of the "self" (Chapter 4), the existence of free will (Chapter 5), the nature and requirements of morality (Chapter 6), and the nature and origin of political authority and of justice and rights (Chapter 7).

Chapter 1, "What Is Philosophy?," contains two readings, one from Plato and one from Bertrand Russell. In the *Euthyphro* Plato illustrates his and Socrates's method of philosophical inquiry. The work depicts a conversation between Socrates and a priest named Euthyphro on the subject of piety (holiness)—something that Plato believes is an essential element in living rightly and therefore a fitting topic for a philosophical dialogue. In the conversation Socrates uses a question-and-answer method to elicit and clarify Euthyphro's opinions about the nature of piety, to make Euthyphro aware of his implicit assumptions, to show him inconsistencies in his views, and to encourage him to think more deeply and coherently about piety. Socrates and Plato believe that this dialectical ("Socratic") method exemplified in the *Euthyphro*—whether used in conversation with another person or in an interior dialogue with oneself—is the surest path to wisdom. In the second reading, Russell presents his views on the value of philosophy. He argues that philosophizing enriches our mental lives. This enrichment comes not from attaining definitive answers to questions (since practically all philosophical questions remain undecided), but from teaching us to question our own beliefs and to see that there are alternative ways of viewing reality. Russell holds that philos-

ophy helps us see the world more objectively by liberating us from our tendency to interpret everything in terms of how it affects us personally.

Plato and Russell would agree that philosophy is the love of wisdom, but—not surprisingly, given the controversial nature of philosophical questions—not all philosophers would. And even those who do agree would almost certainly have different views about what "wisdom" is and what it means to "love" wisdom. To illustrate the diversity of opinion among philosophers about the nature of philosophy, I conclude this introduction with a series of brief quotations from a variety of well-known thinkers from Plato to the present. (Whether one considers these thinkers *philosophers* depends, of course, on how one defines philosophy!)

> The feeling of wonder is the mark of the philosopher; philosophy has no other beginning than this.
>
> —Plato

> Philosophy is the cultivation of mental faculties.
>
> —Marcus Tullius Cicero

> The beginning of philosophy is the recognition of the conflict between opinions.
>
> —Epictetus

> Philosophy is the unusually stubborn attempt to think clearly.
>
> —William James

> Philosophy . . . has its origin and value in an attempt to give a reasonable account of our own personal attitude toward the more serious business of life.
>
> —Josiah Royce

> The proper method of philosophy consists in clearly conceiving insoluble problems in all their insolubility and then in simply contemplating them.
>
> —Simone Weil

> Philosophy [is] the endeavor to discover by systematic reflection the ultimate nature of things.
>
> —Brand Blanshard

> To philosophize is to act in such a way that one steps out of the workaday world.
>
> —Josef Pieper

> The main concern of philosophy is to question and understand very common ideas that all of us use every day without thinking about them.
>
> —Thomas Nagel

READING 1

Euthyphro

Plato

Plato was born in Athens in about 428 B.C.E. As a youth he associated with Socrates, a philosopher who constantly challenged fellow Athenians to think about virtue and to improve their souls. Plato's initial interest was in politics, but he soon became disillusioned, especially when, under the democracy that was restored after the rule of the "Thirty Tyrants," Socrates was arrested on false charges of impiety and the corruption of youth, convicted, and condemned to die. After the execution of Socrates, Plato moved to nearby Megara for a time and may have traveled to Egypt. In 388 he visited Italy and the city of Syracuse in Sicily. Returning to Athens, he founded the Academy, a school devoted both to philosophical inquiry and to the philosophically based education of politicians. Plato spent most of his life teaching at the Academy (Aristotle was his most famous student) and writing philosophical works. He made two more trips to Syracuse, in 368 and 361, apparently with the intention of turning the city's ruler, Dionysius the Younger, into a "philosopher-king." (If this was indeed his purpose, he failed.) Plato died in Athens in 347 at the age of eighty-one.

Most of Plato's works are written as conversations between Socrates and one or more interlocutors on some topic concerning morality. His best-known "dialogues" (the name by which his surviving works are known) are the *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Meno, Symposium,* and *Republic.*

Our reading here is the *Euthyphro,* a work that illustrates how the historical Socrates used the method of question-and-answer to show people that they know less than they think they do about some moral topic and to encourage them to think more deeply and more consistently about it. In this dialogue Socrates meets a priest named Euthyphro at the court of the magistrate in charge of cases involving the state religion. Socrates has come there to deal with preliminary matters concerning the charges of impiety and corruption of youth that a man named Meletus has filed against him; Euthyphro is at the court to charge his father with murder. Since it was generally considered highly impious to bring legal action against one's father, Socrates tells Euthyphro that he must be very knowledgeable about piety, or else he would never have initiated such an action. Euthyphro quickly agrees that he has "made great strides in wisdom." At Socrates's request, he agrees to explain the nature of piety. Socrates expresses his gratitude, since a knowledge of piety will enable him to defend himself in court against the charge of impiety.

Euthyphro first says that piety (holiness) is doing what he is doing: prosecuting the wrongdoer. Socrates points out that while prosecuting wrongdoers may be an *example* of piety, it is not a *definition* because it does not specify the "idea" (form, characteristic) of piety—the element that is common to all instances of piety and makes them be instances of piety. Euthyphro proceeds to define piety as "that which is dear to the gods." Socrates's questioning shows Euthyphro the inadequacy of this definition. Euthyphro then proposes other definitions, but each time Socrates points out inconsistencies in Euthyphro's thought. The dialogue ends with Euthyphro telling Socrates that he is in a hurry and has to go.

Euthyphro. Why have you left the Lyceum,[1] Socrates, and what are you doing at the porch of the king-archon?[2] Surely you cannot be concerned in a suit before the king-archon, like myself?

Socrates. Not in a suit, Euthyphro; [indictment] is the word which the Athenians use.

Euth. What! I suppose that some one has been prosecuting you, for I cannot believe that you are the prosecutor of another.

Soc. Certainly not.

Euth. Then someone else has been prosecuting you?

Soc. Yes.

Euth. And who is he?

Soc. A young man who is little known, Euthyphro; and I hardly know him. His name is Meletus, and he is of the deme[3] of Pitthis. Perhaps you may remember his appearance; he has a beak, and long straight hair, and a beard which is ill grown.

Euth. No, I do not remember him, Socrates. But what is the charge which he brings against you?

Soc. What is the charge? Well, a very serious charge, which shows a good deal of character in the young man, and for which he is certainly not to be despised. He says he knows how the youth are corrupted and who are their corruptors. I fancy that he must be a wise man, and seeing that I am the reverse of a wise man, he has found me out, and is going to accuse me of corrupting his young friends. And of this our mother the state is to be the judge. Of all our political men he is the only one who seems to me to begin in the right way, with the cultivation of virtue in youth; like a good husbandman, he makes the young shoots his first care, and clears away us who are the destroyers of them. This is only the first step; he will afterwards attend to the older branches; and if he goes on as he has begun, he will be a very great public benefactor.

Euth. I hope that he may; but I rather fear, Socrates, that the opposite will turn out to be the truth. My opinion is that in attacking you he is simply aiming a blow at the foundation of the state. But in what way does he say that you corrupt the young?

Soc. He brings a [strange] accusation against me, which at first hearing excites surprise: he says that I am a poet or maker of gods, and that I invent new gods and deny the existence of old ones; this is the ground of his indictment.

Euth. I understand, Socrates; he means to attack you about the [divine] sign which occasionally, as you say, comes to you. He thinks that you are a neologian,[4] and he is going to have you up before the court for this. He knows that such a charge is readily received by the world, as I myself know too well; for when I speak in the assembly about divine things, and foretell the future to them, they laugh at me and think me a madman. Yet every word that I say is true. But they are jealous of us all; and we must be brave and go at them.

Soc. Their laughter, friend Euthyphro, is not a matter of much consequence. For a man may be thought wise; but the Athenians, I suspect, do not much trouble themselves about him until he begins to impart his wisdom to

others; and then for some reason or other—perhaps, as you say, from jealousy—they are angry.

Euth. I am never likely to try their temper in this way.

Soc. I dare say not, for you are reserved in your behaviour, and seldom impart your wisdom. But I have a benevolent habit of pouring out myself to everybody, and would even pay for a listener, and I am afraid that the Athenians may think me too talkative. Now if, as I was saying, they would only laugh at me, as you say that they laugh at you, the time might pass gaily enough in the court; but perhaps they may be in earnest, and then what the end will be you soothsayers only can predict.

Euth. I dare say that the affair will end in nothing, Socrates, and that you will win your cause; and I think that I shall win my own.

Soc. And what is your suit, Euthyphro? Are you the pursuer or the defendant?

Euth. I am the pursuer.

Soc. Of whom?

Euth. You will think me mad when I tell you.

Soc. Why, has the fugitive wings?

Euth. No, he is not very volatile at his time of life.

Soc. Who is he?

Euth. My father.

Soc. Your father, my good man?

Euth. Yes.

Soc. And of what is he accused?

Euth. Of murder, Socrates.

Soc. By the powers, Euthyphro, how little does the common herd know of the nature of right and truth. A man must be an extraordinary man, and have made great strides in wisdom, before he could have seen his way to bring such an action.

Euth. Indeed, Socrates, he must.

Soc. I suppose that the man whom your father murdered was one of your relatives—clearly he was; for if he had been a stranger you would never have thought of prosecuting him.

Euth. I am amused, Socrates, at your making a distinction between one who is a relation and one who is not a relation; for surely the pollution is the same in either case, if you knowingly associate with the murderer when you ought to clear yourself and him by proceeding against him. The real question is whether the murdered man has been justly slain. If justly, then your duty is to let the matter alone; but if unjustly, then even if the murderer lives under the same roof with you and eats at the same table, proceed against him. Now the man who is dead was a poor dependant of mine who worked for us as a field labourer on our farm in Naxos, and one day in a fit of drunken passion he got into a quarrel with one of our domestic servants and slew him. My father bound him hand and foot and threw him into a ditch, and then sent to Athens to ask of a diviner what he should do with him. Meanwhile he never attended to him and took no care about him, for he regarded

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