

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Eighth
Edition



the **Big Questions**

A Short Introduction to Philosophy

Robert C. Solomon
Kathleen M. Higgins

Not for Sale in the
United States

The Big Questions

A Short Introduction to Philosophy

Eighth Edition



ROBERT C. SOLOMON
University of Texas at Austin

KATHLEEN M. HIGGINS
University of Texas at Austin

 **WADSWORTH**
CENGAGE Learning™

Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States



WADSWORTH
CENGAGE Learning™

**The Big Questions: A Short
Introduction to Philosophy,
Eighth Edition**

**Robert C. Solomon and
Kathleen M. Higgins**

Publisher/Executive Editor:
Clark Baxter

Senior Sponsoring Editor:
Joann Kozyrev

Associate Media Editor: Diane
Akerman

Assistant Editor: Nathan
Gamache

Editorial Assistant: Michaela
Henry

Marketing Manager:
Mark Haynes

Marketing Coordinator:
Josh Hendrick

Marketing Communications
Manager: Kim Soltero

Project Manager, Editorial
Production: Abigail Greshik

Creative Director: Rob Hugel

Art Director: Faith Brosnan

Print Buyer: Marcia Locke

Permissions Editor:
Timothy Sisler

Production Service:
Pre-PressPMG

Text Designer: Rebecca Evans

Photo Researcher: Rachel
Trousdale

Copy Editor: Pre-PressPMG

Cover Designer: RHDG/
Christopher Harris

Cover Image: © age footstock/
SuperStock

Composer: Pre-PressPMG

© 2010, 2006 Wadsworth, Cengage Learning

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced, transmitted, stored or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including but not limited to photocopying, recording, scanning, digitizing, taping, Web distribution, information networks, or information storage and retrieval systems, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

For product information and
technology assistance, contact us at **Cengage Learning
Academic Resource Center, 1-800-423-0563**

For permission to use material from this text or product,
submit all requests online at **www.cengage.com/permissions**.
Further permissions questions can be emailed to
permissionrequest@cengage.com

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008941295

ISBN-13: 978-1-439-04200-7

ISBN-10: 1-439-04200-4

Wadsworth, Cengage Learning

10 Davis Drive
Belmont, CA 94002-3098
USA

Cengage Learning products are represented in Canada by
Nelson Education, Ltd.

For your course and learning solutions, visit
academic.cengage.com

Purchase any of our products at your local college store or at our
preferred online store **www.ichapters.com**

The Big Questions

For our nieces and nephews,

*Jem, Jesi, Danyal, Rachel, and Carrie Solomon,
Caitlin Higgins, Jeffrey and Matthew Cook,
Allison, Rachel, Daniel, Brett, and Marcus Felten,
Kevin and Emily Daily*

Preface

It was the fall of 1806, in the college town of Jena, in what we now call Germany. It was about the time when most students and professors would have been getting ready for their classes, with mixed annoyance and anticipation. The professors would have been finishing up their summer research; the students would have been doing what students usually do at the end of the summer.

But this year school would not begin as usual.

Napoleon's troops were already approaching the city, and you could hear the cannon from the steps of the university library. French scouts were already in the town, walking around the university, stopping for a glass of wine in the student bars, and chatting casually with the local residents, many of whom were in sympathy with the new French ideals of "liberty, equality, and fraternity."

As the battle was about to begin, a young philosophy instructor named **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel** was hastily finishing the book he was writing—a very difficult philosophy book with the forbidding title *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. But "spirited" is what the book was, and it perfectly captured the tension, excitement, and anxiety of those perilous days. It was the end of an old way of life and the beginning of a new one. The book was a vision of consciousness caught in the midst of gigantic forces and looking for direction in a new and terrifyingly human world. It was an appeal for hope and thoughtful effort toward universal understanding and a belief in what was then innocently called the "perfectibility of humanity."

Transfer the situation to our own times—it was as if life in America were about to change completely, with all our old habits and landmarks, our ideas about ourselves and the ways we live, replaced by something entirely new and largely unknown. We talk about "future shock" and "megatrends" but, in fact, most of what we consider drastic changes in American life are mere shifts of emphasis, sometimes inconvenient advantages that accompany new and improved technologies and techniques. If so many of us can get so melodramatic about computers, television, and the Internet, how would we react to a *real* change in our lives? Hegel and his students felt confident, even cheerful. Why? Because they had a **philosophy**. They had a vision of themselves and the future that allowed them to face the loss of their jobs, even the destruction of their society and the considerable chaos that would follow. Their ideas inspired them and made even the most threatening circumstances meaningful.

A class of our students, who had been reading Hegel's philosophy were asked to characterize their own views of themselves and their times. The answers were not inspiring. For many of them, the word *dull* seemed to summarize the world; others spoke of "crisis" and "despair." One said that life was "absurd" and another that it

was “meaningless.” When asked why, they answered that gasoline was expensive, that most of them weren’t getting the job interviews they really wanted, and that television programs were bad. We agreed that these events were less than tragic, hardly “absurd,” and didn’t make life “meaningless.” Everyone agreed that the specters of nuclear war and terrorism had put a damper on our optimism, but we also agreed that the likelihood of such catastrophes was debatable and that, in any case, we all had to live as best we could, even if under a shadow. But why, then, in these times of relative affluence and peace (compared to most of the world throughout most of history) were our answers so sour? What were we missing that Hegel and his students, confronting the most terrible battles ever known, seem to have had—something that made them so optimistic and fulfilled? Again, the answer is a philosophy.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was born in Stuttgart in 1770. While he was a college student, he was enthusiastic about the French Revolution (1789–1795) and an admirer of Napoleon. Hegel was teaching at the University of Jena in 1806 when Napoleon marched in and took over the town, ending the eight-hundred-year-old Holy Roman Empire and initiating widespread reforms throughout the German states. It was in this atmosphere of international war and liberal hopes that Hegel formulated his philosophy, which centered on the notion of Spirit, by which he meant the unity of the world through human consciousness. His method was **dialectic**—that is, he tried to demonstrate how contradictory views can be reconciled and shown to be, in fact, different aspects of one underlying phenomenon—ultimately, of Spirit. Hegel is still considered one of the great synthesizers of human knowledge and values; his *Encyclopedia* (first published in 1817) is a short synthesis of the whole of human life, including logic, science, and psychology as well as philosophy, art, religion, metaphysics, and ethics. He died in 1831.

Philosophy, religion, and science have always been closely related. The emphasis shifts, but the point of these endeavors is the same: the importance of ideas and understanding, of making sense out of our world and seeing our lives in some larger, even cosmic, perspective. *Ideas* define our place in the universe and our relations with other people; ideas determine what is important and what is not important, what is fair and what is not fair, what is worth believing and what is not worth believing. Ideas give life meaning. Our minds need ideas the way our bodies need food. We are starved for visions, hungry for understanding. We are caught up in the routines of life, distracted occasionally by those activities we call “recreation” and “entertainment.” What we as a nation have lost is the joy of thinking, the challenge of understanding, the inspirations as well as the consolations of philosophy.

This is odd, however; for America, more than any other nation on earth, was founded on ideas, was built upon philosophical principles. Yet, how many educated

Americans can even name a living American philosopher? Or, for that matter, how many of us know anything about the philosophical history that, toward the end of the eighteenth century, gave birth to this nation? We recite ideas that are two hundred, in some cases two thousand, years old without any attempt to understand them, without any awareness that many men and women have lived and died for them, without even trying to be critical about them, or to work them into our vision of the world. But these ideas are philosophy. Philosophy is simply *thinking hard* about life, about what we have learned, about our place in the world. Philosophy is, literally, the *love of wisdom*. It is the search for the larger picture, and this involves the demand for *knowledge*—the kind of knowledge that allows us to understand our lives and the world around us. It is, accordingly, the insistence on the importance of *values*, a refusal to get totally caught up in the details of life and simply go along with the crowd. Philosophy and wisdom define our place in the universe and give our lives meaning.

When undergraduates ask questions about the meaning of life and the nature of the universe, it is philosophy that ought to answer the questions. But thousands of students, not trained in hard thinking but starved for ideas and understanding, will retreat to the easier alternatives—pop philosophies of self-help, exotic religious practices, extreme politics. . . . If the hard thinking of philosophy does not address the big questions, then perhaps these easier alternatives will. The difference between philosophy and the popular alternatives is ultimately one of quality—the quality of ideas, the thoroughness of understanding. Because we all live by our ideas anyway, the choice becomes not whether to do philosophy or not do philosophy, but whether to accept a cheap and unchallenging substitute or to try the real thing. The aim of this book is to give you an introduction—to the real thing.

The Subject of Philosophy



Philosophy is sometimes treated as an extremely esoteric, abstract, and specialized subject that has little to do with any other subjects of study—or with the rest of our lives. This is simply untrue. Philosophy is nothing less than the attempt to understand who we are and what we think of ourselves. And that is just what the great philosophers of history, whom we study in philosophy courses, were doing: trying to understand themselves, their times, and their place in the world. They did this so brilliantly, in fact, that their attempts remain models for us. They help us formulate our own ideas and develop our own ways of clarifying what we believe.

Throughout this book, we have tried to introduce at least briefly many of the great philosophers throughout history. (Brief biographies are included in the chapters.) But philosophy is not primarily the study of *other* people's ideas. Philosophy is first of all the attempt to state clearly, and as convincingly and interestingly as possible, *your own* views. That is *doing* philosophy, not just reading about how someone else has done it.

This book is an attempt to help you do just that—to *do* philosophy, to state what you believe, using the great philosophers and the great ideas of the past as inspiration, as a guide to ways of putting together your own views, and to provoke the present alternatives that you may not have thought of on your own. The aim of the book—and at least one aim of the course you are taking—is to force you to think through your ideas, connect them, confront alternative views, and understand what you prefer and why you prefer it. Some students inevitably think that once they are speaking abstractly, it doesn't matter what they say. So they talk utter nonsense, they express ideas they have never thought about, or they recite mere words—for example, the popular word *value*—without having any sense of what they as individuals believe to be true. A very bright student one year claimed that he did not exist. (He received a grade anyway.) Some students even feel that it doesn't matter if they contradict themselves—after all, “It's only ideas.” But if it is through ideas that we see the world, if they determine how we feel about ourselves and live our lives, then our ideas make all the difference. So it is urgent—as well as intellectually necessary—that you ask, at every turn, “Do I really believe that?” and, “Is that compatible with other things I believe?” Good philosophy, and *great* philosophy, depends upon the seriousness and rigor with which such questions are asked. And it is the aim of this book to help you ask them, to help you build for yourself a philosophical presentation of your own view of the world.

It may sound as if it is an overwhelming task to summarize your views about the meaning of life and the nature of the universe in a single course. But no matter how crude your first efforts, this kind of integrative critical thinking—putting it all together—is essential to what you will be doing all through your life: keeping your priorities straight, knowing who you are and what you believe. In this course, which may be your first introduction to philosophy, the idea is to get you started. Once you begin to think about the *big questions*, you may well find, as many students and almost all professional philosophers have found, that it is one of the most rewarding and most accessible activities you will ever learn—you can do it almost anywhere, at any time, with anyone, and even alone. And if it seems difficult to begin (as it always does), it is because you are not used to thinking as a philosopher, because our ideas are inevitably more complex than we originally think they are, and because, once you begin thinking, there is no end to the number of things there are to think about. So consider this as a first attempt, an exploratory essay, a first difficult effort to express yourself and your opinions—not just on this issue or that one, but concerning the whole of your view of the world. It is *doing* philosophy, even if it is only for the first time, that makes it so exciting and challenging.

The first chapter of the book consists of a set of preliminary questions to get you to state your opinions on some of the issues that make up virtually every philosophical viewpoint. Some of the questions you will find amusing; some of them are deadly serious. But between the two, the outlines of what you believe and don't believe should begin to become clear. Each succeeding chapter also begins with a set of preliminary questions. And again the point is to encourage you to state your beliefs on these subjects before we begin to develop the views that philosophers have argued. Each chapter includes a discussion of various

alternative viewpoints, with brief passages from some of the great philosophers. Special terms, which probably are new to you but have become established in philosophy, are introduced as they are needed, as a way of helping you make distinctions and clarify your beliefs more precisely than our ordinary language allows. (A glossary containing most of these terms—which are boldface in the text—appears at the back of the book.) Each chapter ends with a set of concluding questions that will help you locate your own views among the alternatives of traditional philosophy. There is a bibliography at the end of each chapter containing suggestions for further reading; you can explore those topics that interest or challenge you, because no textbook can substitute for original works.

For the Instructor



This eighth edition is flexible for teaching a variety of individually structured courses in introductory philosophy at both the college and advanced high school levels. The appendixes, “Writing Philosophy,” “Deductive Logic Valid Argument Forms,” and “Common Informal Fallacies,” allow these topics to receive more focused attention than when these discussions were scattered throughout the text. There are four categories of boxed text: *Primary Sources* offer a wide variety of excerpts from key philosophical writings, as well as relevant popular sources. *Biography* provides a glimpse into the lives of many of the philosophers covered in the main text. *Key Concepts and Ideas* set forth the beliefs of individuals and philosophical movements. *Philosophy and Culture* points out links between philosophical theory and its application to societies worldwide. As in the seventh edition, our intention is for these to make such material available to those instructors who choose to use it but dispensable for those who do not. We have further expanded the final chapter on non-Western philosophies, and also expanded discussion of comparisons between non-Western and Western thought throughout. There is also new consideration of issues in the philosophy of language in chapters 5 and 10. The discussion in each chapter is more or less self-contained, and the chapters can be used in just about any order. Some instructors prefer to start with the “God” chapter, for example, others with the more epistemological chapters on “Knowledge,” “Truth,” “Self,” and “Freedom.” The opening chapters, with their broad collection of both playful and serious philosophical questions and varied discussions of the “Meaning of Life,” may be helpful in loosening up and relaxing nervous first-time students of philosophy and getting them to talk in a more free-wheeling way than they do if they are immediately confronted with the great thinkers or the most intractable problems of philosophy. So, too, the opening questions can help get students to think about the issues on their own before diving into the text. To motivate students to write and think about philosophical questions, to get them used to *interacting* with the text and arguments, we would encourage students to write their own responses and comments directly in the margins of book. The closing questions of each chapter, by the way, also serve as handy exam questions.

Acknowledgments



I thank all those readers, both students and colleagues, who responded kindly and critically to my earlier text, *Introducing Philosophy* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977; Seventh Edition, 2000). The present text, *The Big Questions*, Eighth Edition, is a fresh attempt to reach an audience not as well addressed by that book, and I am indebted to all who pointed out the need for the new book and helped me develop and refine it, especially the following reviewers: Cleavis Headley, Florida Atlantic University; Dave Hilditch, Webster University; and George Matejka, Ursuline College.

I especially thank all those people who taught me the joys and skills of philosophy, and how to teach it. First of all, there is my father, Charles M. Solomon, who always encouraged me. There is Robert Hanson, who first thrilled me with Parmenides and Heraclitus at Cheltenham High School, and Doris Yocum, who taught my first philosophy course. I learned so much about teaching philosophy from Elizabeth Flower, James Ross, Peter Hempel, and Frithjof Bergmann, and I continue to learn from great colleagues like Bob Kane, Stephen Phillips, and Paul Woodruff. I also thank Donette Moss, the late Winkie Conlon, and Shirley Hull for their much-needed care and attention. Thanks to Jon Solomon for his advice on exotic matters in the book. Thanks, too, to Stephen Waters, Mark Gilbertson, Victor Guarino, Michael Thomas, Thomas E. Moody, Stanley M. Browne, Ronald Duska, Albert B. Randall, Emrys Westacott, Gary Prince, Janet McCracken, Timothy Davis, Charlie Huenemann, George Matejka, Christopher Trogan, Butian Zhang, Mathias Bildhauer, Clancy Martin, Karen Mottola, Cleavis Headley, Dave Hilditch, George Matejka, and Erin Frank. Thanks also to David Tatom, Bill McLane, Steve Wainwright, and Worth Hawes.

Robert C. Solomon

In addition to the individuals mentioned above, I would like to thank the reviewers who assisted with the preparation of this edition: Stephen Barnes, Northwest Vista College, and Dr. Robert J. Rosenthal, Hanover College. I would also like to help Sarah Canright and Alex Neill for their help. In particular, thanks to Worth Hawes, Abigail Greshik, Vikram Jayabalan, Lee Kamilah, Melena Fenn, Sarah Perkins, Timothy Sisler, and Nathan Gamache for their help in the preparation of this edition. Special thanks to Shoshana Hurwitz for doing the index and to Jill Hernandez for preparing the eBank Instructor's Manual.

Kathleen M. Higgins

About the Authors



Robert C. Solomon (1942-2007) was internationally renowned as a teacher and lecturer in philosophy. He was Quincy Lee Centennial Professor and Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Texas at Austin. He received his Ph.D. from

the University of Michigan and over the course of his career taught at numerous institutions, including Princeton University, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Auckland, and the University of California in addition to the University of Texas. He authored over forty books, including *Introducing Philosophy*, *A Short History of Philosophy* (with Kathleen M. Higgins), *The Passions*, *In the Spirit of Hegel*, *About Love*, *Above the Bottom Line*, 4th ed., (with Clancy Martin) *Ethics and Excellence*, *The Joy of Philosophy*, *True to Our Feelings*, and was co-editor of *Twenty Questions* (5th ed., with Lee Bowie and Meredith Michaels) and *Since Socrates* (with Clancy Martin).

Kathleen M. Higgins is professor of philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin. She received her Ph.D. from Yale University, and has taught at the University of Auckland and the University of California, Riverside, in addition to the University of Texas. She is author of several books, including *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, *The Music of Our Lives*, *What Nietzsche Really Said* (with Robert C. Solomon), *Comic Relief*, *A Short History of Philosophy* (with Robert C. Solomon), and *A Passion for Wisdom* (with Robert C. Solomon). She has edited or co-edited numerous books, including *Aesthetics in Perspective*, and *Thirteen Questions in Ethics and Social Philosophy* (2nd edition, with Lee Bowie and Meredith Michaels).

The Big Questions

Contents

	Preface	xv
Introduction	Doing Philosophy	3
	Beyond Buzzwords 4	
	Articulation and Argument: Two Crucial Features of Philosophy 5	
	Concepts and Conceptual Frameworks 8	
	<i>Doing Philosophy with Style</i> 13	
	A Little Logic	15
	Deduction 16	
	Induction 17	
	Criticizing Arguments 20	
	Closing Questions 24	
	Suggested Readings 25	
Chapter 1	Philosophical Questions	27
	Philosophical Questions 28	
	Opening Questions 29	
	Suggested Readings 41	
Chapter 2	The Meaning of Life	43
	Opening Questions 43	
	The Meaning of <i>Meaning</i> 44	
	<i>Children as Meaning</i> 46	
	<i>God as Meaning</i> 46	
	<i>Afterlife as Meaning</i> 47	
	<i>No Meaning at All</i> 47	
	The Meanings of Life 50	
	<i>Life as a Game</i> 51	
	<i>Life as a Story</i> 52	
	<i>Life as Tragedy</i> 52	
	<i>Life as Comedy</i> 53	
	<i>Life as a Mission</i> 54	

<i>Life as Art</i>	55
<i>Life as an Adventure</i>	55
<i>Life as Disease</i>	56
<i>Life as Desire</i>	57
<i>Life as Nirvana</i>	58
<i>Life as Altruism</i>	58
<i>Life as Honor</i>	58
<i>Life as Learning</i>	59
<i>Life as Suffering</i>	60
<i>Life as an Investment</i>	61
<i>Life as Relationships</i>	61
Closing Questions	62
Suggested Readings	63

Chapter 3 **God**

65

Opening Questions	65
Believing in God	66
Gods and Goddesses	69
The Traditional Western Conceptions of God	70
<i>God as Transcendent</i>	73
<i>God as Immanent</i>	73
<i>God as Totally Immanent: Pantheism</i>	75
<i>God as Universal Spirit</i>	77
<i>God as Process</i>	78
<i>God as Transcendent Creator: Deism</i>	79
<i>God as the Unknown Object of Faith</i>	79
<i>God as a Moral Being</i>	81
The Problem of Evil	81
<i>Denial of God</i>	82
Two Kinds of Evil	82
<i>Denial of Evil</i>	83
The Least of the Evils	84
The Aesthetic Totality Solution	85
The Free-Will Solution	85
Justice in the Afterlife	86
God's "Mysterious Ways"	86
Working Out an Answer	87
Faith and Reason: Ways of Believing	87
The Cosmological Argument	89
The Argument from Design	90
The Ontological Argument	91
Rational Faith	93
Pascal's Wager	94
Irrational Faith	95

Religious Tolerance: Ritual, Tradition, and Spirituality	97
Doubts	100
Closing Questions	103
Suggested Readings	104
Chapter 4 The Nature of Reality	107
Opening Questions	107
The Real World	108
What Is Most Real?	110
<i>The Reality Behind the Appearances</i>	111
<i>Dreams, Sensations, and Reason: What Is Real?</i>	112
<i>The Basis of Metaphysics</i>	113
The First Metaphysicians	113
<i>Thales</i>	113
<i>The Pre-Socratic Materialists</i>	114
Early Nonphysical Views of Reality	117
Plato's Forms	120
Aristotle's Metaphysics	122
Mind and Metaphysics	123
<i>René Descartes</i>	124
<i>Baruch Spinoza</i>	127
<i>Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz</i>	128
Idealism	130
Teleology	136
Metaphysics and the Everyday World	139
Closing Questions	141
Suggested Readings	142
Chapter 5 The Search for Truth	145
Opening Questions	145
What Is True?	145
Two Kinds of Truth	147
<i>Empirical Truth</i>	147
<i>Necessary Truth</i>	148
Rationalism and Empiricism	151
The Presuppositions of Knowledge	153
Skepticism	155
<i>René Descartes and the Method of Doubt</i>	157
<i>David Hume's Skepticism</i>	159
<i>The Resolution of Skepticism: Immanuel Kant</i>	162
Knowledge, Truth, and Science	164

The Nature of Truth	168	
<i>The Coherence Theory of Truth</i>	170	
<i>The Pragmatic Theory of Truth</i>	171	
Rationality	172	
<i>Why Be Rational?</i>	174	
Subjective Truth and the Problem of Relativism	176	
Closing Questions	181	
Suggested Readings	181	
Chapter 6	Self	183
Opening Questions	183	
The Essential Self	184	
<i>Self as Body, Self as Consciousness</i>	186	
The Self and Its Emotions	190	
<i>The Egocentric Predicament</i>	194	
The Mind-Body Problem	196	
Behaviorism	198	
Identity Theory	199	
Functionalism	200	
The Self as a Choice	202	
<i>No Self, Many Selves</i>	206	
<i>The Self as Social</i>	208	
<i>Self and Relationships</i>	211	
Closing Questions	214	
Suggested Readings	215	
Chapter 7	Freedom	217
Opening Questions	217	
Freedom and the Good Life	218	
<i>Why Is Freedom So Important to Us?</i>	219	
<i>What Is Freedom?</i>	222	
Free Will and Determinism	228	
<i>Determinism Versus Indeterminism</i>	230	
<i>The Role of Consciousness</i>	234	
<i>Soft Determinism</i>	235	
<i>In Defense of Freedom</i>	236	
Closing Questions	240	
Suggested Readings	240	
Chapter 8	Morality and the Good Life	243
Opening Questions	243	
The Good Life	245	
Hedonism	245	