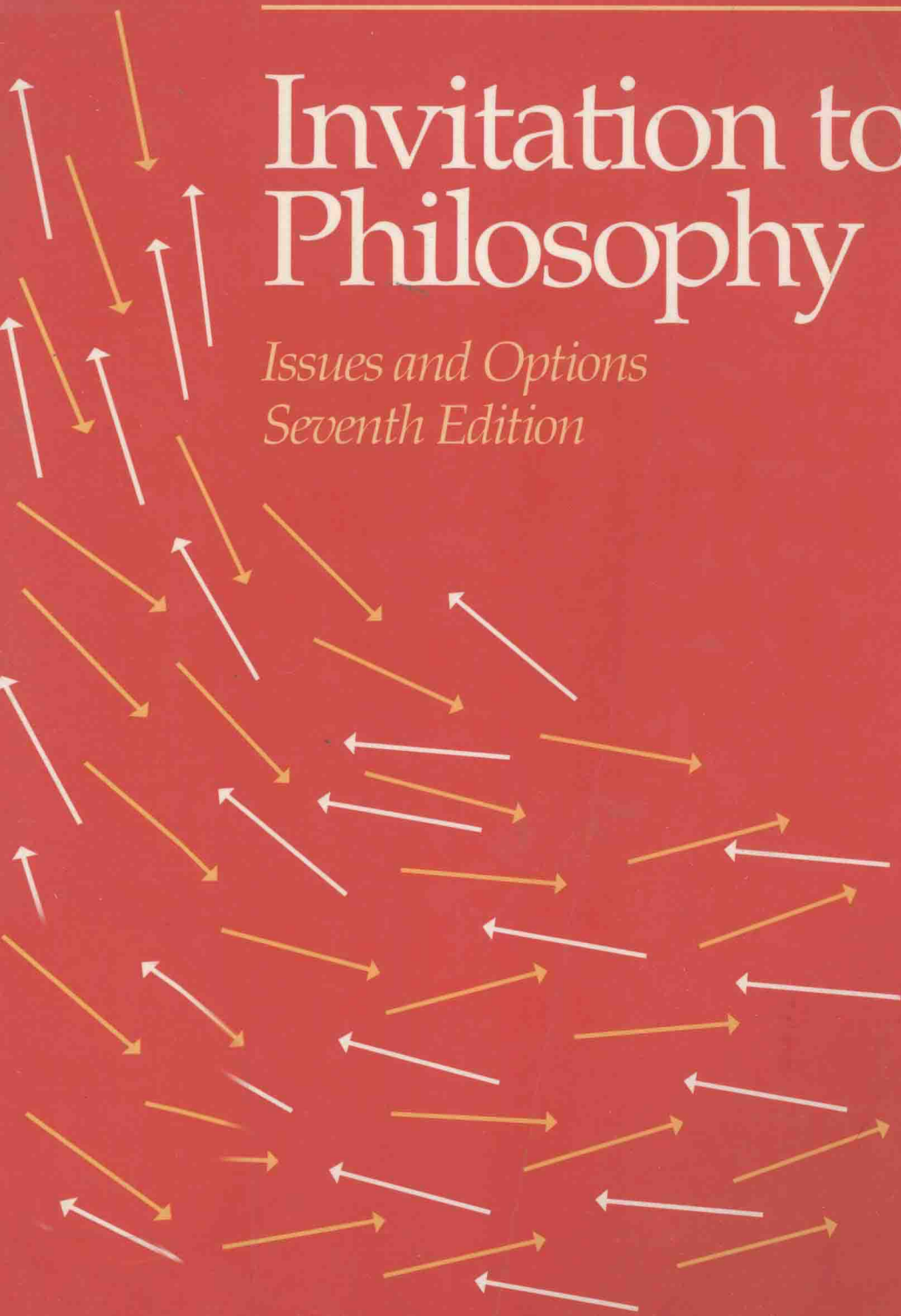

HONER / HUNT / OKHOLM

Invitation to Philosophy

Issues and Options
Seventh Edition



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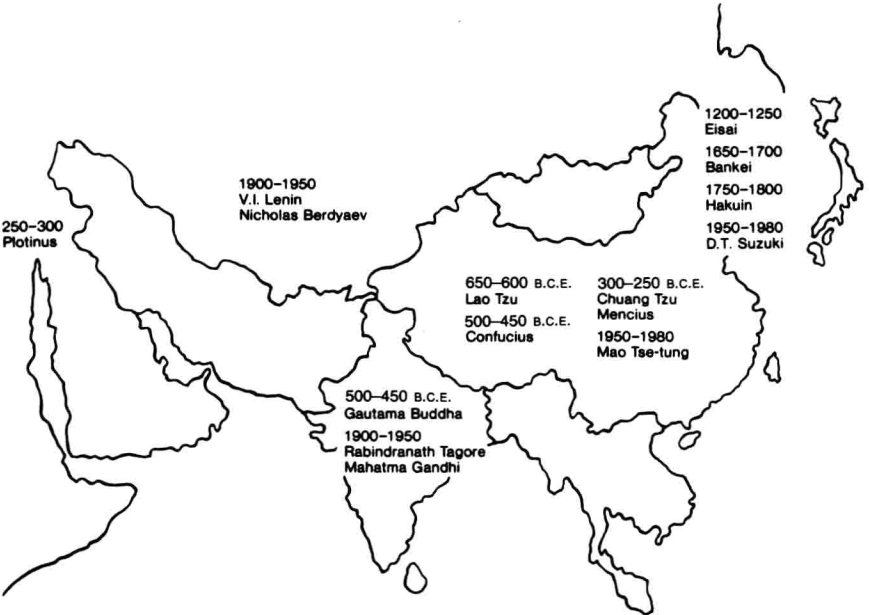
Invitation to Philosophy

Confucius Buddha Pre-Socratics	Socrates Plato	Aristotle	Epicurus Lucretius	Augustine
550-400	400-350	350-300	300-50	400-450
			B.C.E. ¹	C.E.



¹The contemporary designations B.C.E. ("before the common era") and C.E. ("of the common era") are used here in place of the more traditional but sectarian B.C. and A.D.

			Spinoza Pascal Descartes Hobbes	Locke Newton	Rousseau Voltaire Berkeley Hume Edwards	Mill Jefferson	Feuerbach Marx Thoreau Emerson Kierkegaard	Gandhi Nietzsche Lenin Husserl James Whitehead	Dewey Heidegger Wittgenstein Sartre Russell Moore Derrida
Aquinas		Bacon							
1250-1300		1600-1650	1650-1700	1700-1750	1750-1800	1800-1850	1850-1900	1900-1950	1950-2000



Preface

Invitation to Philosophy is an introductory book designed to be current, concise, and challenging to either the beginning student or the general reader. The format attempts to solve some of the problems inherent in presenting an introductory college course that can satisfy a general education requirement for a number of students and at the same time establish an adequate foundation for those who plan to study philosophy at a more advanced level.

The book is relatively short and condensed for several reasons: First, the book is intended as a guide and overview from which further and more extensive exploration can proceed. Second, the book can be employed as a handbook or ready resource for fixing philosophical reference points. The glossary of terms at the back of the book should be especially helpful for this purpose. (Terms that are defined in the glossary are identified when they first appear in the text by bold-faced type.) Third, the volume is designed to permit an early transition to selected readings where direct exposure to particular philosophers and their arguments can become an integral part of the beginner's experience. The book can be used equally well with a standard collection of readings or with a series of paperbacks that present contrasting points of view on crucial philosophical issues.

Instructors contemplating the adoption of the present volume as a textbook in an introductory course may find the authors' experiences helpful. Typically, the book is thoroughly reviewed and discussed during the first part of a semester. Following this overview, a number of supplementary readings are assigned so that the students can examine a range of philosophical positions presented by writers professionally qualified to explain and defend their distinctive views. The supplementary readings are selected with the following objectives in mind: (1) to capture beginning students' intellectual interest and encourage their personal involvement in philosophical activity; (2) to expose students to a distinctive variety of alternative philosophical views; (3) to demon-

strate that philosophical issues are of concern to contemporary as well as classical thinkers who have the ability to express themselves in intelligible terms; and (4) to underscore the relevance of philosophical study to both an enriched academic experience and an increased understanding of the everyday world of human affairs.

For the first time an instructor's handbook is available for use with this text. The manual offers suggestions for supplementary readings and exercises, as well as test questions.

This seventh edition also takes into account postmodern thought and accompanying emphases on deconstruction and narrative; discussions of these topics occur especially in the chapters on epistemology, ethics, human nature, and art. Furthermore, where appropriate there is occasional recognition of trends in the academic and popular culture, particularly feminism, pluralism, and multiculturalism. We have not compromised the material on classical philosophical positions and issues and have resisted the temptation to be fadish, but we have taken care to help students relate classical philosophical discussions to contemporary concerns. Several case studies were specifically designed with this in mind. A minor structural change in the text involves the repositioning of the chapter on metaphysics so that it appears immediately after the chapter on epistemology; the first third of the book now provides a better foundation for what follows, and the sequence is more satisfying.

The authors wish to express their long-standing indebtedness to many whose assistance and support have been invaluable throughout the writing and publishing of this text. Special recognition is given to Elizabeth Honer, Trudie Hunt, and Trevecca Okholm for their assistance in preparing the manuscript and index, offering suggestions on structure and content, and suffering and serving through seven editions.

We also acknowledge the encouragement and cooperation of our teaching colleagues Roger Johnson, James D. Thomas, Harold Loy, Jose Jacinto, Ralph Spaulding, Robert O'Connor, and Arthur Holmes. A long-standing debt is also owed to the students at Mt. San Antonio College who endured the classroom experimentation with the materials that eventually became part of the text.

We would like to thank the following reviewers: Paul Blaisdell, Baltimore City Community College; Doug Matthews, Taccoa Falls College; Brooks McDaniel, Illinois Central College; Richard Money, Indiana University-Purdue University; Georg Retzlaff, Voorhees College; Neil Rossman, La Guardia Community College; and John L. Safford, University of South Carolina at Sumter.

Our thanks also go to Wadsworth Publishing Company, its patient philosophy editor, Tammy Goldfield, and an excellent staff. These

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Finally, we recognize our profound indebtedness to the many philosophers and teachers whose ideas have been incorporated in our book.

Any possible errors and shortcomings of the seventh edition are chargeable to the authors alone.

S. M. H.

T. C. H.

D. L. O.

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Prologue

Everybody's Business

Long ago the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle asserted that human beings *must* philosophize. He believed that for most human beings philosophy was an inescapable activity. In our time the American philosopher Mortimer Adler echoed Aristotle's judgment when he proclaimed: "Philosophy is everybody's business." These two declarations, one from the Golden Age of Greece and the other from the twentieth century, set the tone and the direction for what will be explored in this introductory book.

Each person sees the world from a particular perspective; each person exhibits a more or less organized orientation toward life. As thinking human beings, we guide our actions and mold our attitudes in the light of certain beliefs or principles. When we present arguments to support the claim that something is true or real, we philosophize. When we agonize over and defend a moral judgment, we engage in philosophical work. When we give reasons to favor one political candidate over another, we practice philosophy. The professional philosopher would say that we are operating from a relatively limited number of basic assumptions—whether or not those assumptions are clearly recognized or fully examined. The distinction between the ordinary person and the philosopher, then, is merely one of *degree*. Ordinary people usually express their philosophical postures in simple, ordinary language; professional philosophers typically use more abstract and technical language that must be learned. The philosophical positions of ordinary people are expressed largely by implication, by acts and attitudes; professional philosophers make their thought processes explicit through the careful structuring of arguments. Further, the philosophical expressions of ordinary people are often capricious and fragmentary; professionals take pains to organize their positions and make them consistent—to be systematic.

Children ask philosophical questions:

Why is it wrong to tell a lie?

Where do people go when they die?

How can you tell when something is really true?

If I live in a free country, why can't I do whatever I want to?

But at some point in our lives many of us stop asking some of these profound questions. Part of the reason may lie in the fact that we find them so overwhelming or we are too easily comforted by partial or **dogmatic** answers. Philosophy reawakens our interest in basic questions by restoring the childhood spirit of wonder about bigger and deeper issues. Since most of us have engaged to a greater or lesser degree in the very human act of philosophizing, the formal study of philosophy merely encourages us to do it in a more systematic way. That means we are challenged to think intentionally, seriously, rigorously, and thoroughly. It is an invitation to become more completely human. Thus, philosophers' questions often turn out to be more precise and sophisticated versions of the questions many of us asked when we were very young:

Are some things clearly good and right, or do values differ from time to time and place to place?

Is there some ultimate meaning in life?

Who or what am I? Is the universe friendly or indifferent to human beings and their purposes? How can one best proceed to find the truth?

What, if anything, can I firmly believe?

Am I free to shape my future, or is my behavior determined by my past?

Do people have an obligation to their fellow human beings?

So, philosophy starts with questions. In fact, some people argue that philosophy's most important function is to ascertain and then clearly propose meaningful questions. More than 2,000 years ago, Socrates insisted that the unexamined life is not worth living. Socrates took the stand that it is not the responsibility of philosophy to answer our questions; its responsibility is, rather, to question our answers. The position taken in this introductory book is that a systematic review of the major questions is an overture to the study of philosophy.

Why Study Philosophy?

There are many reasons for studying and practicing philosophy. First, philosophy sharpens the mind of the student who is studying disciplines within the academic community. When a person pursues a college degree she is learning to master one or more disciplines, such as biology, theology, art, mathematics, history, education, music, or business. In the pursuit of such mastery the student will eventually run headlong into philosophical problems. This is because each academic field of knowledge (as well as the professor who teaches it) makes assumptions about reality, espouses certain values, and insists on appropriate methods for studying and advancing the particular discipline. Philosophy provides us with training and tools to recognize such presuppositions and **value judgments**. The capacity and the willingness to cut beneath what others simply take for granted are the marks of a truly educated person. One becomes more than just a technician who knows "how"; one becomes a scholar who asks "why." For example, in relation to business the philosophical person is not satisfied with knowing only how to turn a profit but is concerned with understanding the relative values of money, products, and human beings in a society. By so opening up the world of ideas, philosophy can toughen the mind, help the student develop intellectual muscles to survive in the heady atmosphere of higher education, and provide critical tools to help master an academic discipline.

Second, philosophy helps us to clarify issues, discriminate among options, and make better decisions. Philosophers embrace the principle that knowledge is preferable to ignorance, that awareness is of greater value than innocence. One professional philosopher expressed this with a bumper sticker on his car that read: "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance." Indeed, what we do not know, or will not face, can hurt us in the long run. We need to have a clear idea of the difference between truth and falsity, between what is real and what is unreal. We also must be able to distinguish what is important and what is trivial. The philosopher insists that it is not enough to know all of the answers in a game of Trivial Pursuit. In an age of information overload, we need to be able to sort out *which* facts are important in order to confront problems and respond adequately. So, philosophy protects us from affirming what is false and contenting ourselves with what is trivial. This protection comes not from blind acceptance of fixed answers or unquestioning conformity to majority opinion but from persistent and systematic inquiry into the assumptions, methods, and criteria by which critical distinctions are made. Philosophy enhances our understanding of the everyday world of human affairs and helps us make rational decisions about significant issues in our lives, such as our vocational goals, ethical dilemmas, and religious commitments.

Third, the activity of philosophy enhances our personal lives. One way that it does this is by enlarging our world beyond our private interests. As Bertrand Russell put it, it makes us "citizens of the universe." We feel new depths, experience new dimensions, and open new vistas. Even though new ideas are often unfamiliar and threatening, the courage to open ourselves up to see a bigger universe sharpens our self-awareness and keeps alive our sense of wonder and our quest for new questions and answers. Philosophy also enhances our lives by strengthening the foundation on which a personally satisfying philosophy of life can be built. It helps us to integrate thought, feeling, and action into a meaningful synthesis that is reasonable and consistent. For instance, one must philosophize carefully to integrate one's views about abortion, war, and euthanasia. We all have certain "feelings" about these issues, and many of us have acted out one or more of them. However, until we study philosophy we may not realize that we must somehow consistently relate all three views to our definition of "human life" nor may we understand in what circumstances—if any—it is permissible to take a life so defined. Any one person's integration of these issues may differ markedly from another's; the point is that one's views should be well reasoned and consistent.

Fourth, and related to all that has been said above, philosophy assists us in penetrating to the roots of our commitments by helping us to investigate and substantiate (or replace) our personal convictions (which all of us have). It frees us from the tyranny of prejudices and habitual beliefs of a generation or a nation and from unexamined convictions. After philosophical investigation we may, indeed, retain such convictions or beliefs, but we will then recognize them as assumptions, and, while we cannot completely demonstrate or prove them, they will at least be reasonable to hold. If, however, our inquiry reveals such beliefs to be unreasonable, our philosophical activity will suggest other possibilities and more satisfying options.

Whether this introduction to philosophy marks the beginning of an academic pursuit of philosophy or simply helps the student to grow personally, all of the reasons for studying and practicing philosophy have to do with its effects on the lives of those who engage in it. Studying philosophy may not result in a "better job" after college, but it will result in a better life. Philosophy, unlike some other disciplines one studies in college, does not usually lead to a lucrative career in terms of money, but it is not for that reason impractical. Philosophy is primarily about ideas, and one need not look far to discover the impact that ideas have had on our world. One has only to recall the political and social effects of the philosophies of Jesus, Karl Marx, Adam Smith, John Locke,

Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Simone de Beauvoir. Some of these lived in poverty, and some even lost their lives because of their ideas. But, as Socrates said, the most important thing is not life, but the good life.

Given what has been said about the value of philosophy, this introductory textbook assumes that it is both the privilege and the obligation of those engaged in philosophical study to make a continual critical evaluation of the frame of reference in which their learning takes place. There is the ever-present danger of being captivated by a certain point of view simply because it is represented by a particular author or a particular teacher. Students whose only concern is with ready-made "answers" may be easily bulldozed by dramatic appeals or poorly reasoned arguments. The trick is to remain open-minded and perceptive and critical—all at the same time.

Toward a Philosophical Attitude

If the human activity called philosophy is based on the assumption that it is important to think clearly about things that are of great concern, what intellectual orientation is appropriate to the learner? What expectations and attitudes are helpful to those who seek wisdom in the company of others? How can the beginner contribute to an atmosphere of learning that will enrich a formal instruction program? A few recommendations can be made.

To be significant to each person in the joint enterprise, philosophical discussion calls for a community of tolerance. In the interest of a broadening intellectual perspective, one must remain open to a wide spectrum of ideas. A typical group of students affords a stimulating range of convictions, prejudices, opinions, and backgrounds. Such a variety is a distinct advantage, for it means that each person can learn from the others. Assumptions and statements can be compared in order to discern their implications, to detect their inadequacies, or to reveal their inconsistencies. The group provides a practice ring in which fledgling ideas can be presented and tested before they are launched into a larger and more violent public arena. The working assumption is that everyone agrees to respect everyone else as a person whose ideas are worth expressing. The object is to promote an environment in which all may freely speak, react, and explore. Of course, this does not mean we are obligated to accept uncritically everyone's opinion. Personal tolerance is expected; intellectual agreement is not. All who wish to enrich and intensify the study of philosophy might consider

this covenant: to agree to disagree in an atmosphere of mutual respect. This is not as easy as it sounds; one must have a critical mind without being closed-minded.

The depth and range of philosophical discourse also depend on the accuracy and clarity of communication between all participants. There must be a sustained effort to say what is meant. But an even greater effort is required to understand what is said. Language can be used to distort meaning, and words can be set up as barriers to communication. These difficulties are not easily resolved, but they may prove less formidable if the process of communication is viewed as a **dialogue** rather than as a debate. A debate is a stylized language game played according to formal and arbitrary rules. A debate is won or lost. A dialogue, on the other hand, is a form of conversation in which the communicants strive for reciprocal understanding. A dialogue is not a contest but a mutual search for meaning. This search is what philosophers have in mind when they speak of engaging in the "great conversation"—a conversation that includes not just one's contemporaries but all the philosophers who have gone before us.

One of the earliest difficulties faced by those who would join in philosophical discourse is learning the conventional language used by philosophers. Students must pay particular attention to terminology. The capacity to understand and use correctly the principal philosophical concepts is of primary importance to those who wish to comprehend what the wise, the erudite, or the passionate have had to say about the nature of humankind, meaning, and reality. Demonstrable knowledge of concepts and terms becomes an important criterion of students' academic achievement. Of course, intellectual criteria are not the only meaningful criteria. People who "just feel" about things cannot be dismissed simply by labeling their responses "wrong," "childish," or "absurd." Nevertheless, educational standards of achievement must be more precise (not necessarily "better"). The test of students' comprehension becomes the extent to which they can express thoughts or feelings in a logical and intelligible manner; doing so requires an adequate command of language and closely reasoned thinking. Students should recognize that special restrictions are introduced when philosophy is tailored to fit an academic program. Classroom structures, formal assignments, grading systems, time limitations—all these seriously constrict the environment in which the study of philosophy takes place. Philosophy is not something one simply learns; it is also something one lives. Philosophical explorations far exceed the boundaries of a classroom or a course of study. It was Mark Twain who said: "I have never let my schooling interfere with my education."

The Adventure and the Risk

The eminent philosopher Alfred North Whitehead has described philosophy as “adventures of ideas.” So it is. But any adventure involves risks, and the philosophical venture is no exception. It seems only fair to point out some of the hazards that might beset those newly embarked on the adventure of philosophy. It is said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. But to attain greater knowledge, one must start, at least, with a small amount. And greater knowledge itself does not eliminate danger. Modern concern over the destructive power of nuclear energy suggests that the mighty effort to penetrate the secrets of the atom may have magnified rather than diminished the dangers people perceive. The realization that increased knowledge can introduce new difficulties is not just a modern discovery. If we examine some of Western civilization’s earliest accounts of how knowledge began and what impact it had, we see that knowledge was regarded as a mixed blessing.

1. According to Greek mythology, the god Prometheus stole fire, or knowledge, from the heavenly realm and brought it down to earth for the human race. But Prometheus and humanity came to suffer for it. Seeking revenge, the outraged gods conspired. They created Pandora, endowed her with exceptional beauty and other attractive virtues, and sent her to earth to tempt Prometheus. Pandora was entrusted with a box concerning which she was given explicit instructions. She was at liberty to enjoy the pleasures of earthly existence, but she was forbidden to open the mysterious box. For a time things went smoothly, but, as the gods had contrived, Pandora’s curiosity got the better of her. She peeked into the box. As soon as the lid was raised, all manner of evils—death, disease, famine, war, and a host of others—poured forth and escaped into the world. Evil was the price exacted for the gift of knowledge.
2. Some interpret the biblical story of the beginning of humanity in a similar way. Adam and Eve lived naked and unashamed in the Garden of Eden. Their every need was amply supplied. They could wander safely through the garden and be untroubled by anxiety, guilt, or suffering. God imposed but one simple restriction. They were not to eat the fruit of a certain tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command, and from that moment their eyes were opened and they saw that they were naked. The knowledge of good and evil defiled their innocence and shut the gates of paradise against them. Unproductive work,