



RICHARD E. CREEL

Thinking Philosophically

*An Introduction
to Critical Reflection
and Rational Dialogue*



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*An Introduction to Critical
Reflection and Rational
Dialogue*

RICHARD E. CREEL

 **BLACKWELL**
P u b l i s h e r s

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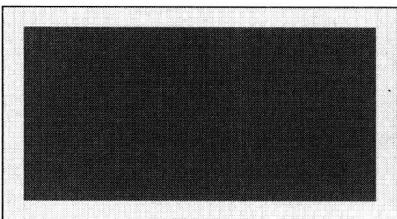
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A Preface to Teachers

Dear Colleague:

I am gratified that you are thinking of using or have decided to use *Thinking Philosophically* as a text in your course. In its pages I present many of the basic concepts and positions in philosophy, I engage the reader in thinking dialectically about philosophical issues, and I try to prepare and motivate the reader to engage productively in philosophical discussions.

Thinking Philosophically consists primarily of the lectures I used to give in my Introduction to Philosophy course – though now they are considerably expanded and polished. By putting into written form a great deal of obligatory, foundational material that I used to deliver by lecture, I have freed in-class time to engage students in discussions of that material and to introduce them to primary sources by way of short handouts that we read, interpret, and discuss in class. I frequently present students with opposed primary source handouts on the topic of the day – for example, Aristotle versus Schopenhauer on happiness, Gorgias versus Hegel on human knowledge, Clifford versus James on the ethics of belief, Bertrand Russell versus Carl Jung on religious experience, Socrates versus Thomas Hobbes on conscience. Sometimes a single handout includes opposed ideas, such as Plato's treatment of The Ring of Gyges or the short debate between Socrates and Thrasymachus on justice. On other occasions a single handout from one point of view can be provocative and illuminating, such as Plato's Allegory of the Cave, with which I always begin my Intro course, and to which I then refer at relevant points as the course goes along. The short dialogues of Plato and some of Descartes' *Meditations* also work well as in-class supplements to *Thinking Philosophically*.

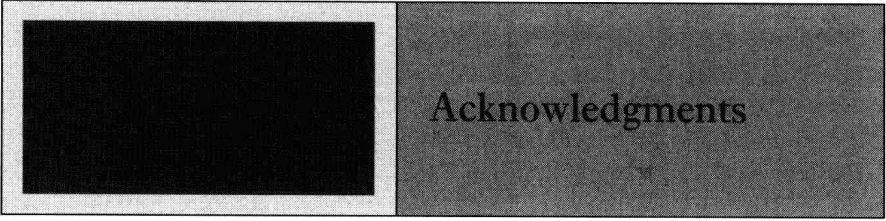
In addition to a brief contents at the beginning of *Thinking Philosophically* you will find a detailed contents at the beginning of each chapter. If students read and reflect on the chapter contents before reading the chapter, they should experience less unnecessary confusion, develop a better sense of how different concepts,

positions, and topics relate to one another, and achieve a higher level of comprehension when they read the chapter itself. Also, if students use the chapter contents as study guides when preparing for tests – by, for example, turning topics into questions for themselves – they should develop a better sense of what is important and do better on tests than they would otherwise. Finally, a study of the chapter contents should help students get a better sense of where they have been, where they are going, and how the various topics of philosophy connect to one another.

As a technical addendum I should explain two kinds of inconsistencies you will encounter: one regards capitalizations in the contents; the other regards headings that are in the contents but not in the text. Regarding the latter, I have made the chapter contents very detailed, as was just mentioned, to help students be better prepared for what they will be reading, better prepared for tests, and more aware of how the various concepts, parts, and positions of philosophy connect to one another. However, some topics listed in the chapter contents follow so closely on one another in the text or can be located with sufficient ease in the text by looking for key words, which are often italicized, that it seemed excessive and distracting to insert those headings into the text, and so I did not. Key words are italicized so often in the text for two reasons: first, to help the reader understand statements more readily by emphasizing where to focus and which words to group together (as is done in lectures by vocal emphases); second, to help the reader relocate key ideas more easily for review and reflection.

Regarding capitalization in the contents, I usually capitalize the first mention of a position, for example, “Universal Eudaemonism,” but lowercase further mentions, for example, “The principle of universal eudaemonism” (see chapter 14, contents, p. 159). When, however, I mention two or more things and am concerned that a failure to capitalize both or all might make it appear that I am favoring one position over another or am suggesting that one thing is less important than another, then I capitalize for the sake of fairness. For example, four of the subheadings in chapter 5 are: “Philosophy and Religion,” “Philosophy and Science,” “Philosophy and Mathematics,” and “Philosophy and History.” Strictly speaking, only the first word in each of those headings should be capitalized, but were I to do that, writing “Philosophy and religion,” “Philosophy and science,” etc., then “Philosophy” would be capitalized in every case and the other disciplines in none – which might give the reader a mistaken, unfortunate impression that I am saying that philosophy is more important than religion, science, mathematics, and the study of history. Hence, I capitalize both disciplines in each case. I also use capitalization to emphasize that each of a series of items is distinct from the others and equally important, for example, “Words, Concepts, Positions, Justifications, and Criticism” (see chapter 15 contents, p. 205).

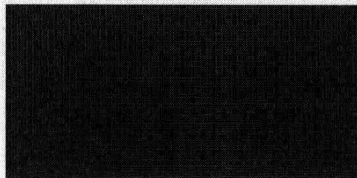
Whatever approach you take to your own course, I hope you find that *Thinking Philosophically* is sufficiently clear, competent, and comprehensive that it frees you and your students to do good things in class that otherwise you would not have time to do. Insofar as *Thinking Philosophically* needs correction, clarification, trimming, expansion, or other changes, I hope you will let me know so the next edition can be improved.



Acknowledgments

I feel deeply grateful to the philosophers whom Blackwell Publishers secured to comment on the penultimate version of *Thinking Philosophically*. I was touched by the care which they took in commenting, and I was humbled by their knowledge and insight. They saved me from numerous infelicities and some plain old bone-headed mistakes.

The author and publishers would like to thank Faber & Faber for permission to reproduce an extract from T. S. Eliot, 'Four Quartets' from *Collected Poems 1909–1962*.



Philosophers in *Thinking Philosophically*

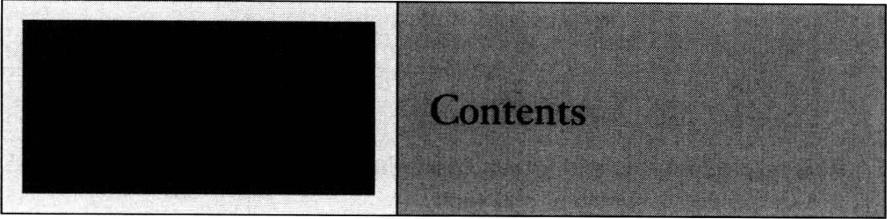
ALPHABETICAL

- Anscombe, Elizabeth (1919–; England)
Anselm, St. (1033–1109; England)
Aquinas, St. Thomas (1225–1249, Italy)
Aristotle (384–322 BC; Greece)
Augustine, St. (354–430; Rome; N. Africa)
Ayer, A. J. (1910–1989; England)
Bentham, Jeremy (1748–1832, England)
Berkeley, George (1685–1753; Ireland)
Blanshard, Brand (1892–1987; USA)
Bradley, F. H. (1846–1924; England)
Clifford, W. K. (1845–1879; England)
Democritus (460–370 BC; Thrace)
Descartes, René (1596–1650; France)
Dewey, John (1859–1952; USA)
Empedocles (ca. 495–435 BC; Sicily)
Epictetus (ca. 50–130; Rome and Greece)
Epicurus (341–270 BC; Athens)
Foot, Philippa (1920–; England)
Frege, Gottlob (1848–1925; Germany)
Hartshorne, Charles (1897–; USA)
Hegel, G. W. F. (1770–1831; Germany)
Heidegger, Martin (1889–1976; Germany)
Hobbes, Thomas (1588–1679; England)
Hume, David (1711–1776; Scotland)
Husserl, Edmund (1859–1938; Germany)
James, William (1842–1910; USA)
Kant, Immanuel (1724–1804; Germany)
Kierkegaard, Søren (1813–1855; Denmark)
Korsgaard, Christine (1952–; USA)
Kripke, Saul (1941–; USA)
Leibniz, G. W. (1646–1716; Germany)
Locke, John (1632–1704; England)
Malebranche, Nicholas (1638–1715; France)
Marx, Karl (1818–1883; Germany)
Mill, John Stuart (1806–1873; England)
Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900; Germany)
Ockham, William of (1285–1349; England)
Paley, William (1743–1805; England)
Pascal, Blaise (1623–1662; France)
Peirce, Charles (1839–1914; USA)
Plato (427–347 BC; Greece)
Popper, Karl (1902–1994; England)
Putnam, Hilary (1926–; USA)
Rawls, John (1921–; USA)
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712–1778; France)
Royce, Josiah (1855–1916; USA)
Russell, Bertrand (1872–1970; England)
Santayana, George (1863–1952; USA)
Sartre, Jean-Paul (1905–1980; France)
Schopenhauer, Arthur (1788–1860; Germany)
Skinner, B. F. (1904–1990; USA)
Socrates (470–399 BC; Greece)
Spinoza, Benedict (1632–1677; Holland)
Swinburne, Richard (1934–; England)
Thales (flourished 585 BC; Asia Minor)
Watts, Alan (1915–1973; USA)
Weil, Simone (1909–1943; France)
Whitehead, A. N. (1861–1947; England; USA)
Wittgenstein, L. (1889–1951; Austria; England)

CHRONOLOGICAL

585 BC	Thales (Asia Minor)	1889–1976	Heidegger, Martin (Germany)
495–435	Empedocles (Sicily)	1892–1987	Blanshard, Brand (USA)
470–399	Socrates (Greece)	1897–	Hartshorne, Charles (USA)
460–370	Democritus (Thrace)	1902–1994	Popper, Karl (England)
427–347	Plato (Greece)	1904–1990	Skinner, B. F. (USA)
384–322	Aristotle (Greece)	1905–1980	Sartre, Jean-Paul (France)
341–270	Epicurus (Greece)	1909–1943	Weil, Simone (France)
AD 50–130	Epictetus (Rome and Greece)	1910–1989	Ayer, A. J. (England)
354–430	Augustine, St. (Rome; N. Africa)	1915–1973	Watts, Alan (USA)
1033–1109	Anselm, St. (England)	1919–	Anscombe, Elizabeth (England)
1225–1249	Aquinas, St. Thomas (Italy)	1920–	Foot, Philippa (England)
1285–1349	Ockham, William of (England)	1921–	Rawls, John (USA)
1588–1679	Hobbes, Thomas (England)	1926–	Putnam, Hilary (USA)
1596–1650	Descartes, René (France)	1934–	Swinburne, Richard (England)
1623–1662	Pascal, Blaise (France)	1941–	Kripke, Saul (USA)
1632–1677	Spinoza, Benedict (Holland)	1952–	Korsgaard, Christine (USA)
1632–1704	Locke, John (England)		
1638–1715	Malebranche, Nicholas (France)		
1646–1716	Leibniz, G. W. (Germany)		
1685–1753	Berkeley, George (Ireland)		
1711–1776	Hume, David (Scotland)		
1712–1778	Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (France)		
1724–1804	Kant, Immanuel (Germany)		
1743–1805	Paley, William (England)		
1748–1832	Bentham, Jeremy (England)		
1770–1831	Hegel, G. W. F. (Germany)		
1788–1860	Schopenhauer, Arthur (Germany)		
1806–1873	Mill, John Stuart (England)		
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1842–1910	James, William (USA)		
1844–1900	Nietzsche, Friedrich (Germany)		
1845–1879	Clifford, W. K. (England)		
1846–1924	Bradley, F. H. (England)		
1848–1925	Frege, Gottlob (Germany)		
1855–1916	Royce, Josiah (USA)		
1859–1938	Husserl, Edmund (Germany)		
1859–1952	Dewey, John (USA)		
1861–1947	Whitehead, A. N. (England; USA)		
1863–1952	Santayana, George (USA)		
1872–1970	Russell, Bertrand (England)		
1889–1951	Wittgenstein, L. (Austria; England)		

But do remember that there are other important philosophers not cited here.



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Part I

Metaphilosophy

Chapter 1

Introduction

- Three ways into philosophy
- The nature of philosophy
- The three most basic problems in philosophy
- Developing a philosophy of your own

Philosophy is a fascinating subject which is personally relevant to every intelligent human being. I want to tell you why that is so, I want to tell you a great deal about philosophy, and I want to engage you in thinking philosophically. When I speak of philosophy I mean western philosophy as it flourished in ancient Greece, then spread to Europe, Great Britain, and North America. Eastern, or Asian, philosophy is also important – especially Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, but if we were to study eastern philosophy as well as western, that would make this book far too long. However, I do encourage you to study the asian traditions in philosophy later. Because there are certain universal features of philosophy, you will find that *Thinking Philosophically* has prepared you for the study of asian philosophy, as well as for further studies in western philosophy.

Three ways into philosophy

There are three common ways of introducing people to philosophy. One way is to focus on the ancient Greek thinkers who founded western philosophy, especially Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Because the rest of the history of philosophy builds on the work of the ancient Greeks, that approach provides students with a sound foundation for further studies in philosophy. However, some students who do not expect to take another philosophy course or do further reading in philosophy find that approach unsatisfying because there are so many other thinkers about whom they learn nothing.

Quite naturally, then, a second approach to introducing students to philosophy is to give them a survey of the history of philosophy. Then they can learn something about most of the giants of western philosophy, starting with the ancient