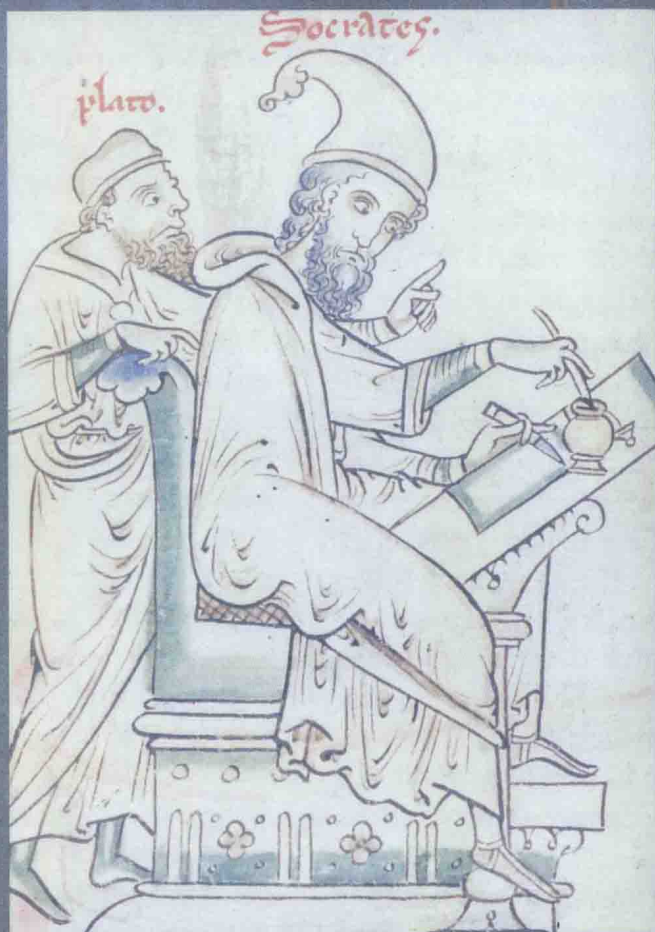


T H I R D E D I T I O N

ELEMENTS OF PHILOSOPHY

— AN INTRODUCTION —



SAMUEL ENOCH STUMPF

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Elements of Philosophy: An Introduction

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Samuel Enoch Stumpf holds the Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He was a Ford Fellow at Harvard University and a Rockefeller Fellow at Oxford University. For fifteen years he was chairman of the philosophy department at Vanderbilt University; he then served a term as president of Cornell College of Iowa, and subsequently returned to Vanderbilt as professor of the philosophy of law in the School of Law and as research professor of medical philosophy in the School of Medicine. He participates in various national organizations and lectures widely in the fields of philosophy, medical ethics, and jurisprudence.

To
the next generation of philosophers
NICHOLAS, ANNA, LAWRENCE, and GILLIAN
who wonder why they can catch a ball, but can't catch the dark

PREFACE

This book is intended for the student just beginning the study of philosophy. The third edition of *Elements of Philosophy* presents philosophers' thinking on these important questions: "What Should I Do and Why Should I Do It?," "Why Should I Obey?," "What Can I Know?," "What Can I Believe?," "What Is There?," "What Am I?," "Is My Will Free?," and "What Is the Meaning of Life?".

Elements of Philosophy examines the ways philosophers throughout history have addressed the questions of today's readers, and presents selections from their thinking and writing on those questions. In selecting the philosophers to be studied, I have sought a balance of representatives from the major historical periods of philosophy in order to achieve a sense of the ongoing "dialogue" as the emphasis and insights in philosophy change. In this third edition, additional emphasis has been placed on our contemporary period with the inclusion of philosophers such as Annette Baier, Simone de Beauvoir, Carol Gilligan, John Hospers, Richard Rorty, John Searle, B. F. Skinner, Joyce Trebilcock, and Geoffrey Warnock. In addition, a selection from Radhakrishnan's *Karma* gives readers an idea of how the past has an effect on the present according to ancient Indian philosophy.

The organization of the book is straightforward and simple, and the length relatively brief, as befits an introductory text. Each of the eight problem areas is self-contained so that instructors can elect to present topics in any sequence they prefer. An introduction to each problem focuses on elements of the particular subject under discussion; brief biographical sketches of the philosophers discussed locate them in time and place; an analysis of the philosophers' ideas makes them more accessible; selections from the philosophers' original works provide a sample of their modes of thought and style of writing; and, new to this edition are "Questions for Review and Discussion" at each chapter's end. An expanded Glossary of Key Terms and list of suggested additional readings is included.

As always, I am grateful to my wife, Jean, for her constant and incomparable assistance along the way.

Samuel Enoch Stumpf



Female Thinker (© Succession H. Matisse 1992/ARS, New York. Matisse, Henri "La Serpentine." Issy-les-Moulineaux (autumn 1909). Bronze, 22 ¼ x 11 x 7 ½", including base. Collection. The Museum of Modern Art. New York. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.)

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What Is Philosophy?

Philosophy is for everyone. In fact, we all engage in philosophy every day. Even when we do not know how to define philosophy, we will make such statements as “My philosophy about eating is . . .” or “Let me tell you my philosophy about taxes.”

Philosophy begins with our ordinary everyday experiences. We not only *do* things, we *think* about them. Such a simple experience as eating is capable of leading to some major philosophical questions. How much should we eat? Animals do not ask this question. We ask it because it makes a difference in our daily life. The amount we eat can affect the pleasure we get out of life, especially if we eat too much. But eating is in itself a pleasure. We begin to philosophize when we try to decide which pleasures are most important to us, for example, looking slim and trim on the one hand or enjoying bountiful meals on the other. We even ask whether pleasure is the proper standard for making our decisions in life. Before long, we no longer talk about eating but about the more general question that the experience of eating makes us think about, namely, What values are most important to us? How, in short, do we achieve the good life?

Similarly, the person who says “Let me tell you my philosophy about taxes” starts to think about this matter because of the experience of paying taxes. Paying taxes is not always pleasant. We want to know more about this part of our experience. Who should pay and how much? Once again, the discussion soon becomes philosophical. From being only about the inconvenience of paying taxes, the discussion moves to such questions as “What is the purpose of the tax?” or “What is a fair tax?” Before long, this line of thought leads to the philosophical question “What is justice?”

From these examples of eating and paying taxes we learn at least one thing about philosophy—that it is a quest for knowledge. That, after all, is what the Greek roots of the word “philosophy” mean, namely, *philo* (love) and *sophia* (knowledge or wisdom)—hence the love of knowledge. To say that philosophy is the love of knowledge still leaves the question “What kind of knowledge does philosophy involve?”

There was a time when philosophy included almost every kind of