

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

## HARVARD SUMMER SCHOOL 2020

Professor Andreas Teuber

<https://scholar.harvard.edu/teuber/home>



### I. Introduction

The primary concern of philosophy is the study of ideas central to the ways we think and live. The value, however, of many of our key concepts is often hidden from us. We come to take the ways we make sense of ourselves and the world around us for granted. We forget why truth matters or acting decently is a minimal requirement for treating others justly.

Readings will be drawn from the writings of major philosophers such as [Plato](#), [Aristotle](#), [Anselm](#), [Aquinas](#), [Descartes](#), [Locke](#), [Berkeley](#), [Hume](#), [Leibniz](#), [Kant](#), [John Stuart Mill](#), and [Bertrand Russell](#), as well as prominent contemporary philosophers such as [Peter Singer](#), [John Rawls](#), [Robert Nozick](#), [Daniel Dennett](#), [Martha Nussbaum](#), [John Searle](#), [Bernard Williams](#), [Judith Thomson](#), [Hilary Putnam](#), [David Chalmers](#), and [Tom Nagel](#).

The focus of the course, however, will be on the questions:

- “Can Machines Think?”
- “Do Persons have Free Will?”
- “How Do You Know You are Not a Brain-in-a-Vat or Living in a Matrix?”
- “Why be Good?”
- “What’s so Bad about Inequality?”
- “If You Had the Choice, Would You Live Forever?”
- “Does Life have Meaning?”

The *Introduction to Philosophy* class is more about thinking than it is about coverage or the memorization of a bunch of facts. In its aim and format the course is more an invitation to do philosophy than an introduction. Introductions seek to map out a territory or lay the ground for more detailed study. There will be some of that here, but insofar as invitations beckon and introductions point, the course beckons students to the study of philosophy rather than points the way. It is not intended to be comprehensive and exhaustive. The classic philosophy is selected to provide a basis for understanding ongoing debates within the field. It is divided into four sections and each section focuses on a key area within Western philosophy:

- Preamble: **What is Thinking?**
- PART I: **REASON & FAITH**
- PART II: **MIND & BODY**
- PART III: **KNOWLEDGE & REALITY**
- PART IV: **ETHICS, JUSTICE & THE GOOD LIFE**

The course cultivates habits of heart and mind that help you become clearer about what matters to you most. As Robert Rubin, Treasury Secretary under Clinton, repeatedly insisted: *“I took one course in philosophy in college and it made me a better economist.”*

The Syllabus for the **Introduction to Philosophy** course as taught by [Andreas Teuber](#) has been listed as “The Second Most Popular Philosophy Syllabi in the World” by [Google](#) and the [Digital Library of America](#) for more than a decade.

**“The Ten Most Popular Philosophy Syllabi in the World”**

<https://dancohen.org/2006/05/21/10-most-popular-philosophy-syllabi/>

## **II. Class Times**

The course will meet on **Tuesdays & Thursdays** from **Noon to 3:00 PM**.

## **III. Course Requirements and Reading**

Course Requirements will remain more or less the same as in prior years. Professor Teuber has been teaching the course at Harvard University in the Summer and at Brandeis University in the Fall for fourteen years. Harvard Summer 2020 will follow the same trajectory as it did last year and draw on many of the same readings.



There is no reading to buy for the course other than Tom Nagel's [WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy](#), Oxford University Press.

Any other reading, essays or selections from books will be posted online on the [PHIL S-4 CANVAS COURSE WEB SITE](#). You will not be required to purchase a textbook or a course pak, but the [Norton Introduction to Philosophy \(2015\)](#) has many of the course readings between its two covers and is recommended.

#### IV. Writing

Three short papers (4 to 5 pages) are required on topics growing out of the readings and class discussions. There will also be one final paper (6 to 7 pages) in lieu of a final exam. Paper Questions will be available seven (7) to ten (10) days before each paper, including the final paper, is due as well as publicly shared on the web to allow you to show the question, if you wish, to family, friends on Facebook, room-mates and others in the class and argue with them about the question. The first of the three papers will **not** be graded. It will be a credit/no credit writing exercise. To receive "credit" you need to take a position on some controversial issue. Make an argument for your position, think of a strong objection to your argument and respond to it. What this involves will be further discussed in class. There will also be three "take home" Reader Response Exercises of a paragraph or two.



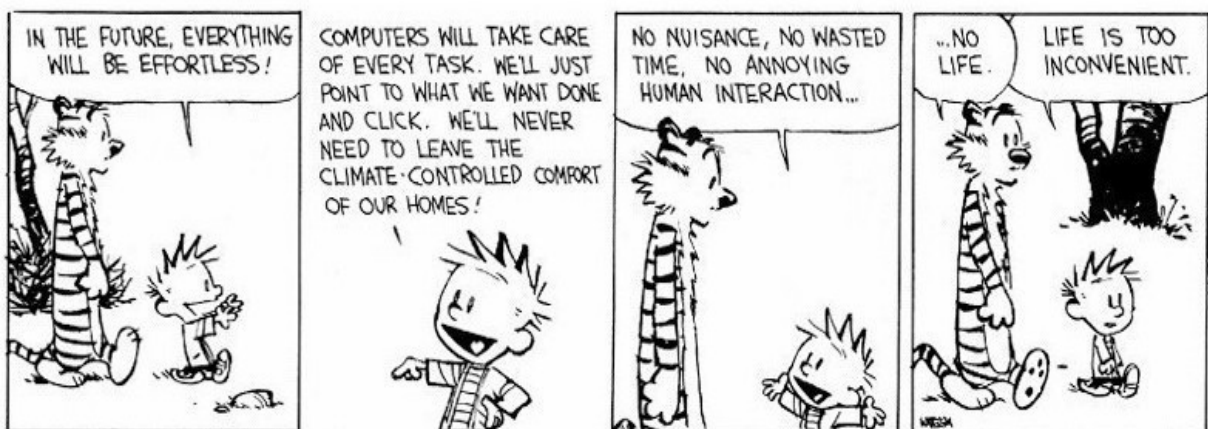
#### V. Rewriting

You will have the opportunity to rewrite one, perhaps two, of the three graded papers.

Rewrites must be accompanied by a copy of the original paper with the comments, plus a cover sheet, stating how you have improved the paper and spelling out what you did to make your paper, now rewritten, that much more wonderful. The grade you receive on your rewrite will be the grade you will receive for the paper. It will not be an average of the two grades. More will be said about rewriting on the first day and at the time the rewrite option kicks in.

#### VI. Examinations

There will be **NO FINAL EXAM** or **MID-TERM**. There will be an in-class quiz on the reading near the end of the Summer Session. The quiz should take about twenty minutes. Quiz questions will be True + False and Multiple Choice. **Other than the quiz there will be no examinations of any kind.**



## VII. Participation

You may meet the participation requirement by participating in class discussions, attending discussion sessions, talking and corresponding with family and friends as well as classmates, by keeping a diary or journal, by communicating on *Facebook*. At the end of the semester everyone will be given the opportunity to send an email describing what they did in and outside the class to meet the participation requirement.



## VIII. Attendance

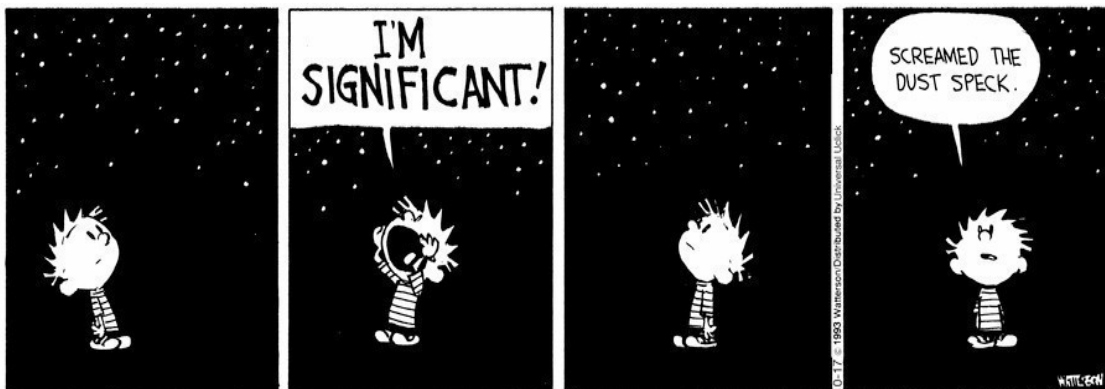
If you are in residence at the University, you are expected to attend class and if you live locally, you are strongly encouraged to participate in the debates that take place in the classroom.

## IX. Grading

Assuming that everyone receives “credit” on the first paper, the three remaining graded papers will be weighted as follows: 35% for your best effort, 25% for your next best effort and 20% for the one which is least successful of the three. The three reader response exercises will count 10% and the quiz and participation will each count 5% of the final grade.

## X. Teaching Assistants

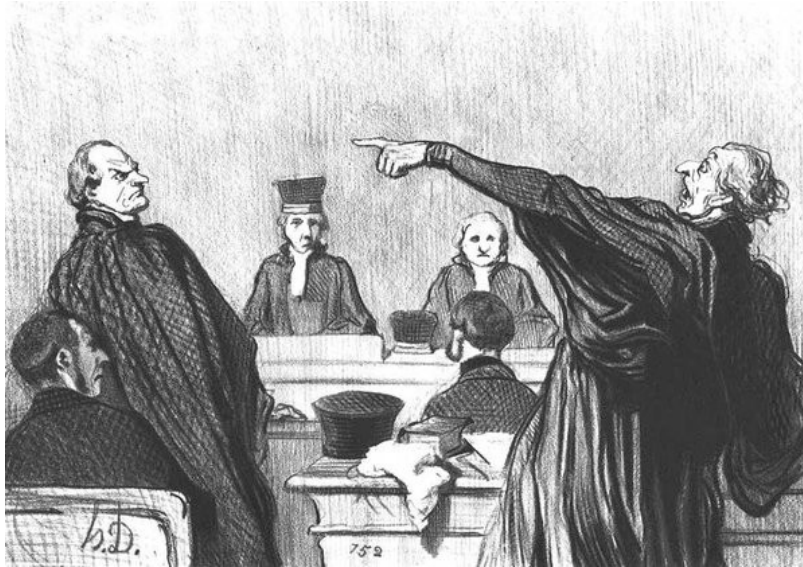
Teaching assistants are primarily responsible for reading your papers and making comments on them. However, **I shall read all the papers, too** and take a look at each TA’s comments, **and independently decide what grade each paper should receive before it is handed back**. If you are convinced an error has been made, first talk with your teaching assistant with whom you have been working. If you are still not satisfied, you may bring your paper to me.





## XI. Office Hours

I will hold office hours on Thursdays from 4:15 until 5:15 pm and by appointment (Office # TBA). If you wish to leave messages for me, send an email to [teuber@g.harvard.edu](mailto:teuber@g.harvard.edu). The Teaching Assistants will also hold office hours and be reachable by email. Their hours and email addresses will be announced at the start of class on June 25<sup>th</sup> of the first week.



## XII. Academic Integrity

Harvard expects you to understand and maintain high standards of academic integrity. Breaches of academic integrity are subject to review and disciplinary action by the Administrative Board. Examples include plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, cheating, duplication of assignments and falsification and misrepresentation of research results. *You are responsible for understanding Harvard Summer School policies on academic integrity and how to use sources responsibly. Not knowing the rules, misunderstanding the rules, running out of time, submitting the wrong draft, or being overwhelmed with multiple demands are not acceptable excuses.*

See the [Harvard Summer School Policy on Student Responsibilities](https://www.summer.harvard.edu/resources-policies/student-responsibilities).  
<https://www.summer.harvard.edu/resources-policies/student-responsibilities>

## XIII. Resources to Support Academic Integrity

Harvard offers essential information about the use of sources in academic writing.

### Guide to Using Resources

<http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

## XIV. Accessibility and Accommodation Services

If you are a student with a documented disability and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see

### The Accessibility Services Office

<https://www.summer.harvard.edu/resources-policies/student-responsibilities>

which offers a variety of accommodations and services to students with documented disabilities, permanent and temporary injuries, and chronic condition.

## XV. Learning and Study Goals

**Philosophy helps one to think better, think smarter.** It develops skills such as sound reasoning, an enlightened use of one's imagination, the capacity to analyze controversial issues, to entertain points of view contrary to one's own, to put oneself in someone else's shoes and see the world from their point of view, to reflect critically on a wide range of human activities and endeavors, skills that are invaluable in the mastery of any discipline and in the pursuit of every vocation. Students should expect to do at least 8–12 hours of work per week *outside* of class time.



## XVI. On Campus and Online Options

The **Introduction to Philosophy** course may be taken either **ON CAMPUS** or **ONLINE**. Classes meet on campus and you can take the course on campus as you would take a regular course at the university. The course also has an online option. You may take it online. Class sessions will be video-taped and posted within 24 hours of the time the class meets. So, too, you may take the course on campus and watch the videos to refresh your memory or for review

# PART I

## Week One: Introduction and Organization (June 23)

Course Description plus Reading (*handouts*)  
 The Trolley Problem (*in class handout + online*) *Queen v. Dudley*, 1884 (*in class handout + online*) Trash on the Beach (*in class handout + online*) "What is a Chair?" (*in class handout + online*)  
 Twenty-One Moral and Legal Puzzlers (*in class handout + online*)

## Week One: What is Philosophy? (June 25)

Plato, *Apology: The Defense of Socrates* ([link](#)) Plato, "The Cave" from *The Republic* (*handout*) Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy" ([link](#))

## Week Two: Reason and Belief

### A. Why Believe? (June 30)

St. Anselm, "The Ontological Argument" ([PDF1](#), [PDF2](#))  
 St. Thomas Aquinas, "The Existence of God" ([PDF](#)) ([summary](#))  
 William Paley, "Natural Theology" ([PDF](#))

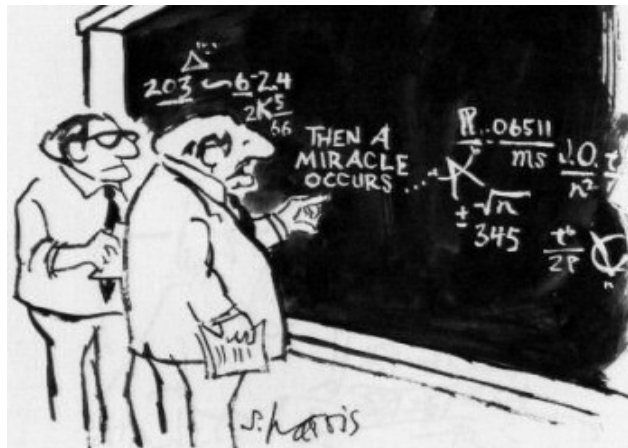
### B. The Problem of Evil (June 30)

William Rowe, "The Problem of Evil" ([PDF](#))  
 Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence" ([link](#))  
 Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (excerpts) ([PDF](#))

### C. Believing Against the Evidence (June 30)

Bertrand Russell, "Why I Am Not a Christian" ([PDF](#));  
 Blaise Pascal, "The Wager" ([PDF](#))  
 William James, "The Will to Believe" ([link](#))  
 W. K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief" ([PDF](#))

*The first writing exercise, the Credit/No Credit Paper, will be handed out at the end of class. It is due on Tuesday, July 7th, at the start of class.*



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

# PART II

## WEEK 3

July 2

### ***The Mind / Body Problem*** (July 2)

Thomas Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?* (Chaps. 4 & 5)

René Descartes, *Meditation II* and *Meditation VI* (PDF)\*

Russell, "Argument from Analogy for Other Minds" (PDF)\*

Gilbert Ryle, "Descartes's Myth" (PDF)\*

David M. Armstrong, "The Nature of Mind" (PDF)

Paul M. Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism" (PDF).

### ***Minds, Brains and Machines*** (July 7)

Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States" (PDF-online)\*

A.M. Turing, "Computing and Intelligence" (PDF)\*

John Searle, "Can Computers Think?" (PDF)

John Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs" (PDF)\*

### ***Consciousness*** (July 9)

Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" (PDF)\*

David Chalmers, "Facing Up to Consciousness" (PDF)\*

David Chalmers, "The Puzzle of Conscious Experience" (PDF)\*

### ***Color and the Knowledge Argument*** (July 9)

Frank Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know" (PDF)

David Lewis, "Knowing What It's Like" (PDF)

C. L. Hardin, "Are Scientific Objects Colored?" (PDF)

*The first writing exercise, the Credit/No Credit Paper, is due on Tuesday, July 7th, at the start of class.*

## WEEK 4

July 14

### ***Freedom, Determinism and Responsibility***

Richard Taylor, "Fatalism" (PDF)

Roderick Chisholm, "Human Freedom & the Self" (PDF)

Peter Van Inwagen, "Powers of Rational Beings" (PDF)

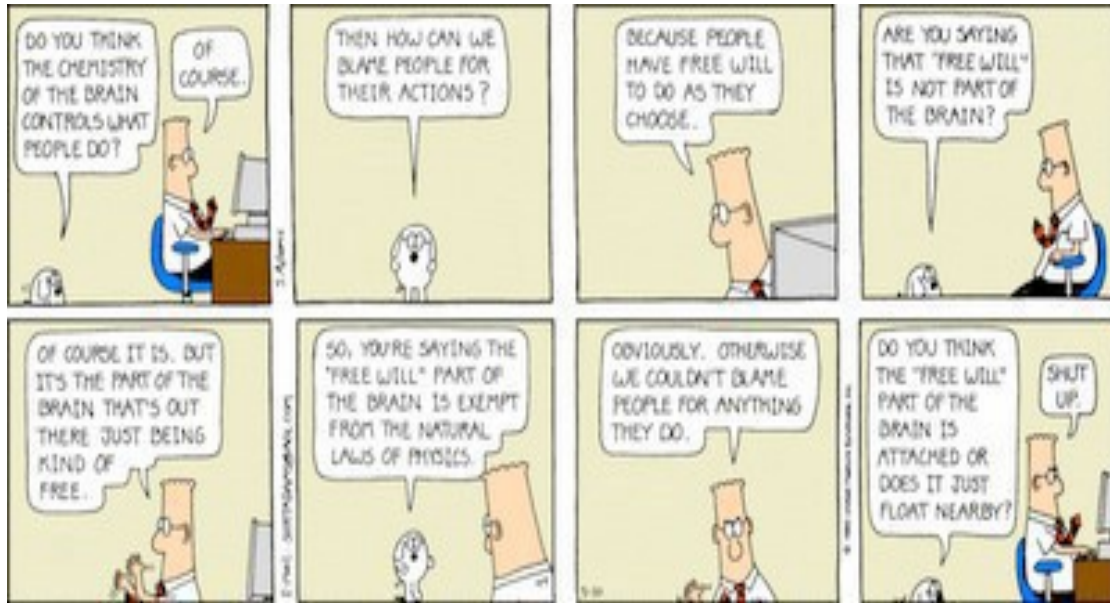
David Hume, "Of Liberty and Necessity" (Link)

Harry Frankfurt, "Possibilities & Responsibility" (PDF)

Harry Frankfurt, "Free Will & the Person" (PDF)

P. F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment" (link)





**WEEK 4 continued**     ***Personal Identity* (July 16)**

John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity" (link)\*

John Perry, "A Dialogue on Identity and Immortality" (PDF)\*

Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity" (PDF)\*

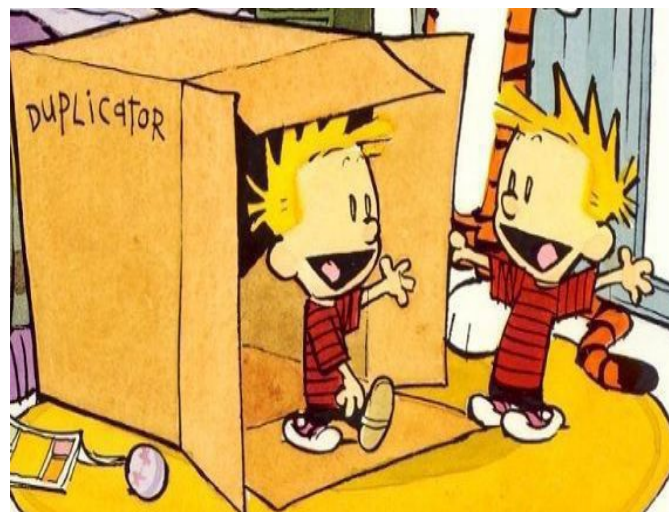
Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future" (PDF)\*

Derek Parfit, "The Unimportance of Identity" (PDF)\*

David Velleman, "So It Goes" (PDF)

Daniel Dennett, "Where Am I?" (PDF)\*

*The second writing exercise will be handed out on Thursday, July 11th. Papers are due on Thursday, July 19th at the start of class.*



# PART III

## WEEK 5 July 21

### **Knowledge and the Skeptical Challenge (July 21)**

Plato, *Theaetetus* (excerpt) on CANVAS \*

Rene Descartes, *Meditations I & II* on CANVAS \*

### **Knowledge as Justified True Belief and Beyond (July 21)**

Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (CANVAS)\*

Robert Nozick, Excerpt from *Philosophical Explanations* (CANVAS) \* Keith

DeRose, "Contextualism" (CANVAS)\*



### **Skepticism about the Senses (July 21)**

David Hume, "Skepticism with Regard to the Senses" (CANVAS) \*

G.E. Moore, "Proof of the External World" (CANVAS) \* Putnam,

"Brains in a Vat," *Reason, Truth & History* (CANVAS) \* Alex Byrne,

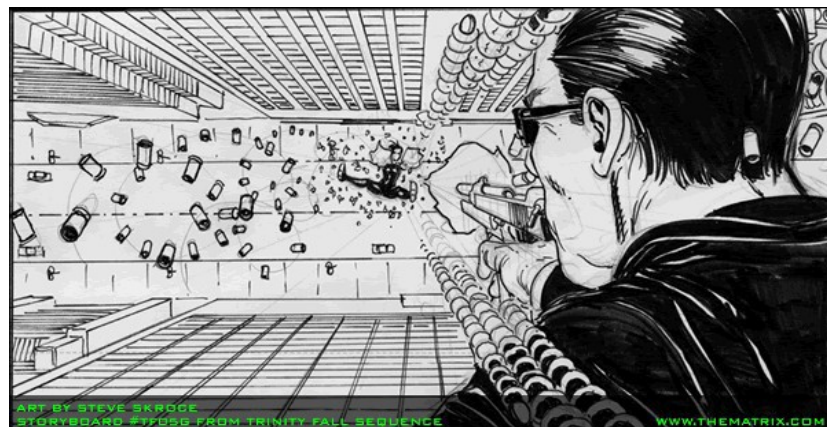
"Skepticism About the Internal World" (CANVAS)

Rae Langton, "Knowledge and Things in Themselves" (CANVAS)

### **The Problem of Induction and Some Solutions (July 23)**

David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (CANVAS)

W. C. Salmon, "An Encounter with David Hume" (CANVAS)



**WEEK 5**

**July 23**

***The Global Skepticism Challenge and The MATRIX (July 23)***

David Chalmers, The Simulation Hypothesis (CANVAS) \*

Nick Bostrom, "Are You Living in a Simulation?" (CANVAS) \*

Chalmers, "Mind-Uploading" (CANVAS) \*

Bostrom, "What Happens When Our Computers

Get Smarter Than We Are?" (CANVAS) \*

***Brain-in-a-Vat Skepticism and The MATRIX (July 23)***

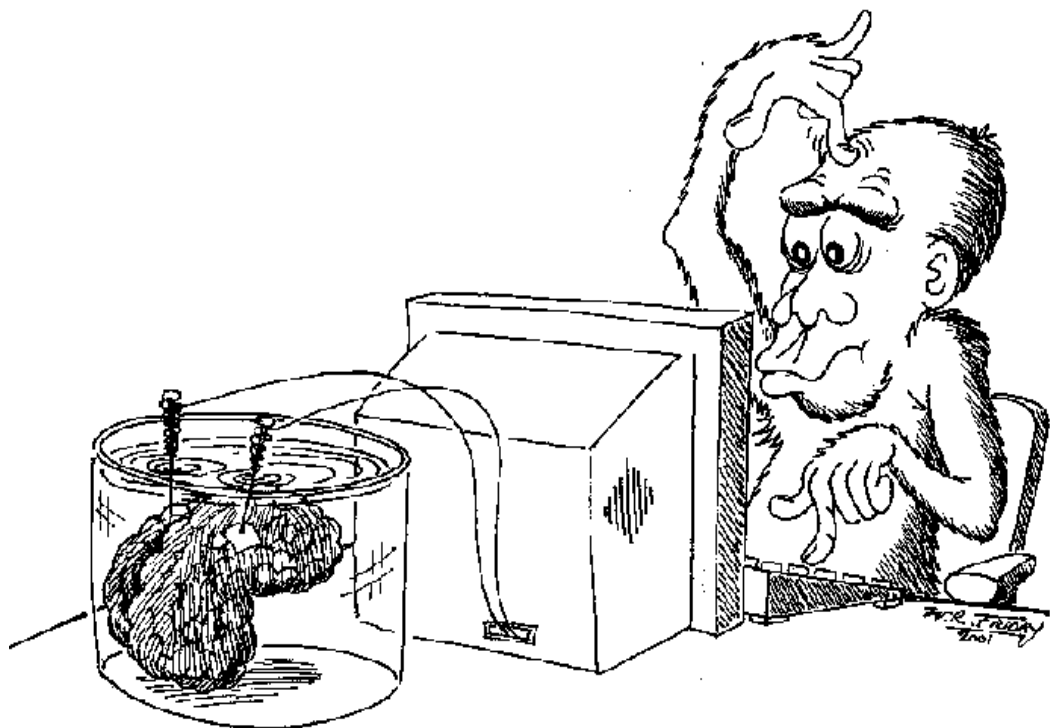
"Dream Skepticism" by Christopher Grau\*

"Brains-in-a-Vat Skepticism" by Christopher Grau\*

"The Experience Machine" by Christopher Grau \*

"The Matrix as Metaphysics" by David J. Chalmers\*

"What's So Bad About Living in The Matrix" James Pryor\*



# PART IV

## Week 6 July 28

### **Utilitarianism (July 28)**

Jeremy Bentham, "The Principle of Utility" (CANVAS) \*

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (online) \*

E.F. Carritt, "Criticisms of Utilitarianism" (PDF)

J.J.C. Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism" (PDF)

\* Bernard Williams, "Utilitarianism and Integrity" (PDF) \*

Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (PDF) \*

### **Kantian Ethics (July 28)**

Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (link) (selections) \*

David Velleman, "A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics" (PDF)

Onora O'Neill, "Kantian Approaches to Famine Problems" (PDF)

### **Aristotelian Ethics (July 28)**

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (online) \*

Thomas Nagel, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia" (PDF) \*

"Casey Martin's Golf Cart" (Handout)

## July 30

### **Challenges to Morality (July 30)**

J.L. Mackie, "The Law of the Jungle" (PDF) \*

Sharon Street, "Does Anything Matter?" \*

Jay Wallace "Moral Subjectivism" \*

J. L. Mackie, "Subjectivity of Values"

### **Moral Arguments and Applied Ethics (July 30)**

Elizabeth Harman, "Doing Ethics" \*

Elizabeth Anscombe, "Truman's Degree" \*

Judith Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" \*

Peter Singer, "Ethics and Intuitions" \*

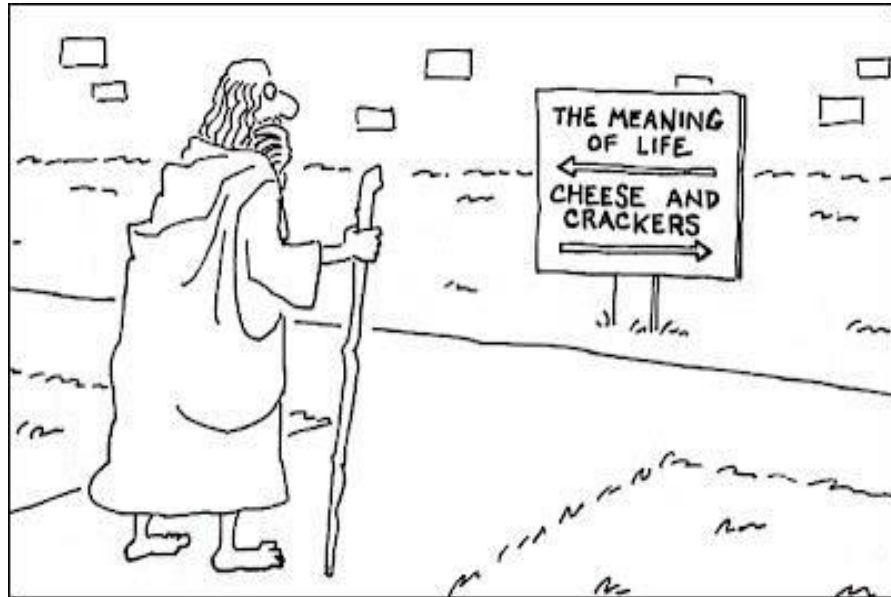
James Rachels, "Active v. Passive Euthanasia" \*

Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints"

### **Justice, Liberty, and Equality (July 30)**

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (PDF) \*

Robert Nozick, "Distributive Justice" (PDF) \*



**August 4**

***Meaning in Life and Why It Matters* (August 4)**

Richard Taylor, "The Meaning of Human Existence" (PDF) \*

Antoine de Saint-Exupery, *The Little Prince*, excerpt (PDF) \*

Jean Paul; Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism" excerpt (PDF) \*

Albert Camus, "The Guest" (PDF) \*

Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd" (PDF) \*

Susan Wolf, "The Tanner Lectures" excerpts (PDF) \*

**August 4**

***Is Death Bad?* (August 4)**

Tom Nagel, "Death" \*

Bernard Williams, "Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality" \*

Shelly Kagan, Death: "The Badness of Death" \*

***THE FINAL PAPER*** will be handed out at the end of class on Thursday, July 30th. It is ***due on Thursday, August 6th 2020*** uploaded, on CANVAS as a MS Word Document ***between 2:00 and 3:00 PM.***



# calvin and Hobbes

BY WATTERSON



GET WHAT YOU CAN WHILE THE GETTING'S GOOD - THAT'S WHAT I SAY! MIGHT MAKES RIGHT! THE WINNERS WRITE THE HISTORY BOOKS!

