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# What is Wisdom?

# What is the CKP?

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Winning Words

The Rainbow Core Curriculum

Lesson 1

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## Overview

The first class will introduce the themes of the Winning Words curriculum – philosophy, wisdom, the good or best life, Socratic conversation, collaborative inquiry, and ethical reflection. The first class will also introduce students to the parent organization of Winning Words, the University of Chicago Civic Knowledge Project.

[civicknowledge.uchicago.edu](http://civicknowledge.uchicago.edu)

## Objectives

Students will become familiar with the teacher and basic form of the class. They will share and improve their understanding of the terms “philosophy” and “wisdom,” and become acquainted with an example of a philosophical question. They will also be briefly introduced to the work of the University of Chicago Civic Knowledge Project and its founder Professor Danielle Allen.

## Essential Questions

- What is philosophy?
- What is wisdom?
- What are Winning Words and the Civic Knowledge Project?

## Introductions

Inform the students that you are a student who studies and discusses something called “philosophy,” and that philosophy literally means “the love of wisdom.” Students may have heard these words before, but they will probably not be able to produce concrete definitions of them. In order to see what they know, and to become acquainted with the students, tell them that you would like to discuss the matter of “wisdom” with them. Be certain to inform students that this activity requires that everyone be willing to listen carefully to one another without disruption, and that, before saying anything, each student must first carefully think about what he or she wishes to say and raise their hand. Explain that you are an instructor with Winning Words, which is part of the University of Chicago’s Civic Knowledge Project. Briefly explain that the CKP was founded in 2003 by a brilliant young philosopher named Danielle Allen, who maintained that people in the U.S. could become better democratic citizens by practicing the kind of philosophy that they will be introduced to in the Winning Words program. If possible, show the students a picture of Professor Allen and show them her book *Talking to Strangers*. Briefly explain that Winning Words will introduce them to a very diverse range of

## Materials

- Name Cards/Tags or Signs
- Blank Paper
- Markers, Pens, etc.

## Tips

If possible, seat students around a large table, or sit in a large circle. If the classroom contains many desks and chairs facing the front of the room, have students arrange chairs to form a large circle for discussion.

The goal of Winning Words activities are to jumpstart conversations and to increase student understanding of the topics being discussed. If conversation is flowing, don’t begin activities that could hamper the discussion. It is more important to have a productive discussion than to get through a lesson plan!

important philosophers, both dead and living—from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to W. E. B. DuBois, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi, to Danielle Allen, Wangari Maathai, Peter Singer, Martha Nussbaum, and Timuel D. Black, a local civil rights hero. All of these figures, you should stress, have had important thoughts about how best to live one’s life, one of the big philosophical questions. Now, ask the students to repeat their names and share their opinions regarding the question “what is wisdom?” Invite each student, after sharing his or her opinion, to write it on the board next to his or her name.

## Discussion

Point out which definitions agree with one another, and which conflict. Ask students with conservative definitions to elaborate, and seek clarification from students with vague ideas. Avoid constructing a consensus, and do not supplant even wacky student definitions with a dictionary definition, or your own definition. Remind them that they are discussing ideas and word definitions—not specific real-life situations, which will be discussed in due course.

## Agree or Disagree

The goal of this exercise is to see how students respond to questions that do not have easy answers, and to demonstrate why philosophers concern themselves with such questions. Now that the question “what is wisdom?” has been asked, the class will see how its definitions of “wisdom” work in practice. Place two signs at opposite ends of the room, one reading “agree,” the other “disagree.” Designate the center as “not sure.” Tell students that they should move to the sign expressing the opinion of a wise person in response to each of the statements that you put to them.

- It is dangerous to go outside alone late at night.
- It is wrong to kill someone.
- It is right to help others when they are in trouble.
- It is always wrong to tell a lie.
- “It is the greatest good to a person...to converse and to test him or herself and others.”
- “A person who is wise will admit that his wisdom is in fact nothing.”
- “The noblest way is not to crush others but to improve yourself.”
- “The unexamined life is not worth living for a human being.”

Have students explain their positions. Hopefully some students will have placed themselves in the “not sure” area. Encourage some discussion about this, and draw out their explanations for “not knowing” the answer. Is it bad to “not know,” or is it good? If we do not know the answer, do we have to find one, or should we be content not knowing?

## Not Knowing

Distribute paper to students and ask them to choose a statement to which their response was “not sure,” or make up a statement or question to which “not sure” is the wisest response. What, according to their view of wisdom, makes this the wisest response, and why do they think this? Ask them to take their time and carefully explain why this is their opinion. Encourage the students to elaborate on their responses, and offer guiding questions as support. Remind them that their spelling,

## Rules

It is important to establish some rules and expectations so that students are able to engage in a respectful and productive discussion. You should start by briefly introducing yourself and inviting your students to sit in a large circle, introduce themselves, and talk about the importance of respect for their fellow students.

In the case of elementary and middle school students, WW coaches have found hand-raising to be absolutely necessary in order to prevent repressive discourteousness. As time goes on this may cease to be necessary, and one may even encounter a class small enough where this is not required.

This should be a seminar-style class discussion with the teacher as a moderator/facilitator. Invite students to address each other, etc., but do not permit tangential chatter to overtake the initial question. Such distractions can be a problem in classes of this type. The goal is to foster discussion-based classes for young people made possible by insistent and thoughtful guidance from a teacher.

## Tips

The goal of these exercises is to see how students respond to questions that do not have easy answers, and to demonstrate why philosophers concern themselves with such questions. Now that the question “what is wisdom?” has been asked, the class will see how its definitions of “wisdom” work in practice.

## Key Terms

- Philosophy
- Wisdom
- Knowing/Not Knowing
- Winning Words
- Civic Knowledge Project
- Danielle Allen

writing quality, or eloquence is not of concern at this time—that you are only trying to understand what they think about the question of wisdom, and that willingness to share is essential for the class to be successful.

Be sure to thank the students for being part of Winning Words! And remember, **if you have any questions or concerns about what you are doing**, you should immediately contact Bart Schultz, Director of the CKP, at [rschultz@uchicago.edu](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu)

Remember to hand out permission slip forms to students who are considering returning, if your site requires these.

In any event, ask the students to make sure that their parents know that they are participating in the Winning Words program, which both students and parents can read about here, [civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/winningwords.shtml](http://civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/winningwords.shtml)

Inform students that with the next class, they will be starting notebooks and learning more about philosophy.

**(You should also keep a notebook, recording your thoughts after each class.)**

They will also start considering some activities that they might pursue through Winning Words—for example, writing and producing a philosophical dialogue, or participating in an Ethics Bowl. If time allows, briefly explain what these might involve, perhaps introducing one of the Ethics Bowl cases available at [civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/files/Ethics%20Bowl%20Resources.pdf](http://civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/files/Ethics%20Bowl%20Resources.pdf)

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# Who Was Socrates?

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## Overview

After initiating the Winning Words style of discussion in the first class, students will now be introduced to Socrates and an example of the Socratic method or elenchus. Students will learn basic information about the life of Socrates, a founding figure of Western philosophy, and begin to experience what it is like to address philosophical issues in a Socratic manner. Students will use the work of the previous session to help illuminate Socrates’s famous claim that human wisdom was worth little or nothing.

## Objectives

Students will be introduced to the character of Socrates (Winning Words treats Socrates as a philosopher in his own right, distinct from Plato, despite our knowledge of him coming in large measure from Plato’s early dialogues). Although some initial philosophical accounts of the Socratic method, or elenchus, will be noted, the emphasis will be on introducing the students to the Socratic method by having them perform or read aloud the parts of a short dialogue contained in Book 1, the most Socratic Book of Plato’s Republic.

## Essential Questions

- Who was Socrates?
- What is justice?
- What is Socrates doing when he practices philosophy?
- What is the Socratic method, or “elenchus”?

## Introduction to Socrates

Distribute the Winning Words notebooks to them and explain that it is very important that they write down their favorite thoughts and insights, and that you will be glad to keep their notebooks for them between sessions. Explain that the discussion and activities during the first session were meant to help them appreciate a very important figure in the history of philosophy: Socrates. Explain that he became very well known for questioning people about the best to live one’s life. Stress that he was concerned with what we would call ethics, or the nature of the best life, and did not engage in abstract speculations about the ultimate matter of the universe the way many later philosophers did. Read the following passage from the entry on “Socrates” in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

“The philosopher Socrates remains, as he was in his lifetime (469–399 B.C.E.) an

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Lesson 2

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## Materials

Copies of the relevant parts of Book I of Plato’s Republic, translation by C. D. C. Reeve. All Winning Words instructors should very carefully review the following accounts of the Socratic method, the Socratic elenchus, and take care not to confuse elenchus with other ways of philosophizing, such as the maieutic or midwifing method in “Meno,” that Plato sometimes attributes to a character “Socrates.” The Winning Words Socrates is a carefully defined construction based on such early Platonic dialogues as “Euthyphro” and “The Apology.” The elenctic Socratic method reflects an attempt at cooperative inquiry, not mere argument, and it involves a testing of lives as well as arguments. The quotes following this lesson should guide you.

## Tips

Instructors should begin every new session of Winning Words with a review of the previous discussion and asking students if they wish to share further thoughts. You might remind them that you considered such questions as “What is wisdom?” and “What is philosophy?” and that you did some exercises about “knowing/not knowing.” The more the class starts building on what went before and becoming its own community of inquiry, the better. Ultimately, the class should be more driven by student inquiry than by instructor structuring.

enigma, an inscrutable individual who, despite having written nothing, is considered one of the handful of philosophers who forever changed how philosophy itself was to be conceived. All our information about him is second-hand and most of it vigorously disputed, but his trial and death at the hands of the Athenian democracy is nevertheless the founding myth of the academic discipline of philosophy, and his influence has been felt far beyond philosophy itself, and in every age. Because his life is widely considered paradigmatic for the philosophic life and, more generally, for how anyone ought to live, Socrates has been encumbered with the admiration and emulation normally reserved for founders of religious sects—Jesus or Buddha—strange for someone who tried so hard to make others do their own thinking, and for someone convicted and executed on the charge of irreverence toward the gods. Certainly he was impressive, so impressive that many others were moved to write about him, all of whom found him strange by the conventions of fifth-century Athens: in his appearance, personality, and behavior, as well as in his views and methods.”

## Socrates and Cephalus

Show the students some pictures of Socrates, telling them that you will fill in more details about Socrates in future sessions, but for now you want them to experience some Socratic philosophizing, especially the way Socrates could lead others to doubt or aporia (an impasse in the inquiry). Ask volunteers to read parts of the following section from Book I of the Republic. Explain that the Republic was written by a very famous student of Socrates, Plato, who lived from about 429 to 347 BC, and that much of what we know about Socrates comes from Plato’s dialogues, which have had a profound effect on Western philosophy and will be discussed more fully in later sessions. Stress again that Socrates and Plato were distinct philosophers, though sometimes Plato uses the character “Socrates” to express views the historical Socrates probably did not hold (as he does in later Books of the Republic). And stress that they are reading a dialogue, a literary work that presents a philosophical conversation between different characters, and they should feel free to dramatize their readings. Reassure them that it is okay if they stumble a bit over some words and names—you will help them. The dialogue is printed at the end of this lesson.

## Discussion

- What is the main question of the dialogue?
- How does Socrates try to answer this question?
- Which of Socrates’s questions do you find the most persuasive?
- What was Socrates trying to do? What actually happened?

## Closing

Ask the students if they enjoyed playing the roles of Socrates and his conversational partners. Ask them to keep thinking about this type of conversation and try to find real world examples of Socratic conversation. Can people just honestly search for the truth together, following the conversation wherever it leads? What might make this hard to achieve?

## Tips

The material covered in these lessons can be quite demanding for some students, and it is important to try to make the performances of the dialogues as engaging as possible, encouraging the students to try to get into the roles in creative ways.

## Key Terms

- Socrates
- Socratic method or elenchus
- Plato
- Dialogue
- Aporia

Be sure to thank the students for being part of Winning Words! **Remember, if you have any questions or concerns about what you are doing, you should immediately contact Bart Schultz, Director of the CKP, at [rschultz@uchicago.edu](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu)**

## Socratic Primer

1. Socratic elenchus is a search for moral truth by question-and-answer adversary argument in which a thesis is debated only if asserted as the answerer's own belief and is regarded as refuted only if its negation is deduced from his own beliefs...First and foremost elenchus is search. The adversary procedure which is suggested (but not entailed) by the Greek word (which may be used to mean 'refutation,' but may also be used to mean 'testing' or, still more broadly, 'censure,' 'reproach') is not an end in itself. If it were, Socrates' dialectic as depicted in Plato's earlier dialogues would be a form of eristic, which it is not, because its object is always that positive outreach for truth which is expressed by words for searching...inquiring...investigating... This is what philosophy is for Socrates.

(Vlastos, "The Socratic Elenchus: Method is All," p. 4).

2. Thus elenchus has a double objective: to discover how every human being ought to live and to test that single human being, who is doing the answering—to find out if he is living as one ought to live. This is a two-in-one operation. Socrates does not provide for two types of elenchus—a philosophical one, searching for truth about the good life, and a therapeutic one, searching out the answerer's own in the hope of bringing him to the truth. There is one elenchus and it must do both jobs, though one or the other will be to the fore in different phases of it. From this point of view, too, the 'say what you believe' requirement makes sense. How could Socrates hope to get you to give, sooner or later, an account of your life, if he did not require you to state your personal opinion on the questions under debate?

(Vlastos, "The Socratic Elenchus: Method is All," p. 10)

3. Socrates walks up to a leading politician—a person who 'seems knowing and clever to many people, and especially to himself.' He engages him in questioning about his alleged expertise, asking him no doubt, as Socrates does so often, for a coherent, contradiction-free account of some central legal and political concepts, concepts such as equality, justice, and law. The expert proves unable to answer Socrates' questions in a satisfactory way. Socrates professes surprise. He goes away, concluding that he is after all a little more knowing than this expert, since he at least knows how difficult the concepts are, and how much his own understanding of them stands in need of further clarification, whereas the expert lacks not only an adequate understanding of the concepts but also knowledge of his own inadequacy. Socrates concludes that he is a very useful figure for democratic government to have around—like a stinging gadfly on the back of a noble but sluggish horse... Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being. In other words, this life of questioning is not just somewhat useful, it is an indispensable part of a worthwhile life for any person and any citizen.

(Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity*, pp. 20-21).

4. Thus, Socrates brought his interlocutors to examine and become aware of themselves. 'Like a gadfly,' Socrates harassed his interlocutors with questions which placed them in question, and obliged them to pay attention to themselves and to take care of themselves.... The point was thus not so much to question the apparent knowledge we think we have, as to question ourselves and the values which guide our own lives. In the last analysis, Socrates' interlocutor, after carrying on a dialogue with him, no longer has any idea of why he acts. He becomes aware of the contradictions in his discourse, and of his own internal contradictions. He doubts himself; and, like Socrates, he comes to know that he knows nothing. As he does this, however, he assumes a distance with regard to himself. He splits into two parts, one of which henceforth identifies itself with Socrates, in the mutual accord which Socrates demands from his interlocutor at each stage of the discussion. The interlocutor thus acquires awareness and begins to question himself.... The real problem is therefore not the problem of knowing this or that, but of being in this or that way: 'I have no concern at all for what most people are concerned about: financial affairs, administration of property, appointments to generalships, oratorical triumphs in public, magistracies, coalitions, political factions. I did not take this path...but rather the one where I could do the most good to each one of you in particular, by persuading you to be less concerned with what you have than with what you are; so that you may make yourselves as excellent and as rational as possible.' Socrates practiced this call to being not only by means of his interrogations and his irony, but above all by means of his way of being, by his way of life, and by his very being.

(Hadot, "What is Ancient Philosophy?", pp. 28-29.)

## Socrates and Cephalus

In this section of the Republic, Socrates has been persuaded to visit the house of Cephalus, and he tells him “In fact, I enjoy engaging in discussion with the very old. I think we should learn from them—since they are like people who have traveled a road that we too will probably have to follow—what the road is like, whether rough and difficult or smooth and easy. And I would be particularly glad to find out from you what you think about it, since you have reached the point in life the poets call old age’s threshold.” After some exchanges the dialogue continues with the following stage setting—the elenctic part is highlighted in maroon:

Socrates: Did you inherit most of your wealth, Cephalus, or did you make it yourself?

Cephalus: What did I make for myself, Socrates, you ask. As a money-maker I am in between my grandfather and my father. You see, my grandfather and namesake inherited about the same amount of wealth as I possess and multiplied it many times. However, my father Lysanias, diminished that amount to even less than I have now. As for me, I am satisfied to leave my sons here not less, but a little more, than I inherited.

Socrates: The reason I asked is that you do not seem particularly to love money. And those who have not made it themselves are usually like that. But those who have made it themselves love it twice as much as anyone else. For just as poets love their poems and fathers their children, so those who have made money take their money seriously both as something that they have made themselves and—just as other people do—because it is useful. This makes them difficult even to be with, since they are unwilling to praise anything except money.

Cephalus: That’s true.

Socrates: Indeed it is. But tell me something else. What do you think is the greatest good you have enjoyed as a result of being very wealthy?

Cephalus: What I have to say probably would not persuade the masses. But you are well aware, Socrates, that when someone thinks his end is near, he becomes frightened and concerned about things he did not fear before. It is then that the stories told about Hades, that a person who has been unjust here must pay the penalty there—stories he used to make fun of—twist his soul this way and that for fear they are true. And whether because of the weakness of old age, or because he is now closer to what happens in Hades and has a clearer view of it, or whatever it is, he is filled with foreboding and fear, and begins to calculate and consider whether he has been unjust to anyone. If he finds many injustices in his life, he often even awakes from sleep in terror, as children do, and lives in anticipation of evils to come. But someone who knows he has not been unjust has sweet good hope as his constant companion—a nurse to his old age, as Pindar says. For he puts it charmingly, Socrates, when he says that when someone lives a just and pious life,

Sweet hope is in his heart

Nurse and companion to his age

Hope, captain of the ever-twisting

Mind of mortal men.

How amazingly well he puts that. It is in this connection I would say the possession of wealth is most valuable, not for every man, but for a good and orderly one. Not cheating someone even unintentionally, not lying to him, not owing a sacrifice to some god or money to a person, and as a result departing for that other place in fear—the possession of wealth makes no small contribution to this. It has many other uses, too, but putting one thing against the other, Socrates, I would say that for a man with any sense, that is how wealth is most useful.

Socrates: A fine sentiment, Cephalus. But speaking of that thing itself, justice, are we to say it is simply speaking the truth and paying whatever debts one has incurred? Or is it sometimes just to do these things, sometimes unjust? I mean this sort of thing, for example: everyone would surely agree that if a man borrows weapons from a sane friend, and if he goes mad and asks for them back, the friend should not return them, and would not be just if he did. Nor should anyone be willing to tell the whole truth to someone in such a state.

Cephalus: That’s true.

Socrates: Then the following is not the definition of justice: to speak the truth and repay what one has borrowed.

Polemarchus interrupted: It certainly is, Socrates, if indeed we are to trust Simonides at all.

Cephalus: Well, then, I will hand over the discussion to you, since it is time for me to look after the sacrifices.

Polemarchus: Am I, Polemarchus, not heir to all your possession?

Cephalus replied with a laugh: Certainly. [And off he went to the sacrifice.]

Socrates: Then tell us, heir to the discussion, just what Simonides said about justice that you think is correct.

Polemarchus: He said it is just to give to each what is owed to him. And a fine saying it is, in my view.

Socrates: Well, now, it is not easy to disagree with Simonides, since he is a wise and godlike man. But what exactly does he mean? Perhaps you know, Polemarchus, but I do not understand. Clearly, he does not mean what we said a moment ago—namely, giving back to someone whatever he has lent to you, even if he is out of his mind when he asks for it. And yet what he has lent to you is surely something that is owed to him, isn't it?

Polemarchus: Yes.

Socrates: But when he is out of his mind, it is, under no circumstances, to be given to him?

Polemarchus: True.

Socrates: Then it seems Simonides must have meant something else when he says that to return what is owed is just.

Polemarchus: Something else indeed, by Zeus! He means friends owe something good to their friends, never something bad.

Socrates: I understand. You mean someone does not give a lender what he is owed by giving him gold, when the giving and taking would be harmful, and both he and the lender are friends. Isn't that what you say Simonides meant?

Polemarchus: It certainly is.

Socrates: Now what about this? Should one also give to one's enemies whatever is owed to them?

Polemarchus: Yes, by all means. What is in fact owed to them. And what an enemy owes an enemy, in my view, is also precisely what is appropriate—something bad.

Socrates: It seems, then, Simonides was speaking in riddles—just like a poet! — when he said what justice is. For what he meant, it seems, is that it is just to give to each what is appropriate to him, and this is what he called giving him what he is owed.

**From C. D. C. Reeve, trans. Plato, Republic, pp. 4-6**

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# Was Socrates Wise?

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## Overview

After experiencing the Winning Words style of discussion in the first two lessons, along with an example of the “Socratic method,” students will now start connecting more of the key themes, acting out another Socratic dialogue and examining how his approach to philosophy reflected his view that human wisdom was worth little or nothing and that the unexamined life was not worth living for a human being.

## Objectives

Students will learn more about the character of Socrates in the early Platonic dialogues, and perform a section of the dialogue “Euthyphro” that will illustrate the Socratic elenchus. They will also read aloud a short passage from “The Apology” that illustrates the Socratic claims about non-knowing and wisdom.

## Essential Questions

- What does Socrates know? What does he claim to know?
- What does Socrates think about wisdom? Piety? The Holy?
- How does the Socratic elenchus end up in aporia? Does it have to end in aporia?

## Dialogue

Stress to the students that it is very important to write down their favorite thoughts and insights. Invite some reflections on the first two sessions—ask them if they remember what you said about Socrates and the Socratic method, the terms “wisdom,” “philosophy,” “elenchus,” and “aporia.” Ask them if they witnessed any examples of Socratic conversation that they would like to share. Explain that today they will learn more about Socrates, and perform another Socratic dialogue. Ask for volunteers to play the parts, and set the stage with a few more anecdotes about Socrates—for example, how he had been a brave soldier, was physically very hardy, and could stand in one place for hours just thinking. Note that his devotion to philosophical questioning meant that he was relatively poor, his wife complained that he was impractical, but he did not value material goods. His devotion to philosophy meant that he did not engage in many of the activities favored by the citizens of democratic Athens—such as rhetorical public speaking in the Assembly. You may want to show the students a copy of M.D. Usher’s book *Wise Guy: The Life and Philosophy of Socrates*. You may want to read to the students from Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, printed at the end of the lesson.

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Winning Words

The Rainbow Core Curriculum

Lesson 3

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## Materials

Copies of the relevant parts of “Euthyphro” and “The Apology,” translation by Benjamin Jowett. Again, all Winning Words instructors should very carefully review the accounts of the Socratic method and the Socratic elenchus provided in Lesson Plan 2. Take care not to confuse elenchus with other methods of philosophy! The elenctic Socratic method reflects an attempt at cooperative inquiry, a joint search rather than mere eristic argument, testing of lives as well as arguments. Consider also the description by Ruby Blondell, printed at the end of this lesson. Remember, for Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, philosophy was a way of life, not mere academic exercise; the philosophical or examined life was the best life!

## Tips

Again, instructors should try to begin every new session of Winning Words by briefly reviewing the previous discussion and asking students if they have any further thoughts that they want to share. You might remind them that they were introduced to the very strange figure of Socrates and ask them if they have any further thoughts on him. Again, the more the class starts building on what went before and becoming its own community of inquiry, the better. Again, the material covered here can be quite demanding for some students, and it is important to try to make the performances of the dialogues as engaging as possible, encouraging the students to try to get into the roles in creative ways.

## Discussion

Invite the students to share their thoughts on the conversation between Socrates and Euthyphro. Ask them, what is the main question of the dialogue? How does Socrates try to answer this question? Which of Socrates's arguments do you find the most persuasive? What was Socrates trying to do? What actually happened? Was Euthyphro too confident that he knew what he was talking about? Was Socrates wise in questioning Euthyphro in this way? Why or why not? What do they think has become famous in philosophy as a "Euthyphro argument"?

## Closing

Ask the students again if they enjoyed playing the roles of Socrates and his conversational partners. Ask them to keep thinking about this type of conversation and try to find real world examples of Socratic conversation. Can people honestly search for the truth together, following the conversation wherever it leads? What might make this hard to achieve? If time permits, read aloud, or have one of the students read aloud, the passage from "The Apology" and explain that the class will be discussing it at their next session. Explain that this selection is part of the defense speech that Socrates gave when he was being tried for impiety and corrupting the young.

## Key Terms

- Socratic elenchus
- Aporia
- Dialogue
- Euthyphro
- Piety or "the holy"
- Euthyphro argument

Be sure to thank the students for being part of Winning Words! **Remember, if you have any questions or concerns about what you are doing, you should immediately contact Bart Schultz, Director of the CKP, at [rschultz@uchicago.edu](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu)**

## From Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*:

“And often, when he beheld the multitude of things which were being sold, he would say to himself, "How many things are there which I do not want." And he was continually repeating these iambs:

For silver plate and purple useful are  
For actors on the stage, but not for men.

And he showed his scorn of Archelaus the Macedonian, and Scopas the Crononian, and Eurylochus of Larissa, when he refused to accept their money, and to go and visit them. And he was so regular in his way of living, that it happened more than once when there was a plague at Athens, that he was the only person who did not catch it.

Aristotle says, that he had two wives. The first was Xanthippe, by whom he had a son named Lamprocles; the second was Myrto, the daughter of Aristides the Just; and he took her without any dowry, and by her he had two son Sophroniscus and Menexenus...

And he was a man able to look down upon any who mocked him. And he prided himself upon the simplicity of his way of life; and never exacted any pay from his pupils. And he used to say, that the man who ate with the greatest appetite, had the least need of delicacies; and that he who drank with the greatest appetite, was the least inclined to look for a draught which is not at hand; and that those who want fewest things are nearest to the Gods. And thus much, indeed, one may learn from the comic poets; who, without perceiving it, praise him in the very matters for which they ridicule him.

Aristophanes speaks thus:

Prudent man, who thus with justice long for mighty wisdom,  
Happiness will be your lot in Athens, and all Greece too;  
For you've a noble memory, and plenty of invention,  
And patience dwells within your mind, and you are never tired,  
Whether you're standing still or walking; and you care not for cold,  
Nor do you long for breakfast time, nor e'er give in to hunger;  
But wine and gluttony you shun, and all such kind of follies.”

## Euthyphro

This dialogue, as the Classic Reader explains, concerns an “incident which may perhaps really have occurred in the family of Euthyphro, a learned Athenian diviner and soothsayer, furnishes the occasion of the discussion. This Euthyphro and Socrates are represented as meeting in the porch of the King Archon... Both have legal business in hand. Socrates is defendant in a suit for impiety which Meletus has brought against him (it is remarked by the way that he is not a likely man himself to have brought a suit against another); and Euthyphro too is plaintiff in an action for murder, which he has brought against his own father. The latter has originated in the following manner: -A poor dependant of the family had slain one of their domestic slaves in Naxos. The guilty person was bound and thrown into a ditch by the command of Euthyphro's father, who sent to the interpreters of religion at Athens to ask what should be done with him. Before the messenger came back the criminal had died from hunger and exposure. This is the origin of the charge of murder which Euthyphro brings against his father. Socrates is confident that before he could have undertaken the responsibility of such a prosecution, he must have been perfectly informed of the nature of piety and impiety; and as he is going to be tried for impiety himself, he thinks that he cannot do better than learn of Euthyphro (who will be admitted by everybody, including the judges, to be an unimpeachable authority) what piety is, and what is Stress again that the students are reading a dialogue, a literary work that presents a philosophical conversation between different characters, and they should feel free to dramatize their readings. Reassure them that it is okay if they stumble a bit over some words and names—you will help them.

Socrates: Good heavens, Euthyphro! And is your knowledge of religion and of things pious and impious so very exact, that, supposing the circumstances to be as you state them, you are not afraid lest you too may be doing an impious thing in bringing an action against your father?

Euthyphro: The best of Euthyphro, and that which distinguishes him, Socrates, from other men, is his exact knowledge of all such matters. What should I be good for without it?

Socrates: Rare friend! I think that I cannot do better than be your disciple. Then before the trial with Meletus comes on I shall challenge him, and say that I have always had a great interest in religious questions, and now, as he charges me with rash imaginations and innovations in religion, I have become your disciple. You, Meletus, as I shall say to him, acknowledge Euthyphro to be a great theologian, and sound in his opinions; and if you approve of him you ought to approve of me, and not have me into court; but if you disapprove, you should begin by indicting him who is my teacher, and who will be the ruin, not of the young, but of the old; that is to say, of myself whom he instructs, and of his old father whom he admonishes and chastises. And if Meletus refuses to listen to me, but will go on, and will not shift the indictment from me to you, I cannot do better than repeat this challenge in the court.

Euthyphro: Yes, indeed, Socrates; and if he attempts to indict me I am mistaken if I do not find a flaw in him; the court shall have a great deal more to say to him than to me.

Socrates: And I, my dear friend, knowing this, am desirous of becoming your disciple. For I observe that no one appears to notice you- not even this Meletus; but his sharp eyes have found me out at once, and he has indicted me for impiety. And therefore, I adjure you to tell me the nature of piety and impiety, which you said that you knew so well, and of murder, and of other offences against the gods. What are they? Is not piety in every action always the same? And impiety, again- is it not always the opposite of piety, and also the same with itself, having, as impiety, one notion which includes whatever is impious?

Euthyphro: To be sure, Socrates.

Socrates: And what is piety, and what is impiety?

Euthyphro: Piety is doing as I am doing; that is to say, prosecuting any one who is guilty of murder, sacrilege, or of any similar crime-whether he be your father or mother, or whoever he may be-that makes no difference; and not to prosecute them is impiety. And please to consider, Socrates, what a notable proof I will give you of the truth of my words, a proof which I have already given to others:-of the principle, I mean, that the impious, whoever he may be, ought not to go unpunished. For do not men regard Zeus as the best and most righteous of the gods? - And yet they admit that he bound his father (Cronos) because he wickedly devoured his sons, and that he too had punished his own father (Uranus) for a similar reason, in a nameless manner. And yet when I proceed against my father, they are angry with me. So inconsistent are they in their way of talking when the gods are concerned, and when I am concerned.

[Abridgement]

Socrates: Remember that I did not ask you to give me two or three examples of piety, but to explain the general idea which makes all pious things to be pious. Do you not recollect that there was one idea which made the impious impious, and the pious pious?

Euthyphro: I remember.

Socrates: Tell me what is the nature of this idea, and then I shall have a standard to which I may look, and by which I may measure actions, whether yours or those of any one else, and then I shall be able to say that such and such an action is pious, such another impious.

Euthyphro: I will tell you, if you like.

Socrates: I should very much like.

Euthyphro: Piety, then, is that which is dear to the gods, and impiety is that which is not dear to them.

Socrates: Very good, Euthyphro; you have now given me the sort of answer which I wanted. But whether what you say is true or not I cannot as yet tell, although I make no doubt that you will prove the truth of your words.

Euthyphro: Of course.

Socrates: Come, then, and let us examine what we are saying. That thing or person which is dear to the gods is pious, and that thing or person which is hateful to the gods is impious, these two being the extreme opposites of one another. Was not that said?

Euthyphro: It was.

Socrates: And well said?

Euthyphro: Yes, Socrates, I thought so; it was certainly said.

Socrates: And further, Euthyphro, the gods were admitted to have enmities and hatreds and differences?

[Abridgement]

There was a notion that came into my mind while you were speaking; I said to myself: "Well, and what if Euthyphro does prove to me that all the gods regarded the death of the serf as unjust, how do I know anything more of the nature of piety and impiety? For granting that this action may be hateful to the gods, still piety and impiety are not adequately defined by these distinctions, for that which is hateful to the gods has been shown to be also pleasing and dear to them." And therefore,

Euthyphro, I do not ask you to prove this; I will suppose, if you like, that all the gods condemn and abominate such an action. But I will amend the definition so far as to say that what all the gods hate is impious, and what they love pious or holy; and what some of them love and others hate is both or neither. Shall this be our definition of piety and impiety?

Euthyphro: Why not, Socrates?

Socrates: Why not! Certainly, as far as I am concerned, Euthyphro, there is no reason why not. But whether this admission will greatly assist you in the task of instructing me as you promised, is a matter for you to consider.

Euthyphro: Yes, I should say that what all the gods love is pious and holy, and the opposite which they all hate, impious.

Socrates: Ought we to enquire into the truth of this, Euthyphro, or simply to accept the mere statement on our own authority and that of others? What do you say?

Euthyphro: We should enquire; and I believe that the statement will stand the test of enquiry.

Socrates: We shall know better, my good friend, in a little while. The point which I should first wish to understand is whether the pious or holy is beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is beloved of the gods.

Euthyphro: I do not understand your meaning, Socrates.

Socrates: I will endeavour to explain: we speak of carrying and we speak of being carried, of leading and being led, seeing and being seen. You know that in all such cases there is a difference, and you know also in what the difference lies?

Euthyphro: I think that I understand.

Socrates: And is not that which is beloved distinct from that which loves?

Euthyphro: Certainly. Socrates: Well; and now tell me, is that which is carried in this state of carrying because it is carried, or for some other reason?

Euthyphro: No; that is the reason.

Socrates: And the same is true of what is led and of what is seen?

Euthyphro: True.

Socrates: And a thing is not seen because it is visible, but conversely, visible because it is seen; nor is a thing led because it is in the state of being led, or carried because it is in the state of being carried, but the converse of this. And now I think, Euthyphro, that my meaning will be intelligible; and my meaning is, that any state of action or passion implies previous action or passion. It does not become because it is becoming, but it is in a state of becoming because it becomes; neither does it suffer because it is in a state of suffering, but it is in a state of suffering because it suffers. Do you not agree?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: Is not that which is loved in some state either of becoming or suffering?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: And the same holds as in the previous instances; the state of being loved follows the act of being loved, and not the act the state.

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: And what do you say of piety, Euthyphro: is not piety, according to your definition, loved by all the gods?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: Because it is pious or holy, or for some other reason?

Euthyphro: No, that is the reason.

Socrates: It is loved because it is holy, not holy because it is loved?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: And that which is dear to the gods is loved by them, and is in a state to be loved of them because it is loved of them?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: Then that which is dear to the gods, Euthyphro, is not holy, nor is that which is holy loved of God, as you affirm; but they are two different things.

## Plato, "The Apology"

"I declare that I will tell you the entire truth. Men of Athens, this reputation of mine has come of a certain sort of wisdom which I possess. If you ask me what kind of wisdom, I reply, such wisdom as is attainable by man, for to that extent I am inclined to believe that I am wise; whereas the persons of whom I was speaking have a superhuman wisdom, which I may fail to describe, because I have it not myself; and he who says that I have, speaks falsely, and is taking away my character. And here, O men of Athens, I must beg you not to interrupt me, even if I seem to say something extravagant. For the word which I will speak is not mine. I will refer you to a witness who is worthy of credit, and will tell you about my wisdom - whether I have any, and of what sort - and that witness shall be the god of Delphi. You must have known Chaerephon; he was early a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, for he shared in the exile of the people, and returned with you. Well, Chaerephon, as you know, was very impetuous in all his doings, and he went to Delphi and boldly asked the oracle to tell him whether - as I was saying, I must beg you not to interrupt - he asked the oracle to tell him whether there was anyone wiser than I was, and the Pythian prophetess answered that there was no man wiser. Chaerephon is dead himself, but his brother, who is in court, will confirm the truth of this story.

Why do I mention this? Because I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, what can the god mean? And what is the interpretation of this riddle? For I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men? And yet he is a god and cannot lie; that would be against his nature. After a long consideration, I at last thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. I should say to him, "Here is a man who is wiser than I am; but you said that I was the wisest." Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed to him - his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination - and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and wiser still by himself; and I went and tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is - for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him. Then I went to another, who had still higher philosophical pretensions, and my conclusion was exactly the same. I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him.

[Abridgement]

This investigation has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies, and I am called wise, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise; and in this oracle he means to say that the wisdom of men is little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name as an illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing. And so I go my way, obedient to the god, and make inquiry into the wisdom of anyone, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be wise; and if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise; and this occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the god."

Ask the students to keep thinking about whether Socrates was wise.

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# Was Socrates Guilty?

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## Overview

The students have now been briefly introduced to many of the key themes of the larger Winning Words curriculum—philosophy, wisdom, the good or best life, Socratic conversation, collaborative inquiry, and ethical reflection on how to live. Students should be in a position to start developing their own Socratic conversations. This session will present an account of the famous trial of Socrates and some reflections on key passages from Socrates’ Apology, or defense speech, and his refusal of the offer to escape his punishment. The students will start preparing to perform the skit “The Gods Judge Socrates” and discuss how they might compose their own Socratic skit/dialogue, or work as a group on some other activity.

## Objectives

Students will learn more about the character of Socrates in the early Platonic dialogues, especially how and why Socrates was tried and condemned for impiety and corrupting young people. They will learn how he accepted his punishment rather than fleeing. Passages from “The Apology” and “Crito” will be read aloud and discussed, and the students will start preparing to perform and discuss the skit “The Gods Judge Socrates” in the following session. They will be encouraged to think creatively about writing their own Socratic skit on an ethical topic of their choice.

## Essential Questions

- What does Socrates know?
- How does Socrates describe his “wisdom”?
- Why does Socrates think that philosophy is so important and the “unexamined life” not worth living?
- Was Socrates right to defy the Athenian jury? Was he right to accept his punishment and drink the hemlock?
- Should he have escaped and run away? Why did he refuse to escape?

## “The Apology”

Ask the students if they have thought some more about the passage from “The Apology” with which you closed the previous session. Re-read part of it. In the interests of time, the instructor might want to do the dramatic readings from “The Apology” printed at the end of Lesson 3

## Discussion

Be sure that the students understand that the “Apology” of Socrates is his defense

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Winning Words

The Rainbow Core Curriculum

Lesson 4

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## Materials

Copies of “The Apology,” translation by Benjamin Jowett. As always, all Winning Words instructors should very carefully review the accounts of the Socratic method and the Socratic elenchus provided in Lesson Plan 2. Take care not to confuse elenchus with other ways of philosophizing. The Socratic “speeches” in the “Apology” are by Socrates’ own admission not representative of his way of philosophizing.

## Tips

Again, instructors should try to begin every new session of Winning Words by briefly reviewing the previous discussion and asking students if they have any further thoughts that they want to share. The material covered here can be quite demanding for some students, and it is important to try to make the performances of the dialogues as engaging as possible, encouraging the students to try to get into the roles in creative ways. It is always a good idea to review the key terms and names from previous sessions.

speech, not an “apology” in the current sense of the word. Invite them to share their thoughts on the strong stance that Socrates takes on refusing to give up his philosophizing, even if the Athenian state were to order him to do so. Was his questioning “impious”? Why did so many people get angry with him? Explain a few more details about the trial and its aftermath: how Socrates was found guilty, how he proposed that his punishment be that he be given free meals at the Prytaneum (an honor usually reserved for great benefactors and Olympic champions), and how he was then condemned to death but refused to flee, even when given the opportunity to do so, and instead drank the hemlock. If possible, show the students the famous painting of Socrates’ death scene by Jacques-Louis David. Ask them if it made sense for Socrates to refuse to give up philosophy but then submit to the punishment ordered by the state. See if the students can come up with some account like the one given in “Crito,” which you might want to share with them after they have tried to think the matter through themselves. Explain that in this dialogue, Socrates is refusing to escape when his friend Crito tries to persuade him to do so.

## Closing

Commend the students for having covered so much important material about the important figure of Socrates, and explain that the next sessions will be more creative and less structured. They will be asked to think about some philosophical activities that they might engage in as a group, with one option being to write and perform their own Socratic dialogue, skit, or conversation. Invite them to start jotting down ideas for this in their notebooks.

## Other Resources

Winning Words coaches should watch the beginning of the Winning Words Initiative Conference, held on the UChicago campus in 2013 and available at [civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/downloads/media/WinningWordsConf\\_DVD1-750K.mp4](http://civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/downloads/media/WinningWordsConf_DVD1-750K.mp4)

The short talk on Socrates by C. D. C. Reeves is particularly important. Winning Words coaches should also read the essay by Gregory Vlastos, “Socrates and Vietnam.” His longer essay, “The Socratic Elenchus: Method is All” is strongly recommended, as is his classic book, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. For a short but insightful account of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, see Henry Sidgwick, *Outlines of the History of Ethics*.

## Key Terms

- The trial of Socrates
- The Apology
- Crito
- The philosophical life as the best life

Be sure to thank the students for being part of Winning Words! **Remember, if you have any questions or concerns about what you are doing, you should immediately contact Bart Schultz, Director of the CKP, at [rschultz@uchicago.edu](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu)**

## Plato, “The Apology”

Explain to the students that Socrates made so many important people angry that in 399 BC, when he was an old man; he was indicted and brought to trial in Athens for impiety and corrupting the young, charges that the Athenians took very seriously. Explain that some of the most famous lines in all of philosophy come from Plato’s account of this trial in “The Apology,” and that Plato never forgave Athens for condemning his teacher. And explain that you want to share with them a few of these famous lines, unless one of the students would like to play the part of Socrates at his trial. Be sure to read at least the sections highlighted in maroon:

“Someone will say: Yes, Socrates, but cannot you hold your tongue, and then you may go into a foreign city, and no one will interfere with you? Now I have great difficulty in making you understand my answer to this. For if I tell you that this would be a disobedience to a divine command, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that the greatest good of man is daily to converse about virtue, and all that concerning which you hear me examining myself and others, and that the life which is unexamined is not worth living - that you are still less likely to believe. And yet what I say is true, although a thing of which it is hard for me to persuade you. Moreover, I am not accustomed to think that I deserve any punishment.”

“Strange, indeed, would be my conduct, O men of Athens, if I who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death; if, I say, now, when, as I conceive and imagine, God orders me to fulfill the philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death: then I should be fancying that I was wise when I was not wise. For this fear of death is indeed the pretense of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being the appearance of knowing the unknown; since no one knows whether death, which they in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good. Is there not here conceit of knowledge, which is a disgraceful sort of ignorance? And this is the point in which, as I think, I am superior to men in general, and in which I might perhaps fancy myself wiser than other men, - that whereas I know but little of the world below, I do not suppose that I know: but I do know that injustice and disobedience to a better, whether God or man, is evil and dishonorable, and I will never fear or avoid a possible good rather than a certain evil. And therefore if you let me go now, and reject the counsels of Anytus, who said that if I were not put to death I ought not to have been prosecuted, and that if I escape now, your sons will all be utterly ruined by listening to my words - if you say to me, Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus, and will let you off, but upon one condition, that are to inquire and speculate in this way any more, and that if you are caught doing this again you shall die; - if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet after my manner, and convincing him, saying: O my friend, why do you who are a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens, care so much about laying up the greatest amount of money and honor and reputation, and so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all? Are you not ashamed of this? And if the person with whom I am arguing says: Yes, but I do care; I do not depart or let him go at once; I interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue, but only says that he has, I reproach him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less. And this I should say to everyone whom I meet, young and old, citizen and alien, but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren. For this is the command of God, as I would have you know; and I believe that to this day no greater good has ever happened in the state than my service to the God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons and your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue come money and every other good of man, public as well as private. This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, my influence is ruinous indeed. But if anyone says that this is not my teaching, he is speaking an untruth. Wherefore, O men of Athens, I say to you, do as Anytus bids or not as Anytus bids, and either acquit me or not; but whatever you do, know that I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times.

Men of Athens, do not interrupt, but hear me; there was an agreement between us that you should hear me out. And I think that what I am going to say will do you good: for I have something more to say, at which you may be inclined to cry out; but I beg that you will not do this. I would have you know that, if you kill such a one as I am, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me. Meletus and Anytus will not injure me: they cannot; for it is not in the nature of things that a bad man should injure a better than himself. I do not deny that he may, perhaps, kill him, or drive him into exile, or deprive him of civil rights; and he may imagine, and others may imagine, that he is doing him a great injury: but in that I do not agree with him; for the evil of doing as Anytus is doing - of unjustly taking away another man's life - is greater far. And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against the God, or lightly reject his boon by condemning me. For if you kill me you will not easily find another like me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by the God; and the state is like a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to

his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which God has given the state and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. And as you will not easily find another like me, I would advise you to spare me. I dare say that you may feel irritated at being suddenly awakened when you are caught napping; and you may think that if you were to strike me dead, as Anytus advises, which you easily might, then you would sleep on for the remainder of your lives, unless God in his care of you gives you another gadfly. And that I am given to you by God is proved by this: - that if I had been like other men, I should not have neglected all my own concerns, or patiently seen the neglect of them during all these years, and have been doing yours, coming to you individually, like a father or elder brother, exhorting you to regard virtue; this I say, would not be like human nature. And had I gained anything, or if my exhortations had been paid, there would have been some sense in that: but now, as you will perceive, not even the impudence of my accusers dares to say that I have ever exacted or sought pay of anyone; they have no witness of that. And I have a witness of the truth of what I say; my poverty is a sufficient witness.

Someone may wonder why I go about in private, giving advice and busying myself with the concerns of others, but do not venture to come forward in public and advise the state. I will tell you the reason of this. You have often heard me speak of an oracle or sign which comes to me, and is the divinity which Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This sign I have had ever since I was a child. The sign is a voice which comes to me and always forbids me to do something which I am going to do, but never commands me to do anything, and this is what stands in the way of my being a politician. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, O men of Athens, that if I had engaged in politics, I should have perished long ago and done no good either to you or to myself. And don't be offended at my telling you the truth: for the truth is that no man who goes to war with you or any other multitude, honestly struggling against the commission of unrighteousness and wrong in the state, will save his life; he who will really fight for the right, if he would live even for a little while, must have a private station and not a public one."

From Plato, "The Apology," trans. Benjamin Jowett,  
<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>

## Plato, "Crito"

"Socrates: Then the laws will say: "Consider, Socrates, if this is true, that in your present attempt you are going to do us wrong. For, after having brought you into the world, and nurtured and educated you, and given you and every other citizen a share in every good that we had to give, we further proclaim and give the right to every Athenian, that if he does not like us when he has come of age and has seen the ways of the city, and made our acquaintance, he may go where he pleases and take his goods with him; and none of us laws will forbid him or interfere with him. Any of you who does not like us and the city, and who wants to go to a colony or to any other city, may go where he likes, and take his goods with him. But he who has experience of the manner in which we order justice and administer the State, and still remains, has entered into an implied contract that he will do as we command him. And he who disobeys us is, as we maintain, thrice wrong: first, because in disobeying us he is disobeying his parents; secondly, because we are the authors of his education; thirdly, because he has made an agreement with us that he will duly obey our commands; and he neither obeys them nor convinces us that our commands are wrong; and we do not rudely impose them, but give him the alternative of obeying or convincing us; that is what we offer and he does neither. These are the sort of accusations to which, as we were saying, you, Socrates, will be exposed if you accomplish your intentions; you, above all other Athenians." Suppose I ask, why is this? they will justly retort upon me that I above all other men have acknowledged the agreement. "There is clear proof," they will say, "Socrates, that we and the city were not displeasing to you. Of all Athenians you have been the most constant resident in the city, which, as you never leave, you may be supposed to love. For you never went out of the city either to see the games, except once when you went to the Isthmus, or to any other place unless when you were on military service; nor did you travel as other men do. Nor had you any curiosity to know other States or their laws: your affections did not go beyond us and our State; we were your especial favorites, and you acquiesced in our government of you; and this is the State in which you begat your children, which is a proof of your satisfaction. Moreover, you might, if you had liked, have fixed the penalty at banishment in the course of the trial-the State which refuses to let you go now would have let you go then. But you pretended that you preferred death to exile, and that you were not grieved at death. And now you have forgotten these fine sentiments, and pay no respect to us, the laws, of whom you are the destroyer; and are doing what only a miserable slave would do, running away and turning your back upon the compacts and agreements which you made as a citizen. And first of all answer this very question: Are we right in saying that you agreed to be governed according to us in deed, and not in word only? Is that true or not?" How shall we answer that, Crito? Must we not agree?"

Cr. There is no help, Socrates.

Socrates: Then will they not say: "You, Socrates, are breaking the covenants and agreements which you made with us at your leisure, not in any haste or under any compulsion or deception, but having had seventy years to think of them, during which time you were at liberty to leave the city, if we were not to your mind, or if our covenants appeared to you to be unfair. You had your choice, and might have gone either to Lacedaemon or Crete, which you often praise for their good government, or to some other Hellenic or foreign State. Whereas you, above all other Athenians, seemed to be so fond of the State, or, in other words, of us her laws (for who would like a State that has no laws?), that you never stirred out of her: the halt, the blind, the maimed, were not more stationary in her than you were. And now you run away and forsake your agreements. Not so, Socrates, if you will take our advice; do not make yourself ridiculous by escaping out of the city.

"For just consider, if you transgress and err in this sort of way, what good will you do, either to yourself or to your friends? That your friends will be driven into exile and deprived of citizenship, or will lose their property, is tolerably certain; and you yourself, if you fly to one of the neighboring cities, as, for example, Thebes or Megara, both of which are well-governed cities, will come to them as an enemy, Socrates, and their government will be against you, and all patriotic citizens will cast an evil eye upon you as a subverter of the laws, and you will confirm in the minds of the judges the justice of their own condemnation of you. For he who is a corrupter of the laws is more than likely to be corrupter of the young and foolish portion of mankind. Will you then flee from well-ordered cities and virtuous men? And is existence worth having on these terms? Or will you go to them without shame, and talk to them, Socrates? And what will you say to them? What you say here about virtue and justice and institutions and laws being the best things among men? Would that be decent of you? Surely not. But if you go away from well-governed States to Crito's friends in Thessaly, where there is great disorder and license, they will be charmed to have the tale of your escape from prison, set off with ludicrous particulars of the manner in which you were wrapped in a goatskin or some other disguise, and metamorphosed as the fashion of runaways is- that is very likely; but will there be no one to remind you that in your old age you violated the most sacred laws from a miserable desire of a little more life? Perhaps not, if you keep them in a good temper; but if they are out of temper you will hear many degrading things; you will live, but how? - As the flatterer of all men, and the servant of all men; and doing what? - Eating and drinking in Thessaly, having gone abroad in order that you may get a dinner. And where will be your fine sentiments about justice and virtue then? Say that you wish to live for the sake of your children, that you may bring them up and educate them- will you take them into Thessaly and deprive them of Athenian citizenship? Is that the benefit which you would confer upon them? Or are you under the impression that they will be better cared for and educated here if you are still alive, although absent from them; for that your friends will take care of

them? Do you fancy that if you are an inhabitant of Thessaly they will take care of them, and if you are an inhabitant of the other world they will not take care of them? Nay; but if they who call themselves friends are truly friends, they surely will.

"Listen, then, Socrates, to us who have brought you up. Think not of life and children first, and of justice afterwards, but of justice first, that you may be justified before the princes of the world below. For neither will you nor any that belong to you be happier or holier or juster in this life, or happier in another, if you do as Crito bids. Now you depart in innocence, a sufferer and not a doer of evil; a victim, not of the laws, but of men. But if you go forth, returning evil for evil, and injury for injury, breaking the covenants and agreements which you have made with us, and wronging those whom you ought least to wrong, that is to say, yourself, your friends, your country, and us, we shall be angry with you while you live, and our brethren, the laws in the world below, will receive you as an enemy; for they will know that you have done your best to destroy us. Listen, then, to us and not to Crito."

This is the voice which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic; that voice, I say, is humming in my ears, and prevents me from hearing any other. And I know that anything more which you will say will be in vain. Yet speak, if you have anything to say."

Invite further discussion of Socrates' decision to accept his punishment. Should he have fled?

Ask for volunteers to play the parts, and set the stage with a few more anecdotes about Socrates—for example, how he had been a brave soldier, was physically very hardy, and could stand in one place for hours just thinking.

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# The Gods Judge Socrates

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## Overview

After considering many of the key themes of the larger Winning Words curriculum—philosophy, wisdom, the good or best life, Socratic conversation, collaborative inquiry, and ethical reflection, the students should now be well-positioned to start thinking creatively about how to carry on their own Socratic conversations, and how they might compose their own Socratic skit/dialogue. The students will perform the skit “The Gods Judge Socrates” and then critique it. They will be introduced at greater length to the idea of an Ethics Bowl as another possible group activity.

## Objectives

The students will be encouraged to think creatively about writing their own Socratic skit on an ethical topic of their choice. They will be given an example of such a skit, “The Gods Judge Socrates,” and invited to perform and critique it. This activity will help the students start working as a group engaged in a common philosophical project. They will also be introduced to the idea of an “Ethics Bowl” and invited to think about pursuing that possibility as well.

## Essential Questions

- Why is dialogue such an important way of depicting the philosophizing of Socrates?
- Does it make a difference whether one reads a dialogue or simply a description of what Socrates believed?
- What does it take to play the part of Socrates?

## A Performance

Try to arrange your site as a performance space suitable for the occasion. Ask for student volunteers to play the parts, but try to recruit some students who have not spoken up much or performed previously. Briefly explain the characters and their significance, though this may take some doing, particularly with Odysseus. The parts in this skit are easy to read, and bring more comedy into the discussion than in previous sessions. Encourage the students to have fun with this, but also to think about the serious points being raised. Then stage a reading of the skit. Depending on the number of students present, the instructor may have to play a role or roles as well.

## Discussion

Allow students to discuss their reactions to Socrates and the different claims of the gods in relation to their understanding of wisdom that they developed during previous

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Winning Words

The Rainbow Core Curriculum

Lesson 5

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## Materials

For this session, the Winning Words instructors might want to review one of the standard introductory treatments of Greek mythology, such as D’Aulaires’ Book of Greek Myths, which they could bring to class to help illustrate the various gods and goddesses that figure in “The Gods Judge Socrates.” This session affords a good opportunity to fill in more background on ancient Greek religion and myth. Instructors will need to start thinking more systematically about how to create a performance space for their Winning Words sessions, and may want to look into the possibility of occasionally using the school auditorium.

## Tips

As always, instructors should try to begin every new session of Winning Words by briefly reviewing the previous discussion and asking students if they have any further thoughts that they want to share. Thus, you might ask the students what, on reflection, they now think of Socrates, his way of philosophizing, his trial and death. Review the key terms and names from previous sessions, explaining that the students should use these as they move into their creative projects. Instructors with little background in theater might want to watch some performances of Socratic dialogues, such as those in the video *The Republic: Plato’s Utopia*.

sessions. Encourage students to point to specific statements in the play as evidence for their claims, either supporting or refuting them. Is the play too comic? Is there enough Socratic dialogue in it? How would they change it? Encourage them to be critical, to think about how they would do things differently.

## Closing

Stress again how the students should be thinking about what kind of group project they would like to work on, and how they would like to present Socrates. Explain that the next session will be devoted to some free discussion and creative brainstorming.

Emphasize that as the class moves ahead during future sessions, they will be thinking about Socrates very creatively, trying to imagine what he might have said about the Ethics Bowl problem cases, or how he would have conversed with such figures as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. That is why you want to use the next session to allow for a less structured discussion, encouraging them to raise questions about what has been covered so far and how the students as a group might work together on an appropriate philosophical activity.

## Key Terms

- The Greek gods and goddesses
- Odysseus
- Socratic skit
- Ethics Bowl

## Other Resources

Your students may like to work on Ethics Bowl Cases as their final project. Briefly explain the format of an Ethics Bowl and give them an example of one of the problem cases—see [civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/files/Ethics%20Bowl%20Resources.pdf](http://civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/files/Ethics%20Bowl%20Resources.pdf)

**Remember, if you have any questions or concerns about what you are doing, you should immediately contact Bart Schultz, Director of the CKP, at [rschultz@uchicago.edu](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu)**

## A Play, “The Gods Judge Socrates”

### University of Chicago Laboratory School (35 minutes)

**Narrator:** Mt Olympus, 399 BC. The king of the gods, Zeus, has called the other Olympian gods together for a Council Meeting. Assembled with Zeus, the Lord of the Skies and the Thunderbolt, are 1. Athena, goddess of wisdom, strategy, and heroism, and patron goddess of Athens, 2. Apollo, the god of music, healing, plague, prophecies, poetry, and archery, whose oracle is at Delphi, 3. Ares, the god of war, bloodlust, violence, manly courage, and civil order, 4. Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, whose gift of Helen to Paris of Troy caused the Trojan War, 5. Poseidon, Ruler of the Seas, the Earthshaker, 6. Hermes, the messenger of the gods, and 7. Hera, Zeus’s wife, the Queen of the gods and protector of hearth and family. The other gods and goddesses had schedule conflicts.

**Zeus:** It has come to my attention that there are some strange things going on in your city.

**Athena:** Who is this man Socrates, and why is he being put on trial?

**Athena:** Dread Majesty, son of Cronos, this man, Socrates, is very strange. His followers call him a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, because he devotes his life to seeking the truth about how mortals can best live their lives. Although his followers love him, he has annoyed many important people by questioning them about such things as virtue, piety, courage, justice, love, and friendship. His enemies have charged him with impiety and corrupting young people.

**Zeus:** Impiety?! We gods cannot stand for that! Is this true?

**Apollo:** Lord Zeus, a word of explanation here. A friend of this man Socrates visited my oracle at Delphi. He asked the oracle whether anyone was wiser than Socrates, and the oracle told him that no one was. But when this was reported to Socrates, he was puzzled; he never claimed to have any special expertise at all. So, he went looking for someone wiser than himself.

**Zeus:** Hence the questioning?

**Athena and Apollo:** Right!

**Zeus:** Ares, Aphrodite, what do you make of this Socrates?

**Ares:** I like this troublemaker! He is stirring up conflict, violence, bloodlust (at least for his own blood). Who knows? Maybe these mortals will start going to war over this philosophy thing! We had better alert Hades about this!

**Aphrodite:** Hold on Ares. I am not sure that I trust this man at all. Why, he seems to think that physical beauty is just not that important! He claims that the beauty of mortals lies within them, whatever that means. Whoever heard of a beautiful liver? And anyway, this Socrates only loves ideas! Ares, if the mortals had followed him, we would not have had the Trojan War!

**Ares:** Terrible man! Still, my manly courage side has to admire him—did you hear what he just told the Athenian jury? They found him guilty and asked him what a fit punishment would be. And he told them that he should be treated to free meals at City Hall, just like the athletes who return victorious from the Olympic games!

**Athena:** That sounds VERY ARROGANT! My poor City has to put up with that? I am not sure that I understand this mortal’s so-called wisdom.

**Zeus:** That gives me an idea, dear daughter. Let us summon one of your favorite mortals of all, Odysseus, the great hero of the Trojan War, whose soul now dwells on the Isles of the Blessed. He was always the cleverest of mortals, a man of Winning Words. Let us hear his verdict on this Socrates, and on whether we gods need worry about these new philosophical developments. Odysseus is summoned, and Zeus provides him with a backgrounder on the situation. Odysseus is then invited to address the assembled gods and goddesses on the subject of Socrates.

**Odysseus:** Great gods, again you favor me. My great protector, Athena, my wisdom is nothing compared to the wisdom of the gods. How can I serve you? How can my mortal experience, nothing to the gods, shed any light on this case?

**Athena:** Well, you can see why he has always been my favorite.

**Zeus:** Odysseus, favorite of the gods that is what we want of you—the perspective of a mere

**Odysseus:** Zeus, Lord of the Skies, I will speak. I believe that this man Socrates is pious, and if he is condemned, I hope his soul will join me on the Isles of the Blessed.

**All the gods:** Whaaaaat? Is he that good?

**Odysseus:** Peace, Immortal Ones. I mean no offense. I only affirm what I just said—the wisdom of mortals counts for little. Surely you agree?

**All the gods:** OBVIOUSLY!

**Odysseus:** And surely the piety you so rightly demand of mortals requires that we recognize how

**All the gods:** Yes, of course.

**Odysseus:** Then Socrates must be a very pious man, for he claims that he knows nothing, and that the wisdom of mortals counts for little.

**Zeus:** Athena, daughter dearest, why would your City condemn Socrates for such noble thoughts?

**Athena:** Father, I will see that they come to regret it!

**Ares:** Hooray! Would you like to help with a few more wars?

**Odysseus:** Thank you, Immortal Ones, I trust the will of the gods will carry me back to the Isles of the Blessed, where I shall await the arrival of this strange man Socrates. I have some questions to

**Zeus:** I bow my head to that. This has made me very thirsty—someone get me something to drink! Apollo, get me some nectar!

**Apollo:** But you quit drinking nectar.

**Zeus:** Well, get me something else to drink!

**Apollo:** Lemonade, Lord Zeus?

**Zeus:** Lemonade?! No, water!

**Poseidon:** Here Sire, have some water—I have plenty.

**Zeus:** (takes a sip) Pleeeeeck! That tastes terrible! You gave me seawater!

**Poseidon:** Of course Sir, I am the Lord of the Sea. You can develop a taste for it.

**Zeus:** I just want that taste out of my mouth! Give me some food!

**Poseidon:** Food Sire? Here, try this fresh sea....

**Zeus:** Not you, where's Hera?

**Hera:** What would you like Dread Majesty?

**Hera:** We only have the fat free kind. Remember your New Year's Resolution?

**Hermes:** Perhaps I can help Lord Zeus! Would you like some tasty snakes? I always have some with me! I could even cook them up for you, with Hephaestus' help.

**Hephaestus:** That sounds more like a job for Hades.

**Socrates:** By the dog! Perhaps I can help you, Lord Zeus.

**Zeus:** Who are you?! And no dogs, or mortals, are allowed on Mt. Olympus without special permission. We do not even let Hades bring Cerberus along.

**Socrates:** I am the soul of Socrates, the philosopher condemned to death by Athens. I was on my way to the Isles of the Blessed when I ran into the great hero Odysseus, who told me how to get here. I could not resist the opportunity to learn from gods, since you are surely much wiser than I am. And I happen to have with me a doggy bag from my last feast—I only like very plain and simple food, and not much of it. I used to say that whereas my fellow citizens lived to eat, I ate to live.

**Zeus:** Doggy bag? Are you offering the King of the Gods some kind of dog chow? That does not sound very wise to me!

**Hera:** No, Dear, I think the weird mortal means he has some of that mortal food that is always being tossed into the sacrificial fires for us.

**Hermes:** Lord Zeus, do you want the snakes or not?

**Zeus:** Not, though I might regret this choice after tasting this Socratic bag lunch. What is this?

**Socrates:** A roast beef sandwich and individual serving of red wine. Odysseus thought you would like it.

**Zeus:** Hera, can I eat this? I do not want to end up with a bellyache like my father Cronus.

**Hera:** Remember, Dear, your father's digestive problems were rather special, the result of eating his children, plus a large rock.

**Zeus:** Well, here goes. You there, the soul of the mortal Socrates, entertain me while I dine. Do you know any good jokes?

**Socrates:** No, but people used to take pleasure in my questioning important individuals claiming to be wise. Here, let me show you my method. Aphrodite, you are the goddess of beauty. Surely you can tell us what beauty really is ...

**Narrator:** And so the Gods and Socrates spent their remaining days discussing the meanings of important life concepts like beauty, justice and wisdom. Mount Olympus was finally calm—the temperaments of the strong-willed Gods were finally peaceful.

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# Free Talk

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## Overview

After considering many of the key themes of the larger Winning Words curriculum—philosophy, wisdom, the good or best life, Socratic conversation, collaborative inquiry, and ethical reflection, the students should now be encouraged to play a more active role in guiding class discussion. This session is an opportunity for them to raise questions about what was covered in previous sessions, return to points that they found especially interesting, and propose ways to work together as a group on an appropriate philosophical project, whether this be a Socratic dialogue/skit, an Ethics Bowl, or some other activity.

## Objectives

The students will be encouraged to lead the discussion, raising questions about the material covered in previous sessions and expressing their views on what the most important and interesting points were. They will be allowed to think creatively about writing their own Socratic skit on an ethical topic of their choice, or creating their own “Ethics Bowl” or pursuing their own option. The aim is to get a better sense of the personality of the class as a whole, and how they might work together as a group.

## Essential Questions

- What do you think of Socrates?
- Philosophy?
- Winning Words?
- What kinds of conversations should you be having?
- What kinds of activities should the group pursue?

## Discussion

Remind the students that as the class moves ahead they will be thinking about Socrates very creatively, trying to imagine what he might have said about the Ethics Bowl problem cases, or how he would have conversed with such figures as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and explain that you want to open up the class for free discussion and brainstorming. You could start by inviting them to write down their thoughts on a slip of paper without signing their names, so that you could collect these and share them. And you might want to remind them that by the end of the session they should have made some headway on a group project, and that the options include writing and performing a Socratic dialogue/skit, staging an Ethics Bowl, and other possibilities that will come up in future sessions. You might mention that you will be talking about oral history and doing interviews with older people. Try to give them a sense of what is to come, so that they will be able to think about a broad range of options.

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Winning Words

The Rainbow Core Curriculum

Lesson 6

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## Materials

Instructors should come to this session prepared to review or respond to questions about anything and everything from previous Winning Words sessions. They may want to use this opportunity to bring in more thought-provoking art or video presentations. They need to make sure that they have the appropriate means to record the class consensus, and may want to propose another round of the philosophy games used during session 1.

## Tips

Instructors must come to this session prepared to say less and listen more; getting a feel for the class dynamic is the crucial task.

Give them some sense of how they might get to do their projects on the campus of UChicago, when all the Winning Words groups are brought together for a big collective event. If the class is up for it, go around the circle asking each individual to share his/her thoughts. Another possibility is to break up into small groups of two or three, with each group going off to huddle before reporting back to the group as a whole. Small group work of this nature can be very productive.

## Closing

Emphasize again that as the class moves ahead during future sessions, they will be thinking about Socrates very creatively, trying to imagine what he might have said about the Ethics Bowl problem cases, or how he would have conversed with such figures as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Do your best to give an honest initial summary of how you will take the input from this session into account in planning the future sessions. If the class has settled on a group activity, more time will be allocated to working on that.

Be sure to thank the students for being part of Winning Words! **Remember, if you have any questions or concerns about what you are doing, you should immediately contact Bart Schultz, Director of the CKP, at [rschultz@uchicago.edu](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu)**

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# Socrates, Gandhi, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Winning Words

The Rainbow Core Curriculum

Lesson 7

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## Overview

This class will take the themes of the earlier Winning Words lesson plans—philosophy, wisdom, the good or best life, Socratic conversation, collaborative inquiry, and ethical reflection—and demonstrate their relevance to issues of social justice during more recent times. Students will learn about such figures as Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and about the philosophical themes informing their activism on behalf of social justice, especially the philosophy of non-violent resistance.

## Objectives

Students will develop a deeper understanding of the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by discussing the meaning and roots of his philosophy of nonviolent resistance, which drew on a wide range of sources, including the examples of Socrates and Gandhi.

## Essential Questions

- What are human rights, and how does a concern with human rights relate to a Socratic concern with the good or best life?
- What was the U.S. civil rights movement?
- Why was the practice of non-violence important to the U.S. civil rights movement in, for example, the Montgomery bus boycott and the actions in Birmingham?
- How did MLK defend non-violent civil disobedience?
- What did MLK like about Gandhi? What did their form of non-violent civil disobedience seek to achieve?
- What did MLK admire about Socrates? How did MLK and Socrates differ in their approaches to social justice?

## MLK and Gandhi

Briefly review the discussion of Socrates from previous sessions, asking the students if they have thought more about the examined life as the good or best life, and the decisions that Socrates made. Remind them that, like Socrates, they are engaged in a collaborative inquiry, seeking to make progress in considering difficult philosophical questions. Give them their journals and explain that you want them to write down their thoughts and various points made in class. Briefly review the chronologies of Gandhi and MLK/the civil rights movement, highlighting Gandhi's Salt March and what MLK said about it in his "Palm Sunday Sermon on Mohandas K. Gandhi," p. 55 (in West, *The Radical King*). Briefly review MLK's work in Montgomery, Selma, and Birmingham (you

## Materials

Copies of Gandhi, MLK and Socrates, a copy of *The Radical King*, edited by Cornel West, and a copy of MLK's *Strength to Love*. For additional philosophical background, use G. Vlastos, "Socrates and Vietnam."

## Tips

There is a great deal of important material covered in this and the following lesson plan, and it may be better to extend each of these lessons to two sessions, if the conversations require it.

should ask how many of them have seen the movie “Selma”). Then invite the students to take turns reading aloud the key points of MLK’s “Pilgrimage to Nonviolence,” pp. 48-53 in West, *The Radical King*. These passages and those given below should be included in their handouts. Remind them of how MLK admired Gandhi, and how the U.S. civil rights movement was committed to non-violence.

## Discussion

Ask the students to share their initial thoughts on Gandhi and MLK, and what they usually do on MLK Day. Ask them how many of MLK’s speeches they have heard, and which ones they think are the most powerful and why. Ask how many of them have read any of MLK’s speeches or books. Remind the students of the philosophical differences at play in the notions of the best life, human rights and legal rights. Ask them if they think that MLK and Gandhi were right to break the law. Press them on why or why not they believe this. Ask them to explain under what circumstances civil disobedience would be right or wrong. Follow up by asking them why people should or should not practice non-violence. Ask them if non-violence makes a difference to the rightness or wrongness of civil disobedience (if helpful, mention the opposition to MLK from Malcolm X, the Black Power Movement, etc.). Ask them if there is any way to settle the question of whether non-violent civil disobedience is right or wrong. Press them on why Gandhi and MLK believed that it was right under certain circumstances. Did their religious views make a difference to their philosophies of non-violence? Ask them if the U.S. is right to honor MLK with a national holiday, and what that means. As a parting thought, share with them this line from Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel: “The whole future of America will depend upon the impact and influence of Dr. King.” (West, *The Radical King*, p. x).

## MLK and Socrates

Remind the students of the philosophical differences at play in the notions of the best life, human rights and legal rights. Show the students some of MLK’s books, such as *Strength to Love*, *Stride Toward Freedom: the Montgomery Story*, and *Where Do We Go From Here? Chaos or Community*, and explain that MLK was a powerful writer as well as a powerful speaker. Read aloud, or invite a student to read aloud, this passage from “The Man Who Was a Fool” to illustrate: “In a real sense, all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.” (*Strength*, p. 69). Invite others to read the passage as well, putting in their own emphasis on phrases they feel are especially important.

## Discussion

Ask the students whether Socrates would have agreed with that passage from “The Man Who Was a Fool.” Ask them to share their thoughts on MLK’s claim that “Love is the most durable power in the world” (*Strength*, p. 51), and if they are interested in the question of which man was a “Fool,” invite them to take turns reading aloud pp. 65-67 from “The Man Who Was a Fool” (*Strength*, pp. 65-73). Ask them to share their thoughts on whether MLK was right to call the rich man in question a “Fool.” Ask them if MLK was being like Socrates in his condemnation of materialism. Ask them what they make of the line: “To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because

## Other Resources

If possible, show the students the picture of Gandhi that MLK kept in his dining room.

If possible, review the following website/statement with them:

[www.thekingcenter.org/about-dr-king](http://www.thekingcenter.org/about-dr-king)

And the following account of Gandhian non-violence, which stresses a number of the key points:

[kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc\\_nonviolent\\_resistance/](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_nonviolent_resistance/)

Non-violence does not, you should stress, mean passivity or cowardice. If necessary, describe some more of Gandhi’s non-violent actions for purposes of comparison (see, for material, MLK’s “My Trip to the Land of Gandhi,” available at

<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/kingpapers/documents/my-trip-land-gandhi>

And chapters 2 and 3 in West, ed., *The Radical King*.

## Key Terms

- Non-violent resistance
- Civil rights
- Civil disobedience
- Radical love
- Socrates
- Gandhi
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Socrates practiced civil disobedience.” (West, *The Radical King*, p. 134), and give them a little background on MLK’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” Should Socrates have written a “Letter from an Athenian Jail”? Ask the students again how they would compare Socrates and MLK – on what did they agree, and on what did they disagree? Did Socrates practice nonviolence? Civil disobedience? Ask the students if both Socrates and MLK stood for “radical love”—“a relentless self-examination in which a fearful, hateful, egoistic self dies daily to be reborn into a courageous, loving, and sacrificial self” (West, *The Radical King*, p. xvi). Invite discussion of their different approaches to working for social justice—elenctic conversation versus prophetic oratory to build a movement. Should Socrates have done what MLK tried to do? Watch a short clip from MLK’s “I Have a Dream” speech and ask the students what made MLK such a powerful speaker and writer.

## Closing

Thank the students for attending this session of Winning Words. Ask for some quick takes on the most interesting question of the day—what did the students find most intriguing? Which questions do they want to pursue? Ask them to write down their thoughts in their journals so that they can share them at the next session. Ask them if they can name some people from the South Side of Chicago who worked very closely with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. If they do not do so, briefly mention Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., Professor Timuel D. Black, and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and explain that future sessions of Winning Words will discuss them. Invite one of the students to close the session by reading aloud this poem by Pulitzer Prize winning poet Gwendolyn Brooks, who spent her life in the Bronzeville neighborhood:

### "Martin Luther King Jr." By Gwendolyn Brooks

*A man went forth with gifts.  
He was a prose poem.*

He was a tragic grace.  
He was a warm music.

He tried to heal the vivid volcanoes.  
His ashes are  
reading the world.  
His Dream still wishes to anoint  
the barricades of faith and or control.

His word still burns the center of the sun,  
above the thousands and the  
hundred thousands.  
The word was Justice. It was spoken.  
So it shall be spoken.

So it shall be done.

## Other Resources

### CORE:

<http://www.core-online.org/History/history.htm>

### Timuel D. Black:

[www.uchicago.edu/features/a\\_lifetime\\_championing\\_civil\\_rights/](http://www.uchicago.edu/features/a_lifetime_championing_civil_rights/)

Timeline for Timuel D. Black  
available in Lesson 8

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# The Legacy of MLK:

Professor Timuel D. Black, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., and Professor Cornel West

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## Overview

This class will continue the discussions initiated during the previous sessions, continuing to develop the themes of the earlier Winning Words lesson plans—philosophy, wisdom, the good or best life, Socratic conversation, collaborative inquiry, and ethical reflection—in connection with issues of social justice during more recent times. Students will learn more about such figures as Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and be introduced to a number of living philosophers who were profoundly influenced by MLK, including Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., Professor Cornel West, and Professor Timuel Black, all of whom have philosophized about non-violent resistance.

## Objectives

Students will develop a deeper understanding of the philosophical legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) by discussing the influence of his philosophy of nonviolent resistance on some prominent living philosophers, including two who have long been identified with the South Side of Chicago: Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr. and Professor Timuel D. Black (TDB). Students will learn about the important role played by Chicago’s South Side in the civil rights movement.

## Essential Questions

- What did non-violent civil disobedience seek to achieve?
- What did MLK mean by “radical love”?
- How have such living philosophers as Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., Professor Cornel West, and Professor Timuel D. Black carried on MLK’s legacy?
- What did they like about King? How might they disagree with King? How do their philosophical styles relate to those of Socrates and MLK?
- What is “strategic nonviolence”? Why is it so important to “talk with the elders”?

## Talking with the Elders

Review the discussions from previous sessions, asking the students if they have thought more about MLK’s philosophy of radical love and nonviolence. Remind them that they are engaged in a collaborative inquiry, seeking to make progress in considering difficult philosophical questions. Give them their journals and explain that you want them to write down their thoughts and various points made in class. Then begin by briefly reviewing the life of Professor Timuel D. Black. Ask the students why he would think interviews with the people of Chicago’s south side were so important. Ask the students what they would want to ask him in an interview. Briefly explain how

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Lesson 8

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## Materials

Copies of handouts on the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., and Professor Timuel D. Black, a copy of *The Radical King*, edited by Cornel West, a copy of one vol. of TDB’s *Bridges of Memory*, and a copy of MLK’s *Strength to Love*. Also the DVD or link to “The Civic Knowledge Project Remembers 1942-43,”

Copies of the story “A Lifetime Championing Civil Rights,”

Also, review “Fifty Years Later, Participants in the March on Washington are Still Hoping for Justice,”

And the CKP Home Movie pt. II.

## Links

[humstatic.uchicago.edu/mahimahi/media/ckp/CKP-1942.mp4](http://humstatic.uchicago.edu/mahimahi/media/ckp/CKP-1942.mp4)

[http://www.uchicago.edu/features/a\\_lifetime\\_championing\\_civil\\_rights/](http://www.uchicago.edu/features/a_lifetime_championing_civil_rights/)

<http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/march-on-washington-1963-timuel-black-don-rose-mlk/Content?oid=10701416>

<http://humstatic.uchicago.edu/mahimahi/media/ckp/CKP-ProfBlackPart2.mp4>

## Key Terms

- Strategic Nonviolence
- Oral History and “talking to the elders”
- Professor Timuel D. Black
- CORE
- Operation Bread Basket and RainbowPUSH coalition

he thinks it very important for young people to talk with the elders, and that they should think about other people they might want to interview. Introduce the students to his distinction between King's form of nonviolence and his own version, "strategic nonviolence."

## Discussion

Pursue the question of why Timuel D. Black thinks that it is so important to "talk to the elders." More specifically, ask the students to share their thoughts on what they would want to ask him about his life and his work with MLK. Show them one of the short videos featuring a story about his work with MLK and his different approach to the issue of nonviolence (Timuel D. Black addresses this at some length in "The Civic Knowledge Project Remembers 1942-43). Ask them which approach to nonviolence is more defensible, Timuel D. Black's or MLK's. Invite them to discuss his emphasis on storytelling, and how his way of philosophizing compares to those of Socrates and MLK. Ask why stories are so important. What are their favorite stories about MLK?

## MLK's Legacy in Chicago

Watch another brief clip from "The Civic Knowledge Project Remembers 1942-43" that explains how CORE (the Congress of Racial Equality) was founded by James Farmer and others on Chicago's South Side, and briefly explain how the members of CORE were also influenced by Gandhi in their protests against racial segregation and discrimination in the 1940s. Note how CORE's George Houser introduced MLK to many African leaders fighting against colonialism and imperialism. Then present a short account of some more significant historical events on Chicago's South Side: MLK's visit to Chicago in 1966—including his residence in North Lawndale and his organizing at the Warren Congregational Church (West Side) and Liberty Baptist Church (South Side)—and the founding of Operation Bread Basket's Chicago Campaign here in 1966 see:

[kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc\\_operation\\_breadbasket/](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_operation_breadbasket/)

And how that eventually led to the creation of Reverend Jesse Jackson's RainbowPUSH coalition. Explain how Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., was involved with MLK's "Poor People's Campaign" (see West, *The Radical King*, pp. ix-xvi) and was in Memphis when MLK was assassinated on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968. Explain how Professor Cornel West put together the book *The Radical King* to highlight how important and radical much of MLK's work was—for example, the Poor People's Campaign, which continued after MLK's assassination with the occupation of the Mall in Washington DC in June of 1968.

## Discussion

Ask the students to share their thoughts on the legacy of MLK in Chicago. Ask them what questions that would want to ask Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., if they were interviewing him. Do they think that MLK was right to support Operation Bread Basket and the Poor People's Campaign? Invite them to speculate on what MLK would want to see today. What questions would they want to ask MLK, if they were interviewing him? What might Socrates have asked MLK about his legacy?

- Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr.
- The Poor People's Campaign
- Professor Cornel West
- Prophetic Oratory

## Timeline for Timuel D. Black

- Born in Birmingham on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> 1918
- Moved with his family to the Bronzeville neighborhood in 1919
- Served in WWII and was moved to work for social justice after witnessing the Buchenwald concentration camp
- Decided in the 1950s to work with MLK and the civil rights movement
- Helped organize the March on Washington in 1963
- Supported Dr. Margaret Burroughs in founding the DuSable Museum of African American History in the 1960s
- Helped elect Harold Washington as mayor of Chicago in 1983
- Helped Barack Obama enter political life
- Recently worked to bring the Obama Presidential Library to Chicago's South Side
- Became a highly respected oral historian with his multivolume *Bridges of Memory*, a series of interviews with people from Chicago's South Side

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## Closing

Ask for some quick takes on the most interesting question of the day—what did the students find most intriguing? Which questions do they want to pursue? Ask them to write down their thoughts in their journals so that they can share them at the next session. If time permits, show them the segment featuring Professor Cornel West discussing Socrates from the video *The Examined Life*. Tell them that putting together an oral history would be another possible activity for them.

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# From Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Dr. Wangari Maathai

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## Overview

This class will take the themes of the earlier Winning Words lesson plans—philosophy, wisdom, the good or best life, Socratic conversation, collaborative inquiry, ethical reflection, and the philosophies of the civil rights movement and Indian independence movement—and connect them to further issues of global social justice, particularly environmental justice. Students will learn about such figures as Dr. Wangari Maathai, the founder of Kenya’s Green Belt Movement, and Professor Martha Nussbaum, a leading feminist philosopher of global and environmental justice who has done much work in India. Students will be introduced to both environmental philosophy and feminist philosophy, in ways that link strongly to previous lesson plans.

## Objectives

Students will develop a deeper and broader understanding of the philosophical issues raised in previous class sessions by discussing the relevance of philosophy—including the philosophies of non-violent resistance—to the challenges posed by unsustainable social practices and environmental degradation. They will also be introduced to some extremely important and influential women philosophers and activists, and the vital importance of women in philosophy and movements for social justice will be stressed.

## Essential Questions

- In what ways are the works of Wangari Maathai and Martha Nussbaum reflective of the influences of MLK and Socrates?
- How do their visions of justice expand the scope of justice and call for new approaches?
- Why are such problems as deforestation, global warming, and the degradation of the environment in part philosophical/ethical problems?
- What do present generations owe to future generations, as a matter of social justice?
- Why has the role of women in philosophy and movements for social justice been unfairly neglected?

## MLK and Wangari Maathai

Explain to the students how many women played a crucial role in the civil rights movement discussed in previous sessions, mentioning such names as Ella Baker,

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Lesson 9

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## Materials

Copies of handouts on Dr. Wangari Maathai and Professor Martha Nussbaum, a DVD or link to *The Examined Life*, a DVD or link to *The Lorax*, sketch pads and crayons, charcoal, markers, etc.

## Tips

This lesson plan marks an important transition to philosophical issues in environmentalism and feminism. The material may take up more than one class session, and may work particularly well if the class can meet outside in an appropriate green space by some inspiring trees.

## Wangari Maathai

Many, perhaps most students will not recognize Wangari Maathai, so it will be necessary to explain that she was born in Kenya in 1940, studied in the U.S., but returned to Kenya and became the first woman to earn a Ph.D. and head an academic department in Kenya. She founded the Green Belt Movement in 1977 in response to the environmental degradation and deforestation that she witnessed in Kenya. Through this movement she mobilized rural women to become activists by planting trees to restore the environment. The Green Belt Movement, a form of feminist environmental activism, empowers women to protect the environment. Wangari Maathai also promoted education for girls and women, who are discriminated against in many parts of the

Fannie Lou Hamer, Margaret Burroughs, and Rosa Parks, and how they are also playing crucial roles in such movements as the Green Belt Movement, the movement for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the Children and Nature movement, and many other causes. Then read aloud, or invite the students to read aloud passages from WM's book *Unbowed, A Memoir*, printed at the end of this lesson.

## Discussion

Ask the students what they make of those lines—how does Wangari Maathai portray the natural world? What would Gandhi or MLK say about these passages? Would she also be an example of “radical love”—“a relentless self-examination in which a fearful, hateful, egoistic self dies daily to be reborn into a courageous, loving, and sacrificial self” (West, *The Radical King*, p. xvi)? Invite discussion of her approach to working for social justice—how does it compare to elenctic conversation and prophetic oratory and nonviolent resistance to build a movement? Can planting a tree really be an act of social justice? Why should we care about the environment? If we destroy or deplete the natural environment are we behaving unjustly to both future generations and ourselves? Ask the students what trees mean to them. Invite them to draw pictures of their favorite or ideal trees adding an explanation of what their pictures symbolize. Ask the students to share their pictures and thoughts with the rest of the class. If outside, you might work on identifying the trees in the vicinity or you might show pictures of the trees in the Washington Park arboretum. If they could interview a tree, what would they want to ask?

## Martha Nussbaum on Love and Justice

Show the students the segment on Martha Nussbaum in the video *The Examined Life*. Explain that she works at the University of Chicago and is a very important and influential philosopher who has written on topics from Socrates and the ancient Greeks, to the importance of a liberal education, to the meaning of global justice, to feminist philosophy, to Indian politics and culture. Invite the students to read aloud the passages from Martha Nussbaum's review of *The Examined Life* in *The Point*, printed at the end of this lesson. For purposes of comparison, read aloud, or invite the students to read aloud, the following passages from Martha Nussbaum's *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*, which links MLK to Lincoln and Whitman on the Civil War.

## Discussion

Ask students how Martha Nussbaum's admiration for Socrates and her admiration for MLK compare—is there a conflict between the demand for reason and the demand for love and poetry in our political culture? Can poetry and political rhetoric really be Socratic? Were Socrates and MLK “patriotic” in Martha Nussbaum's sense? Ask the students to compare again the speech of Socrates in *The Apology* to King's “I Have a Dream” speech and “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” Press them on which approach is better and why or why not they believe this. Is it possible to have the best of both worlds, Socratic elenctic conversation and MLK's poetic and prophetic oratory of love?

## Closing

Ask for some quick takes on the most interesting questions of the day—what was most intriguing? Which questions do they want to pursue? Invite the students to read, on their own, the following poem by artist Dr. Margaret Burroughs, founder of the DuSable Museum of African American History, printed below.

world. In 2002 she was elected to Kenya's Parliament, and held other government posts as well. Like MLK, she won the Nobel Peace Prize, which was awarded to her in 2004. She died of ovarian cancer in 2011.

## Other Resources

If time permits, watch and discuss some scenes from *The Lorax*, or invite students to read aloud the following passage from Helen MacDonald, “On Nature: Dead Forests and Living Memories,” printed at the end of this lesson.

## Key Terms

- Environmentalism
- Environmental philosophy
- Green Belt Movement
- Feminism
- Wangari Maathai
- Martha Nussbaum
- Poetry
- Political rhetoric
- Walt Whitman

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What will your legacy be?  
Legacy? Legacy?  
Do you know what the word "Legacy"  
means? Well, if you don't know, let me tell  
you what the dictionary says it means.  
Legacy: property or money left to someone  
by a will; something handed down from  
those who have gone before; a legacy of  
honor, our legacy, of freedom.  
In this poem, I'm not referring to material  
things like property or money, either of  
honor or of freedom. I am referring to what  
a person has done with this life that God  
has given to him or her.  
Yes, I want to know what will your legacy  
be? This is a question that I would like to  
put to each and every one of you?  
What will your legacy be?  
When you have finally cast off these mortal coils?  
When you have crossed the great divide?  
What will your legacy be?  
When you can no longer run life's race.  
When you no longer have a place; when you  
have at last completed the circle round and  
when an escape is no longer to be found.  
What will your legacy be?  
When you walk into the unknown all by  
yourself and alone,  
What will your legacy be?  
Stop for a moment and listen to me and  
answer this question if you can.  
What will your legacy be?  
When you must cross that great divide into  
an area from which none can hide. When  
you, alone, with no one by your side with no  
friend to lead you or to hold your hand?  
What will your legacy be?  
What deeds have you done in your lifetime  
which will be left for you to be remembered by?  
Will it be just a gray decaying tombstone  
standing alone in a cemetery or will it be, as it  
should be some act, some service or some deed  
that will insure that you will be remembered on  
and into the eternity of life's game?  
I ask you. What will your legacy be?  
Will it be the fact that you helped somebody  
along the way, during the time while you were  
here on earth?  
What will your legacy be?  
Will it be similar to the legacies left to our  
generation by people like Harriet Tubman,  
Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, John  
Brown, Ida B. Wells, Mary Bethune and so  
many others who made of their lives a bridge  
for us to cross over on and whose lives were an  
inspiration for us of today to make of our lives  
bridges for future generations to cross over on?  
What will your legacy be?  
Legacy! Legacy!  
Let us stop for a moment and recall some of  
our people who left their lives as legacies to

us, and who always will be honored and  
remembered.  
They were people like:  
Harriet Tubman: her legacy was the work  
that she did on the underground railroad in  
which she brought hundreds of our ancestors  
out of the bonds of slavery; and,  
Frederick Douglass: his legacy was the work  
that he did to help abolish slavery; and,  
fought against the evil of black men being  
lynched in this country; and, Mary McLeod  
Bethune: her legacy was that she worked  
for the education of our youth by starting on  
faith, a small school which grew to be a  
great university; and Dr. Martin Luther  
King's Jr.: his legacy was that he devoted  
his life to fighting for full equality for our  
people; and, Sojourner Truth: her legacy  
was her fight for the liberation of and full  
equality for all women in our country; and,  
John Brown: his legacy was that he  
sacrificed his life for an end to slavery and  
for freedom of our people; and, Bessie  
Coleman: her legacy was that she became  
the first woman in America, black or white,  
to acquire a pilot's license; and, Paul  
Robeson: his legacy was that he was a  
renaissance man. He was a concert and folk  
singer, an athlete and a linguist and that he  
fought for the liberation of all oppressed  
people all over in the world; and poets,  
Langston Hughes and Margaret Walker:  
their legacies were the many inspirational  
poems that they wrote which expressed the  
soul of our people; and Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois:  
his legacy was his life long struggle for the  
liberation of our people in his actions,  
his speeches and his writings; and, Dr. Carter  
G. Woodson: his legacy was the fact that he  
early brought to the attention of the world  
the numerous and significant contributions  
of people of Africa and African descent to  
the attention of the world; and,  
Booker T. Washington: his legacy was the  
fact that he worked for the education of our  
people when he founded and opened  
Tuskegee Institute in Alabama; and,  
George Washington Carver: his legacy was his  
significant and important accomplishments  
in the field of science; and,  
Jean Baptiste Point DuSable: his legacy  
was the fact he, a black man, was the first  
person to settle in the area that became  
Chicago and grew into a great trading  
center from the little post that DuSable of  
African blood started over 100 years ago;  
and, last but not least,  
Charles Gordon Burroughs: his legacy  
was the first black history museum in the  
world which he as co-founder started in his  
living room at 3806 South Michigan Avenue

in Chicago.

This act inspired many who were interested in the recognition and preservation of black history to the point that today there are over 100 black history museums in our country.

These are just a few as you well know.

There are many, many others who like these, left, though their contributions in their lifetime, their legacies as bridges for us to cross over on. So, I ask you, what will you leave as your legacy, as a bridge for those now and those coming on to cross over on. What will your legacy be?

I ask you, what will your legacy be? Do you know? How you thought about it? Do you have an answer? What will you leave as your legacy? If you have no answer, if at this point, you cannot say: Hearken! Listen to me! This is the moment. This is the prime moment for you to think and to get to work and identify what you will leave as your legacy for you to be remembered by. You are here. You are still here, alive and quick and you have time. You have time on your side. You have time to begin even now so get busy and do something to help somebody. To improve the conditions of life for people now and for those who come after. To build institutions to educate and broaden the minds for people now and for those who came after and to make your life a contribution that will be your legacy. Do this and your name will be remembered from now on and into eternity.

What will your legacy be? Hopefully, it will not be just a gray and decaying tombstone. Think now! Act now! To insure that your legacy will be a positive contribution to humanity and you will be remembered, yes you will be remembered, on and on and in eternity as God wills it.

## About Dr. Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs

Internationally prominent as an artist, educator and writer, Margaret Burroughs is renowned as the founder, along with her late husband, Charles, of the DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago. Opened as a modest display in the couple's South Side house in 1961 as the Ebony Museum of African American History, the collected artifacts expressed Burroughs' commitment to exploring and sharing the cultural heritage of African Americans. Born on Nov. 1, 1917, in St. Rose Parish, La., Margaret Burroughs graduated from Chicago Teachers' College in 1937 and then received an MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1948. During the 1940s she taught art in Chicago elementary schools, and published her first children's book, "Jasper, the Drummin' Boy." Burroughs' art works have been exhibited internationally. "I wish my art to speak not only for my people but for all humanity ... my subject matter is social commentary and seeks to improve the condition of life for all people."

The students can watch this video of Burroughs reading her poem "What Will Your Legacy Be?":  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjiME9LUvmg>

## Helen McDonald, "On Nature: Dead Forests and Living Memories"

Increasingly, knowing your surroundings, recognizing the species of animals and plants around you, means opening yourself up to constant grief. Virulent tree diseases hit the headlines, but smaller, less visible disappearances happen all the time. The flycatchers that nested in my neighborhood 10 years ago have vanished; meadows in my hometown that were full of all kinds of life have become housing developments full of nothing but our own. People of a certain age tend to look back elegiacally at the things that have gone: the store you used as a kid that closed, the room that became a memory. But those small, personal disappearances, however poignant, are not the same as losing biodiversity. Brands are not butterflies. Changes to city skylines are not the same as acres of beetle-blasted trees: though they are caught up in stories about ourselves, trees are not ever just about us. They support complex and interdependent communities of life, and as forests slowly become less diverse, the world loses more than simply trees.

For the full essay, see

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/magazine/dead-forests-and-living-memories.html?rref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Fon-nature&action=click&contentCollection=magazine&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection&r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/magazine/dead-forests-and-living-memories.html?rref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Fon-nature&action=click&contentCollection=magazine&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection&r=0)

## Wangari Maathai, Unbound, A Memoir

During my time at the Mount [Mt. Saint Scholastica College], and especially during the national holidays, families would open up their homes to foreign students. I was impressed by their generosity to us Africans at a time when there was so much conflict between the races in the United States. On television we saw protests and black people being cruelly treated by policemen. Even then I did not quite absorb what was happening and the long-term impact of what I was watching. The Mau Mau struggle for justice in Kenya had led me to believe that education was part of the solution to many of the problems black people were facing everywhere. But I was not adequately conversant with the history, politics, and mind-set of American society. / I tended to bury myself in my books, but nonetheless I took an interest in the civil rights movement and learned a lot. I wanted to understand it, and America in all its intricacy, and to see where I as a Kenyan and a black woman fit in. I often wondered why I should come to America to see black people being treated as harshly as I had witnessed in Kenya as the British attempted to crush the Mau Mau movement. While Britain was a colonial power, America was 'the land of the free and the home of the brave'! So how was I to explain such happenings?

(pp. 85-86)

You may need to explain the Mau Mau struggle against British rule, and how WM supported Jomo Kenyatta, who led Kenya to independence from the British in 1963. The following passage describes WM's state of mind when she heard that she had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize:

I faced Mt. Kenya, the source of inspiration for me throughout my life, as well as for generations of people before me. I reflected on how appropriate it was that I should be at this place at this time and celebrating the historic news facing this mountain. The mountain is known to be rather shy, the summit often cloaked by a veil of clouds. It was hidden that day. Although around me the sun was bright and strong, the mountain was hiding. As I searched for her with my eyes and heart, I recalled the many times I have worried whether she will survive the harm we are doing to her. As I continued to search for her, I believed that the mountain was celebrating with me: The Nobel Committee had also heard the voice of nature, and in a very special way. As I gazed at her, I felt that the mountain too was probably weeping with joy, and hiding her tears behind a veil of white clouds. At that moment I felt I stood on sacred ground. / Trees have been an essential part of my life and

have provided me with many lessons. Trees are living symbols of peace and hope. A tree has roots in the soil yet reaches to the sky. It tells us that in order to aspire we need to be grounded, and that no matter how high we go it is from our roots that we draw sustenance. It is a reminder to all of us who have had success that we cannot forget where we came from. It signifies that no matter how powerful we become in government or how many awards we receive, our power and strength and our ability to reach our goals depend on the people, those who work remains unseen, who are the soil out of which we grown, the shoulders on which we stand.

(pp. 292-93)

## Martha Nussbaum's review of *The Examined Life in The Point*

But I have not yet said what philosophy, as I understand it, is. So, let's think about Socrates, as he is portrayed in the early Platonic dialogues, such as Euthyphro, Laches, Lysis, Charmides, and as he describes his own way of life in the Platonic Apology. Socrates has a passion for argument. He doesn't like long speeches, and he doesn't make them. He also doesn't like authority. He takes nothing on trust, not from the poets, not from the politicians, not from any other source of cultural prestige and power. He questions everything, and he accepts only what survives reason's demand for consistency, for clear definitions and for cogent explanations. This also means that Socrates and his interlocutor are equals: the fact that he is a philosopher gives him no special claim, no authority. Indeed, he practices on himself the same techniques of examination and refutation he practices on others. If he is one step ahead of his interlocutors at times, it is only because he knows what he does not know, and they sometimes fancy that they have answers—which soon fall to bits.

What this Socrates says to a democratic culture impatient with deliberation and vulnerable to demagoguery of all sorts is: "Slow down. Think clearly. Do not defer to authority or peer pressure. Follow reason wherever it takes you, and don't trust anything else. Indeed, don't trust even reason: keep probing your arguments for faults, never rest content."

Socrates also teaches this impatient culture a new way of dealing with political or cultural disagreement. Instead of thinking of an opponent as an enemy to be defeated by the sheer power of one's words— what we might call the "talk radio" conception of disagreement— he teaches us to think of opponents as people who have reasons and can produce them. When reasons are produced, it may turn out that the disagreement narrows: the "other side" may accept some of the same premises that "my side" starts from, and then the exercise of finding out where and why we differ will become a subtle search rather than a contest of strength.

American culture, like the ancient Athenian democracy, is susceptible to the influence of authority, to peer pressure and to seeing political argument as a matter of boasts and assertions, of scoring "points" for one's side. That is why Socrates has so much to offer us. I once talked with a student in a business college who had been required to take a philosophy course in which he studied the life and career of Socrates, and learned to argue in a Socratic manner. The instructor included a segment in which students conducted classroom debates on political issues, often being assigned to defend a position that was not their own. He said that this experience taught him a wholly new attitude toward people who disagree with him in politics. He had never understood that it was possible to argue on behalf of a position that he himself did not hold. Learning this, in turn, taught him that people on the "other side" could have reasons and be respected for those reasons. It was even fun and exhilarating to figure out where the source of disagreement lay.

It was this aspect of Socrates— this insistence on deferring to nothing but what one had figured out with one's own reason— that inspired Kant and the philosophers of the Enlightenment, and his deliberative and egalitarian conception of philosophy continues to animate the teaching of philosophy all over our country and in many other countries. In our present polarized and hysterical political culture, we need Socrates more than ever.

See more at: [thepointmag.com/2010/criticism/inheriting-socrates#sthash.abkMzJui.dpuf](http://thepointmag.com/2010/criticism/inheriting-socrates#sthash.abkMzJui.dpuf)

## Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*

Surviving a great tragedy requires love. Respect for human dignity is important, but if people are being asked to heal one another's wounds after a great disaster, they need some stronger reason. They need to be moved to a love of one another and of their common enterprise. Returning to the Whitman stanza [from "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"]...and seeing it now in its poetic and historical context, as a response to a huge national tragedy, we can more fully appreciate Whitman's reasons for insisting, as he continually did, that poetry is a necessary part of the public endeavor. Political rhetoric can itself verge on poetry, swaying people by surging rhythms and evocative images of their common task. Lincoln and King have the emotive capacity. And yet Whitman's poetry adds something crucial: the concrete sensuous grasp of America, its beauty, the beauty of its people—with the shiver down that spine that only great poetic imagery can inspire. The poet-speaker takes his stand in the middle of American: 'Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth, /... in the large unconscious scenery of my

land with its lakes and forests, /In the heavenly aerial beauty (after the perturb'd winds and the storms)' (108-111). He becomes, thus, a kind of national light or eye, seeing peace out of war, and seeing the beauty of the land that makes peace worth fighting for.

(p. 281)

Disgust might be counteracted in the private sphere, without recourse to national ideals. But one way to overcome it is surely to link the narrative of the full humanity of the denigrated group to a story of national struggle and national commitment ... one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s great achievements was to promote this emotional transformation in his audience. If educators can portray the denigrated group as part of a 'we' that suffered together in the past and is working together for a future of justice, this makes it far more difficult to continue to see the other as a contaminating and excluded outsider. In patriotic emotion, citizens embrace one another as a family, sharing common purposes; thus stigma is overcome (for a time at least) by imagination and love.

(p. 211)

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# Animal Ethics I: Peter Singer vs. Bernard Williams

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## Overview

This class and the next one will take the themes of the previous Winning Words lesson plan and expand the discussion to cover more issues in environmental and ethical philosophy, notably the moral standing of non-human animals. Gandhi, Peter Singer, and Martha Nussbaum all agree that nonhuman animals have moral standing and that humans are morally obligated to treat them in certain ways. But the justifications they offer are quite diverse, and the differences among them highlight some fundamental differences in philosophical ethics. Additionally, this class will cover Bernard Williams's rejection of their claims.

## Objectives

In this and the following lesson, students will develop a deeper understanding of philosophical ethics by considering issues related to the moral standing of and moral obligations to nonhuman animals. They will gain a better understanding of the ethics of Gandhi and Martha Nussbaum, and be introduced to two profoundly important and influential philosophers – Bernard Williams and Peter Singer.

## Essential Questions

- What kind of ethical demands should govern the relations between human and nonhuman animals?
- Do nonhuman animals have rights?
- Should their happiness count in the moral calculus as much as human happiness?
- What are the crucial ethical considerations? Rights? Duties? Happiness? Virtue?
- Who is Peter Singer?

## Chimpanzees Are People Too

Stress that this session will be devoted to some very deep ethical questions that will bring out more of the fundamental differences in the ways people think about ethics, the differences between approaches that emphasize universal “happiness” rather than virtues, or rights, or duties, or one’s own happiness as the ethical bottom line. Add that you want to draw out their views on these matters through discussion, rather than simply explaining them abstractly. They will need to think hard about some ethical problems, such as Peter Singer’s article, “Chimpanzees are people, too”, printed at the end of this lesson.

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Winning Words

The Rainbow Core Curriculum

Lesson 10

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## Materials

Copies of “Chimpanzees are people, too” and relevant portions of Peter Singer’s response to Bernard Williams at the 10<sup>th</sup> Dasan Memorial Lectures, as well as the video at

[youtube.com/watch?v=gMZvIZEO1E0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMZvIZEO1E0).

Instructors should read the entire lecture by Peter Singer reproduced below and the Bernard Williams essay, “The Human Prejudice.” They should familiarize themselves with the positions of Gandhi and Martha Nussbaum on the ethical treatment of non-human animals.

## Tips

There is a great deal of important information covered in this lesson plan and the next lesson plan, and it may be better to extend each of these lessons to two sessions, if the conversations sparked merit longer discussions.

## Discussion

Briefly explain that Peter Singer is an important living philosopher who wrote a famous book titled *Animal Liberation*. Ask the students whether they agree with the court's decision. Press them on the difference between the legal and the ethical issue – legal rights v. moral rights. Press them on Singer's claim about the moral personhood of Tommy, something Tommy might have, even if, as is the case, denied legal rights. Do they agree with what Singer says about "moral personhood"? What gives a creature moral – standing? Is it the ability to think, or to suffer? Explain that Singer holds that legal and ethical rights are justified as means to promote the greatest happiness. Press them on how, if Tommy's happiness is to count, they could avoid counting the happiness of dogs and cats, of rats, or ants, etc. Can one draw an arbitrary line about who or what counts ethically? Are zoos like prisons?

## Peter Singer vs. Bernard Williams

Introduce Bernard Williams's defense of speciesism from the lecture by Peter Singer printed at the end of this lesson. (Parts of William's defense are highlighted in maroon.) Allow students to discuss his claims, and explain (or allow students to read) Peter Singer's response to his claims. Ask the students how they feel about the analogy between racism and speciesism. How is it accurate? Can it be mistaken, as Bernard Williams argues? How does it help Peter Singer's argument?

## Closing

Explain that, as they have seen time and again, philosophy can make a very big difference in the "real world." Ask for some quick takes on the most interesting question of the day – what problems/questions did the students find most intriguing and most want to pursue? Ask them to come to class next time prepared to share their considered reflections on these issues and push the conversation even further.

## The Utilitarians

Tell the students that this philosophy, "utilitarianism" has had some very important philosophical defenders: Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Henry Sidgwick. The utilitarians are famous for believing that what one ultimately has most reason to do is to promote or maximize net happiness, counting the happiness of all sentient creatures (creatures capable of feeling pleasure and pain). Ask the students how such a position might differ from the ethical views that they have met with in earlier classes.

## Other Resources

For Bernard William's full defense of speciesism, along with Peter Singer's response, see the following book, available on EBSCOhost through the University of Chicago Library.

Schaler, Jeffrey. *Peter Singer Under Fire: The Moral Iconoclast Faces His Critics*. New York: Open Court, 2011.

## Key Terms

- Legal and moral persons
- Moral Standing
- Greatest Happiness
- Utilitarianism
- Speciesism
- Pleasure and Pain
- Peter Singer
- Bernard Williams

Be sure to thank the students for being part of Winning Words! **Remember, if you have any questions or concerns about what you are doing, you should immediately contact Bart Schultz, Director of the CKP, at [rschultz@uchicago.edu](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu)**

# Chimpanzees are People, Too: The Moral Case for Protecting Their Basic Rights

Peter Singer. *New York Daily News*. Tuesday, October 21, 2014, 6:35 pm

Tommy is 26 years old. He is being held in solitary confinement in a wire cage. He has never been convicted of any crime, or even accused of one. He is not in Guantanamo, but in upstate Gloversville.

How is this possible? Because Tommy is a chimpanzee.

Now the Nonhuman Rights Project has invoked the ancient legal procedure of habeas corpus (Latin for “you have the body”) to bring Tommy’s imprisonment before a state appeals court.

The writ is typically used to get a court to consider whether the detention of a prisoner or perhaps someone confined to a mental institution is lawful. The court is being asked to send Tommy to a sanctuary in Florida, where he can live with other chimps on a 3-acre island in a lake.

Five appellate judges listened attentively this month as Nonhuman Rights Project founder Steve Wise presented the case for Tommy. The judges asked sensible questions, including the obvious one: Isn’t legal personhood just for human beings?

Wise cited legal precedents to show that it is not. In civil law, to be a person is to count as an entity in one’s own right. A corporation can be a legal person, and so, too, can a river, a holy book and a mosque.

The judges have the power to declare Tommy a legal person. That is what they should do, and not only because it is cruel to keep a chimpanzee in solitary confinement. The real reason for recognizing Tommy as a legal person is that he *is* a person, in the proper and the philosophical sense of that term.

What is a person? We can trace the term back to Roman times, and show that it was never limited to human beings. Early Christian theologians debated the doctrine of the Trinity — that God is “three persons in one.” If “person” meant “human being,” that doctrine would be plainly contrary to Christian belief, for Christians hold that only one of those “persons” was ever a human being.

In more contemporary usage, in science fiction movies, we have no difficulty in grasping that aliens like the extraterrestrial in “E.T.,” or the Na’vi in “Avatar,” are persons, even though they are not members of the species *Homo sapiens*.

In reading the work of scientists like Jane Goodall or Dian Fossey, we have no difficulty in recognizing that the great apes they describe are persons.

They have close and complex personal relationships with others in their group. They grieve for lost loved ones. They are self-aware beings, capable of thought. Their foresight and anticipation enable them to plan ahead. We can even recognize the rudiments of ethics in the way they respond to other apes who fail to return a favor.

Contrary to the caricatures of some opponents of this lawsuit, declaring a chimpanzee a person doesn’t mean giving him or her the right to vote, attend school or sue for defamation. It simply means giving him or her the most basic, fundamental right of having legal standing, rather than being considered a mere object.

Over the past 30 years, European laboratories have, in recognition of the special nature of chimpanzees, freed them from research labs. That left only the United States still using chimpanzees in medical research, and last year the National Institutes of Health announced that it was retiring almost all of the chimpanzees utilized in testing and sending them to a sanctuary.

If the nation’s leading medical research agency has decided that, except possibly in very unusual circumstances, it will not use chimpanzees as research subjects, why are we allowing individuals to lock them up for no good reason at all?

It is time for the courts to recognize that the way we treat chimpanzees is indefensible. They are persons and we should end their wrongful imprisonment.

*Singer is professor of bioethics at Princeton University. His books include “Animal Liberation,” “Practical Ethics,” “The Great Ape Project” and “The Life You Can Save.”*

Postscript: The New York State Appellate Court, Third Judicial Department rejected the Nonhuman Rights Project’s application on behalf of Tommy. The Project is currently seeking to appeal to New York’s highest court. [The Appellate Court denied the move for leave to appeal – see [nonhumanrightsproject.org/2015/09/01/statement-re-ny-court-of-appeals-decision-to-deny-motion-for-leave-to-appeal-in-tommys-and-kikos-cases/](http://nonhumanrightsproject.org/2015/09/01/statement-re-ny-court-of-appeals-decision-to-deny-motion-for-leave-to-appeal-in-tommys-and-kikos-cases/)]

## Peter Singer: Ethics and Animals

From the 10<sup>th</sup> Dasan Memorial Lectures, 2007

Throughout Western civilization, nonhuman animals have been seen as beings of no ethical significance, or at best, of very minor significance. Aristotle thought that animals exist for the sake of more rational humans, to provide them with food and clothing. In the book of Genesis, man is given dominion over the animals, and only humans are made in God's image. St Paul asked "Doth God care for oxen?" but it was a rhetorical question – he assumed that the answer was obviously no. Later Christian thinkers like Augustine and Aquinas reinforced this view, denying that the suffering of animals is any reason, in itself, for not harming them or for showing kindness towards them. (The only reason they offered for not being cruel to animals was that it may lead to cruelty to humans; the animals themselves were of no account.)

Most Western philosophers accepted this attitude. Descartes even denied that animals can suffer. Kant did not, but he thought only rational beings can be ends in themselves, and animals are mere means. There were, however, a few exceptions to this dominant attitude. Montaigne challenged human arrogance, and Hume thought we owed "gentle usage", although not justice, to animals. The strongest dissent to the dominant view came from the British utilitarian writers, Bentham, Mill and Sidgwick, each of whom insisted that the suffering of animals matters in itself. Bentham went so far as to look forward to the day when animals will be recognized as having rights. But even the classical utilitarians relegated their comments on animals to the margins of their philosophical writings. Their thinking was influential in leading to laws that sought to prohibit gross acts of cruelty to animals, but it did not lead to reconsideration of the assumption of the priority of human interests when they conflict with the interests of animals.

In the East, the tradition is different. Both in Hinduism and in Buddhism, humans and animals are seen as closely connected. The Hindu idea that we may be reincarnated as an animal links us to animals in a way that is completely abhorrent to the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. Compassion for all sentient beings is at the core of Buddhist teachings. Both the Indian king Ashoka, and the Tokugawa shogun Tsunayoshi, known as the "dog shogun" were far ahead of their Western contemporaries in making laws to protect animals. Nevertheless, in Buddhism animals are thought of as "lower" than humans – it is clearly a negative thing to be born as an animal. And while it would seem that the Buddhist precept of compassion to all sentient beings would lead to radically different practices towards animals, in fact we find that practices towards animals do not differ significantly between Buddhist and Western countries.

Against this background, let me introduce my own ideas. More than thirty years ago, I published an article in *The New York Review of Books* that began with these words:

We are familiar with Black Liberation, Gay Liberation, and a variety of other movements. With Women's Liberation some thought we had come to the end of the road. Discrimination on the basis of sex, it has been said, is the last form of discrimination that is universally accepted and practiced without pretense, even in those liberal circles which have long prided themselves on their freedom from racial discrimination. But one should always be wary of talking of "the last remaining form of discrimination."

In the text that followed, I urged that despite obvious differences between humans and nonhuman animals, we share with them a capacity to suffer, and this means that they, like us, have interests. If we ignore or discount their interests, simply on the grounds that they are not members of our species, the logic of our position is similar to that of the most blatant racists or sexists who thinks that those who belong to their race or sex have superior moral status, simply in virtue of their race or sex, and irrespective of other characteristics or qualities. Although most humans may be superior in reasoning or other intellectual capacities to non-human animals, that is not enough to justify the line we draw between humans and animals. Some humans – infants, and those with severe intellectual disabilities – have intellectual capacities inferior to some animals, but we would, rightly, be shocked by anyone who proposed that we inflict slow, painful deaths on these intellectually inferior humans in order to test the safety of household products. Nor, of course, would we tolerate confining them in small cages and then slaughtering them in order to eat them. The fact that we are prepared to do these things to nonhuman animals is therefore a sign of "speciesism" – a prejudice that survives because it is convenient for the dominant group – in this case, not whites or males, but all humans.

In the early 1970s, to an extent barely credible today, scarcely anyone thought that the treatment of individual animals raised an ethical issue worth taking seriously. There were no animal rights or animal liberation organizations. Animal welfare was an issue for cat and dog lovers, best ignored by people with more important things to write about.

Today the situation is very different. Issues about our treatment of animals are often in the news. Animal rights organizations are active in all the industrialized nations and have had a significant influence in some. A lively intellectual debate has sprung up. (The most comprehensive bibliography of writings on the moral status of animals lists only 94 works in the first 1700 years of the Christian era, and 240 works from

1970 and 1988, when the bibliography was completed. The tally now would be in the thousands.) Nor is this debate simply a Western phenomenon – leading works on animals and ethics have been translated into most of the world’s major languages, including Japanese, Chinese and Korean.

How well has the position I outlined in that first venture into this field stood up to the variety of criticisms and arguments that have been raised against it over the last thirty years?

To assess the debate, it helps to distinguish two questions. First, can speciesism itself – the idea that it is justifiable to give preference to beings simply on the grounds that they are members of the species *Homo sapiens* – be defended? And secondly, if speciesism cannot be defended, are there other characteristics about human beings that justify us in placing much more moral significance on what happens to human beings than on what happens to nonhuman animals?

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The view that species is in itself a reason for treating some beings as morally more significant than others is often assumed but rarely defended. Some who write as if they are defending “speciesism” are in fact defending an affirmative answer to the second question, arguing that there are morally relevant differences between human beings and other animals that entitle us to give more weight to the interests of humans. The late Bernard Williams, however, defended speciesism in an unpublished paper entitled “The Human Prejudice” which will be published in a forthcoming collection of his essays, and also, with my response, in a collection of critical essays about my work to be called *Singer Under Fire*. Since Williams is the most distinguished and able philosopher to have attempted to defend speciesism against my own critique of it, I will spend a little time discussing his defense.

Williams begins with a discussion of different possible views of the place of human beings in the universe. He rejects religious and anthropocentric views according to which the universe revolves around us, either literally or metaphorically. But the problem with such views, he says, is not merely that we overestimate our significance from the cosmic point of view, but that we assume that there is such a thing as a “cosmic point of view” at all. Hence the claim that we have some, but perhaps relatively little, significance, is rejected as a muddle. Instead Williams prefers the Nietzschean view that “once upon a time there was a star in a corner of the universe, and a planet circling that star, and on it some clever creatures who invented knowledge; and then they died, and the star went out, and it was as though nothing had happened.”

It may be that human existence, or even all sentient life on this planet, will one day come to an end, and it will be “as though nothing had happened,” but in fact something will have happened, and there is no muddle involved in thinking that the universe will, timelessly, have been worse if all sentient beings who ever lived on this planet lived in unrelieved misery than it would have been if the lives of all these beings was filled with happiness and satisfaction. Just how much of a difference this will make in any overall judgment of the state of the universe will depend on something we do not know: the proportion of sentient life in the universe as a whole that is to be found on this planet. In the unlikely event that the Earth is the only place in the universe where sentient beings exist, or ever will exist, then our judgment of how well the universe has gone will depend entirely on how well the existence of sentient beings on Earth has gone. But if our planet is only one among billions of planets, each of which had, has, or will have, billions of sentient beings, then how well sentient existence on our planet goes is a very minor factor in any overall judgment of how well the universe goes.

To say this does not involve the quasi-religious claim that the universe actually has a purpose or a point of view. But the denial of a purposeful universe does not compel us to accept that the only sense in which our existence matters is that it matters to us. We can still maintain that our lives, and the satisfaction or frustration of our preferences, matters objectively. At least, there is nothing that Nietzsche, or Williams, says that refutes this possibility. All that is needed is the ability to imagine an impartial observer who puts herself in the position of all of the sentient beings involved, and considers which of various possible universes she would prefer, if she were living all those lives.

Williams’ purpose in arguing against the idea of a cosmic point of view is to suggest that all our values are necessarily “human values.” Of course, in one sense, they are. Since we have yet to encounter any nonhumans who articulate, reflect upon and discuss their values, all the values we have are human, or at least have been developed by human beings from behavioral dispositions we inherited from our pre-human ancestors. Still, the fact that our values are human in this sense does not exclude the possibility that our distinctively human nature includes an ability to develop values that would be accepted by any rational being capable of empathy with other beings. Nor – and this is the most important point - does the human nature of our values tell us anything about what our values can or should be, and in particular, whether we should value the pains, pleasures and lives of nonhuman animals less highly than we value our own pains, pleasures and lives.

Williams, to his credit, does not attempt to argue that because our values are human values, concern for animals is somehow misguided. On

the contrary, he acknowledges that “it is itself part of a human, or humane, outlook to be concerned with how animals should be treated, and there is nothing in what I have said to suggest that we should not be concerned with that.” Instead Williams’s argument is directed to the idea that we do not have to justify having a bias or prejudice in favor of human beings over other animals.

As we have seen, from the very beginning of my writing on these issues, I have drawn parallels between racism, sexism and speciesism. In each of these instances, I argue, a dominant group develops an ideology that justifies treating outsiders in ways that are to its benefit. This ideology also disregards or discounts the interests of these outsiders – they simply don’t matter as much as the interests of the insiders do. The analogy between racism, sexism and speciesism is useful, in part because it leads us to see humans, not as the only beings who matter, but as a dominant group that uses other beings for its own ends. Moreover, the analogy raises questions about the use of mere biological differences as the justification for differences in how much consideration we give to others.

To this analogy, Williams objects that speciesism is not like racism or sexism, and is not morally objectionable. It is true, of course, that the parallel between racism, sexism and speciesism is inexact. Williams gives some of the reasons why this is so. The differences between normal humans and, say, kangaroos, are vastly greater than the differences between people of different races, or between men and women. I said that myself in the first edition of *Animal Liberation*, when I wrote: “There are many areas in which the superior mental powers of normal adult humans make a difference: anticipation, more detailed memory, greater knowledge of what is happening, and so on.” The claim that speciesism is morally objectionable is not affected by such arguments, because I define speciesism as discrimination on the basis of species, not as discrimination on the basis of superior mental powers, even if those superior mental powers typically are possessed by members of our species and not by members of other species.

The most curious aspect of Williams’s discussion of speciesism, however, is that he never discusses the cases in which this discrimination is most evident - cases involving human beings who do not have mental powers who are superior to those of a dog or a pig, but nevertheless are accorded the same superior moral status as other humans. Consider the fact that we are prepared to subject chimpanzees, monkeys, pigs and dogs to painful and lethal experiments, when we regard it as a violation of human rights to subject humans to such experiments – and here, “humans” includes humans who, perhaps because of a genetic abnormality, or an accident at birth, never have had, nor will have, intellectual abilities comparable to these animals. Does this not show a prejudice in favor of humans that has nothing to do with mental abilities or with any of the other features that Williams discusses in distinguishing humans from nonhuman animals? Any one who defends our present treatment of animals needs to respond to this possibility. It is not, after all, a purely hypothetical one. In many instances, the use of severely brain-damaged human beings would be beneficial for medical science, because there are significant differences between species, and results from research on nonhuman animals can be misleading. Yet we refuse to contemplate such research, while continuing all the time to do millions of experiments on nonhuman animals at a higher level of intellectual awareness than at least some of these humans.

When it comes to the crunch, Williams’s last resort in defense of “the human prejudice” is surprisingly crude. He asks us to imagine that our planet has been colonized by benevolent, fair-minded and far-sighted aliens who, no doubt fair-mindedly and on the basis of full information, judge it necessary to “remove us” – that is, kill us. In this situation, Williams says, we should not discuss the rights and wrongs of the aliens’ policies. Even if they are acting fairly and for the greater good of all, the only question, Williams thinks, is: “Which side are you on?”

It’s odd that Williams should first deny the analogy between racism and speciesism, and then resort to “which side are you on?” as the ultimate bulwark of his argument. For it is a question we have heard before. In times of war, or racial, ethnic, religious or ideological conflict, it is used to evoke group solidarity and suggest that any questioning of the struggle is treason. McCarthyists asked it of those who opposed their methods of fighting communism, and now the Bush administration has used it against its critics to imply that by criticizing the policies of the administration, they are giving support to terrorists. “Which side are you on?” divides the world into “us” and “them” and demands that the mere fact of this division transcend ethical issues about what is the right thing to do.

In these circumstances, the right thing to do, and the courageous thing to do, is not to listen to the tribal instincts that prompt us to say “My tribe (country, race, ethnic group, religion, species, etc.) right or wrong” but to say: “I’m on the side that does what is right.” Although it is fantastic to imagine that a fair-minded, well-informed, far-sighted judge could ever decide that there was no alternative to the “removal” of our species in order to avoid much greater injustice and misery, if this really were the case, we should reject the tribal – or species – instinct, and answer Williams’s question in the same way, by being on the side that does what is right.

Before leaving this issue of the parallel between racism and speciesism, I should mention one other argument that has been made in defense of speciesism: the claim that just as parents have a special obligation to care for their own children in preference to the children of strangers, so we have a special obligation to other members of our species in preference to members of other species.

Advocates of this position usually pass in silence over the obvious case that lies between the family and the species. For example, Lewis

Petrinovich, Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Riverside, and an authority on ornithology and evolution, says that our biology turns certain boundaries into moral imperatives – and then lists “children, kin, neighbors, and species.” If the argument works for both the narrower circle of family and friends, and the wider sphere of the species, it should also work for the middle case: race. But Petrinovich is plainly too embarrassed to draw that conclusion. An argument that supported preferring the interests of members of our own race over those of members of other races would be less persuasive, today, than one that allowed priority only for kin, neighbors, and members of our species. But if race is not a morally relevant boundary, why should species be morally relevant?

In 1983, Robert Nozick argued that we can't infer much from the fact that we do not yet have a theory of the moral importance of species membership, because the issue had not, until recently, seemed pressing, and so no one had spent much time trying to formulate such a theory. Since Nozick wrote that, however, many philosophers have given a great deal of attention to the issue of the moral importance, or otherwise, of species membership, but none of them has succeeded in saying anything at all convincing. Nozick's comment therefore has taken on a different significance. It seems increasingly likely that there can be no successful justification of it.

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That takes us to the second question. If species is not morally important in itself, is there something else that happens to coincide with the species boundary, on the basis of which we can justify the inferior consideration we give to nonhuman animals?

Those who regard morality as a kind of social contract say that it is the lack of a capacity to reciprocate. Peter Carruthers, for example, argues that ethics arises out of an agreement that if I do not harm you, you will not harm me. Since animals cannot take part in this social contract we have no direct duties to them. The difficulty with this approach to ethics is that it also means we have no direct duties to small children, or to future generations yet unborn. If we produce radioactive waste that will be deadly for thousands of years, is it unethical to put it into a container that will last 150 years and then drop it into a convenient lake? If it is, ethics cannot be based on reciprocity.

Many other ways of marking the special moral significance of human beings have been suggested: the ability to reason, self-awareness, possessing a sense of justice, language, autonomy, and so on. But the problem with all of these allegedly distinguishing marks is, as noted above in our discussion of Williams, that some humans are entirely lacking in these characteristics and few want to consign these humans to the same moral category as nonhuman animals.

The appeal to our treatment of human beings whose intellectual abilities are not superior to those of nonhuman animals, in order to demonstrate the speciesism of our existing practices towards animals, has become known by the tactless label of “the argument from marginal cases.” It is a powerful argument against the way we currently draw the boundary between beings with special moral status and beings who lack that status, but it also shows that a critique of speciesism has implications for how we think about humans, as well as how we think about animals. These implications some find alarming. I shall discuss them more fully in my next lecture. For the purposes of today's discussion, only a brief summary of the issue is necessary. If we accept the prevailing moral rhetoric that asserts that all humans have the same set of basic rights, irrespective of their intellectual level, the fact that many nonhuman animals – let's say, at least, all normal birds and mammals - are as rational, self-aware and autonomous as some human beings looks like a firm basis for asserting that all animals have these basic rights, including, presumably, a right to life. If, on the other hand, humans with profound intellectual disabilities are as lacking in rights as we currently believe nonhuman animals at the same mental level are, then it seems that we may use these humans in painful and lethal research, as we currently do with nonhuman animals.

Some argue that because in normal conditions human beings are members of a moral community protected by rights, abnormality does not cancel membership of this community. Thus Roger Scruton claims that even though humans with profound intellectual disability do not really have the same claims on us as normal humans, we would do well to treat them as if they did. But slave-owning societies had no difficulty in drawing lines between humans with rights and humans without rights. Nor is it clear why humans are to be elevated above other animals because of the characteristics they normally possess, rather than those they actually have. This argument seems to appeal to a kind of unfairness in excluding those who “fortuitously” fail to have the required characteristics. If the “fortuitousness” is merely statistical, it carries no moral relevance, and if it is intended to suggest that the lack of the required characteristics is not the fault of the abnormal humans, then that is not a basis for separating abnormal humans from nonhuman animals.

I conclude that the debate of the past thirty years has not revealed any fundamental objections to the idea that all sentient beings – all beings with interests – are entitled to equal consideration of their interests. Such a position does, however, face the inevitable difficulties of estimating what those interests are. The interest a being has in continued life – and hence the wrongness of taking that being's life - will depend in part on whether the being is aware of itself as existing over time, and is capable of forming future-directed desires. A being who is incapable of seeing itself as existing over time cannot want to go on living, and so death cannot thwart that desire. To that extent characteristics like self-awareness and a sense of the future do make a difference to how serious a harm is done by killing a being. It might be

objected that even a fish will struggle for its life if it is pulled out of the water. Is this a sign that it is self-aware, and wants to go on living? But the answer is that it is not. A fish pulled out of the water is certainly in distress, because it cannot breathe, and it presumably is suffering as it slowly suffocates. It struggles because of that distress, but it would be wrong to draw from that struggle the conclusion that it knows that it exists over time, and wants to continue to live.) Again, I shall say more about this issue of the wrongness of killing in the next lecture.

I should, however, say something about the boundaries of sentience. My view is that all sentient beings are entitled to equal consideration of interests. By “sentient beings” I mean beings with interests, and the capacity to feel pain is sufficient for a being to have interests – such a being has, at least, an interest in not feeling pain. But which beings have that capacity?

No one can directly observe the consciousness of another being. The only consciousness of which we have direct experience is our own. In all other cases, we can only infer the existence of consciousness by analogy. When other animals are in circumstances that would cause us pain, and they behave much as we would, we have some reason for believing that they are experiencing what we experience when we are in pain. The analogy grows stronger when we discover that they have nervous systems very like ours, transmitting impulses to brains like ours. Add the knowledge that we have a common evolutionary origin – animals are not clever little robots built by toy companies to mimic animal behavior – and it becomes reasonable to assume that they have conscious experiences as we do. So it seems clear that all mammals can feel pain, and there is little doubt about birds either. There has been some controversy about fish, and also about invertebrates. But a recent study of the behavior of fish strongly suggest that they are capable of feeling pain. With crustacea and insects it is more difficult to be confident of this. In some respects, their behavior appears to be more rigidly programmed, in a way that may not require consciousness. But we cannot be sure, and therefore the most ethical course of action is to give them the benefit of the doubt, and avoid, where possible, doing things that will cause them to suffer if they are capable of suffering.

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Some people are skeptical about the impact of moral argument on real life. They believe that moral argument is really a rationalization of what we wish to do, and rarely or never does it change anyone’s mind. The animal movement offers a counterexample to this view. As James Jasper and Dorothy Nelkin observed in *The Animal Rights Crusade: The Growth of a Moral Protest*, “Philosophers served as midwives of the animal rights movement in the late 1970s.” This movement has led to significant reforms in the ways in which experiments are performed on animals, and, especially in the European Union, to laws phasing out some of the worst forms of factory farming, including keeping veal calves and sows in crates so small that they cannot walk or even turn around, and keeping hens in very small wire cages without any kind of nesting box to lay their eggs in, or enough room to perform basic instinctual behaviors. These reforms in the European Union will affect hundreds of millions of animals, and transform large industries – all because of an ethical concern for the welfare of animals. Now it seems that the United States is beginning to follow Europe’s example. Following referenda in Florida and Arizona that have banned some of the cruelest factory farm practices, the largest pig producer in the world, Smithfield, has announced that it will voluntarily phase out keeping its sows in individual crates. Canada’s largest pig producer, Maple Leaf, has now said it will do the same. Now big veal producers in the United States have also announced that they will be phasing out the cruel individual stalls they have been using for veal calves. So here is an area of everyday life in which philosophy has played a truly critical role in society, not only at the level of ideas, but in instigating significant changes in society.

It is noteworthy that this modern philosophical challenge to the way we think about nonhuman animals came from writers in what is sometimes called the “analytic” tradition, that is, the tradition of English-language philosophy. Thinkers in the continental European tradition, the tradition of Heidegger, Foucault, Levinas, and Deleuze, played no role at all. Despite the much-vaunted “critical stance” that these thinkers are said to take to prevailing assumptions and social institutions, this extensive body of thought has largely failed to grapple with the issue of how we treat animals. Why should this have been so?

Of course, it is possible to ask the same question of philosophy in the analytic tradition before the 1970s, and some of the possible answers are common to all philosophical traditions. Just as it was convenient for the slave-traders and slave-owners to believe that they were justified in treating people of African descent as property, so too it is convenient for humans to believe that they are justified in treating animals as things that can be owned, and to deny that they have interests that give rise to moral claims upon us. But there are other, more specific factors involved in the failure of the continental tradition to challenge orthodoxy regarding animals, even when philosophers outside that tradition were actively engaged in debating the issue. One reason may be that the British tradition of Hume, Bentham and Mill already had reached the conclusion that the capacity for experiencing pain and pleasure is what is crucial to moral status. In contrast, the continental tradition, focused more on Kant, made the ability to reason, and with it the capacity for autonomy, the crucial requirement. Still, it is astonishing that so few of Kant’s followers noticed that this gave rise to a problem about the status of human infants and humans with profound intellectual disabilities. Clearly, if the ability to reason or to act autonomously, is what makes human beings “ends in themselves” rather than just the means to the ends of others, then obviously some human beings are just means to the ends of others, not ends in

themselves.

The real lesson to be learned from the failure of continental European philosophy to grapple with the issue of the moral status of animals, is that to adopt a “critical stance” requires us to be critical about vague rhetorical formulations that appear profound or uplifting, but do more to camouflage weaknesses in reasoning than to hold them up for critical scrutiny. Philosophy should be less respectful of the authority of the “great” philosophers of the past, and more ready to punch a hole in inflated rhetoric that lacks clear argument – even if doing so makes us as unpopular as Socrates became when he did the same thing in ancient Athens.

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My original New York Review essay, from which I quoted at the beginning of this lecture, ended with a paragraph that saw the challenge of the animal movement as a test of human nature:

Can a purely moral demand of this kind succeed? The odds are certainly against it. The book holds out no inducements. It does not tell us that we will become healthier, or enjoy life more, if we cease exploiting animals. Animal Liberation will require greater altruism on the part of mankind than any other liberation movement, since animals are incapable of demanding it for themselves, or of protesting against their exploitation by votes, demonstrations, or bombs. Is man capable of such genuine altruism? Who knows? If this book does have a significant effect, however, it will be a vindication of all those who have believed that man has within himself the potential for more than cruelty and selfishness.

So how have we done? Both the optimists and the cynics about human nature could see the results as confirming their views. Significant changes have occurred, in animal testing and other areas of animal abuse. Many big corporations, like Revlon, Avon and Bristol-Myers, used to routinely test their products on animals. They would immobilize thousands of rabbits in wooden boxes, and then, while the rabbits were fully conscious, place ingredients to be used in cosmetics directly into their eyes. Then the technicians would return a day or two later and measure the damage done to the eye. Sometimes very caustic or acidic substances would be placed in their eyes, and the eyeball would blister. One can only imagine how excruciating this must have been for the rabbit. Fortunately, as a result of the activities of the animal movement, these corporations no longer test their products on animals, and the eye test has largely disappeared. Fur is another area in which some progress has been made. In many European countries, and in North America, fur is much less popular than it was, because of publicity about the suffering of animals in the fur industry.

By far the most significant area of animal abuse by humans, however, is in farming, because the numbers of animals used there is so vast. In the United States alone, ten billion land animals are raised and killed for food each year. As I have mentioned, in Europe, whole industries are being transformed because of the concern of the public for the welfare of farm animals. Now this transformation may be beginning to happen in North America. Perhaps most encouraging for the optimists is the fact that millions of activists have freely given up their time and money to support the animal movement, many of them changing their diet and lifestyle to avoid supporting the abuse of animals. Vegetarianism and even veganism (avoiding all animal products) are far more widespread in North America and Europe than they were thirty years ago, and although it is difficult to know how much of this relates to concern for animals, undoubtedly some of it does.

On the other hand, despite the generally favorable course of the philosophical debate about the moral status of animals, popular views on that topic are still very far from the basic idea of equal consideration for the interests of beings irrespective of their species. Most people still eat meat, and buy what is cheapest, oblivious to the suffering of the animal from which the meat comes. Notwithstanding the gains made by the modern animal movement, it has to be admitted that on a global scale, the situation for animals is getting worse, not better. The gains I have mentioned are dwarfed by the huge increase in factory farming in Asia, especially China, but including also many other Asian nations that have an increasing, and increasingly prosperous, middle class. Korea, I am sure, is among them. The overwhelming majority of these factory-reared animals live miserable lives, entirely indoors, never knowing fresh air, sunshine or grass until they are trucked away to be slaughtered. In short, the outcome so far indicates that as a species we are capable of altruistic concern for other beings; but imperfect information, powerful interests, and a desire not to know disturbing facts, have limited the gains made by the animal movement.

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# Animal Ethics II:

## Martha Nussbaum and Gandhi

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Winning Words

The Rainbow Core Curriculum

Lesson 11

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### Overview

This class will take the themes of the previous Winning Words lesson plan and expand the discussion to cover more issues in environmental and ethical philosophy related to the moral standing of non-human animals. Following some reflection on the discussion of Peter Singer v. Bernard Williams, the class will be introduced to the views of Gandhi and Martha Nussbaum on how nonhuman animals have moral standing and humans are morally obligated to treat them in certain ways.

### Objectives

In this session, students will develop a deeper understanding of philosophical ethics by considering issues related to the moral standing of and moral obligations to nonhuman animals. They will gain a better understanding of the positions of Peter Singer and Bernard Williams and be introduced to additional features of the ethics of Gandhi and Martha Nussbaum.

### Essential Questions

- What kind of ethical demands should govern the relations between human and nonhuman animals?
- Do nonhuman animals have rights?
- What does it mean for either a human or a nonhuman animal to “flourish”?
- Which human capabilities are most important and how do non-human animals compare?
- What are the crucial considerations at stake in this determination?

### Interview with Martha Nussbaum

Briefly review the previous discussion, indicating some of the points that you, the instructor, found puzzling, then invite the students to share their further reflections on the ethical standing and treatment of nonhuman animals? Did they have any further thoughts about Tommy the chimpanzee? About Peter Singer or Bernard Williams? Follow the conversation wherever it leads before introducing them to the thoughts of Gandhi and Martha Nussbaum on these issues. Ask them what they think Gandhi and Martha Nussbaum might say about this conversation. Then read aloud the highlighted portions of the interview with Martha Nussbaum printed at the end of this lesson.

### Materials

Copies of the Philosopher’s Zone Interview with Martha Nussbaum. Instructors should read the entire selections from Martha Nussbaum and Gandhi reproduced below. They should familiarize themselves with the positions of Gandhi and Martha Nussbaum on the ethical treatment of non-human animals from other sources as well.

### Tips

There is a great deal of important material covered in this lesson plan – don’t cut off conversation in order to make it through the lesson plan. You can always extend the discussion to a second week.

## Discussion

Ask the students what Martha Nussbaum is saying about utilitarianism and the treatment of nonhuman animals. What is she recommending as an alternative ethical approach? Why would it be wrong to bring into existence a huge number of creatures if the total happiness were thus maximized (even though individual creatures might be less happy than in a less crowded world)? How might Peter Singer reply to these criticisms? What does Martha Nussbaum mean when she says “So there’s a lot more than pleasure and pain that we have to think about”? What is the “more”? Introduce the students to the notion of capabilities, what a creature “can do and be,” explaining that Martha Nussbaum thinks that rights and opportunities are entitlements helping to guarantee a flourishing life for a creature given its distinctive capabilities – human happiness or flourishing is different from chimpanzee happiness or flourishing, but both humans and chimpanzees and other creatures ought to be guaranteed the rights and opportunities that will enable them to develop their capabilities, flourish, and be treated with dignity. Remind them that Martha Nussbaum is a great admirer of Socrates and Aristotle, and that her capabilities approach owes much to them, but also to a philosopher named Kant, who will be discussed in future Winning Words sessions. Finally, ask the students what they think Gandhi would say about all of this.

## Gandhi

In his total commitment to nonviolence, Gandhi always included the animals, stating, “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” Ask students how Gandhi’s nonviolence necessitates ethical treatments of animals. Does nonviolence necessarily include animals? Read more about Gandhi from PETA feature on Gandhi, printed below and found at [peta.org/features/gandhi/](http://peta.org/features/gandhi/)

“October 2 is the birthday of one of the greatest practitioners of nonviolence, Mohandas Gandhi. It is also World Farm Animals Day, a celebration launched nearly two decades ago to stop the suffering inflicted upon billions of terrified animals who are beaten, crippled, and killed on factory farms and in slaughterhouses around the globe – all for nothing more than a fleeting taste of their flesh”

Called the Mahatma (“Great Soul”), Gandhi taught that nonviolence begins with what we eat. “To my mind,” he said, “I hold that the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man from the cruelty of man.

## Closing

Explain that, as they have seen time and again, philosophy can make a very big difference in the “real world.” Ask for some quick takes on the most interesting question of the day – what problems/questions did the students find most intriguing and most want to pursue? Ask them to come to class next time prepared to share their considered reflections on these issues and push the conversation even further.

## Key Terms

- Legal and moral persons
- Moral Standing
- Greatest Happiness
- Utilitarianism
- Speciesism
- Factory Farming
- Pleasure and Pain
- Martha Nussbaum
- Gandhi
- Aristotle
- Flourishing
- The capabilities approach
- Veganism/vegetarianism

Be sure to thank the students for being part of Winning Words! **Remember, if you have any questions or concerns about what you are doing, you should immediately contact Bart Schultz, Director of the CKP, at [rschultz@uchicago.edu](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu)**

## Philosopher's Zone Interview with Martha Nussbaum

**Alan Saunders:** We don't put pigs on trial and gazelles don't sue lions. So it looks as though it doesn't make much sense to talk about animal rights.

But can we do what we like with animals? Or should we recognise not just that they have interests, such as a lively interest in not being eaten, but that they have capabilities; the capability of enjoyment, for example, or of engaging in social life with others of their kind.

Hello and welcome to *The Philosopher's Zone*. I'm Alan Saunders.

Last week, in the first part of our conversation with the distinguished American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, we learned about her take on the social contract. That's the idea that political society is justified because its citizens have decided to give up some of their liberty in exchange for the benefits that can come only from co-operation: roads, defence, that sort of thing.

This idea is contrasted with that of the Utilitarians, like John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham in the 19th century, who hold that a society is to be assessed according to the degree to which it maximises happiness. But what about those who tend to be excluded from these considerations? Those with disabilities, the members of other communities, and non-human animals.

Well it's the last of these, the non-human animals who seem to present the greatest challenge to our ideas. And here, Martha Nussbaum in the second part of conversation, has a good word to say for the Utilitarians.

**Martha Nussbaum:** I think the Utilitarians were really heroic in noticing the problem with animal suffering, and actually the strong point of the theory generally is its focus on pain and suffering. So what Bentham and Mill both saw in their time, was that animals are enduring terrible cruelty at the hands of human beings. Bentham said it was just like the mistreatment of African-Americans under slavery. Bentham said, famously, that the day he thought would come before long, when the curvature of the os sacrum, the villosity of the skin and various other things that he enumerated, would be regarded as just as irrelevant to a creature's entitlements as the colour of the skin.

Obviously, that has not happened. I think that we're getting closer, we are paying more attention to animal suffering, but see I think the first problem with Utilitarianism is that even on the issue of suffering, it's not really adequate because of the way it pools all the lives together into a single calculus. So it says what you're supposed to be producing is the greatest total, or in some versions, average, net balance of pleasure over pain. And so what that means is when you add all the lives together, that if a few at the bottom are doing miserably badly and suffering a lot, that can be, as it were, bought off by the exceeding pleasure and happiness of a lot at the top.

The second problem is that pain, though very, very important, is not the only thing that's important for animals. We can give animals a pain free life, and it might still be a very deprived life. Animals, like humans, need a wide range of different opportunities. Opportunities to move around, to enjoy light and air, to have social relationships with others in their species. And if you think about an elephant in a zoo, an elephant in a zoo might not feel a lot of pain, but if it's in a cramped, narrow space, as is usually the case, then it can't move in the way that's characteristic of elephants, and it certainly can't join in the rich, very intelligent community structure that we now know is characteristic of elephants. So there's a lot more than pleasure and pain that we have to think about.

One more problem is that if you're thinking about creating greatest total of pleasure, then that means that you could bring in to being huge numbers of creatures who have very miserable lives, just so long as those lives are just slightly better than being not worth living at all. And of course that's what the food industry does all the time. So Utilitarianism could actually justify the continued creation of a whole lot of animals who have very miserable lives just on the grounds that each one has a tiny bit of pleasure, and it augments the total.

**Alan Saunders:** In the West, we haven't traditionally regarded animals as members of the ethical community. Why is that, do you think?

**Martha Nussbaum:** I think it's funny and it's complicated, because if you go back to Greece and Rome, we do see that the different philosophical traditions had different views, but most of them did treat animals with a great deal of respect, and had a lot of arguments about vegetarianism and the good treatment of animals. The Stoic tradition was the one that didn't, it made a very sharp separation between humans and the other animals, and that's the one that turned out to be highly influential. So that's part of it, but I think you know, Judaism and Christianity are another part of the problem. Both Judaism and Christianity do make human beings the stewards of nature, and they give them dominion over all the other creatures. And so even though a lot of people in those traditions have had great sensitivity to the plight of animals, it's very different story from Hinduism and Buddhism, where the kinship of all life is a very fundamental issue. And even today, the best court judgment that I know dealing with animal rights, is one from a High Court in the State of Kerala in India, that said that animals are persons in the sense of the Indian Constitution and subject to the right that that constitution guarantees to a life with dignity.

**Alan Saunders:** What was the attitude of the Stoics? I mean did they simply ignore animals, or were they positively antipathetic?

**Martha Nussbaum:** They thought first of all, that animals had no intelligence, so they were just wrong on the facts. They also thought they didn't even have emotions. So this is the view that much later Descartes developed further, and he said that animals were mere automata, and that's basically what the Stoics thought. They didn't therefore have much to say about them ethically, because they just thought Well, they're sort of like plants, you can do with them what you want. They just aren't subjects of moral duties.

**Alan Saunders:** Now it seems essential to contract theory that the agents involved in the contract are capable to relationships that involve reciprocity. Can animals be involved in this way?

**Martha Nussbaum:** Well I think the more we know about many species of animals, the more we see evidence of reciprocity. But of course it's not in a form that you could easily tap to make them full-fledged partners in a social contract, because animals can't speak to us, the kind of reciprocity they have is usually with other members of their own kind only. And so there's no doubt that for the foreseeable future, it's going to be humans who are going to be the makers of the social contract. But of course as I said, that doesn't mean they make it only for themselves, and there's absolutely no reason why animals can't be regarded as the bearers of entitlements.

**Alan Saunders:** What about, I mean one basic aspect of reciprocity is blame. Can I blame animals? I still bear on my wrist scratch marks from a friend's cat, who is basically a very friendly cat, but who does get carried away occasionally. Can I blame the cat for that? Can I say 'That was wrong, that was a bad thing to do', as I would if a human being treated me like that?

**Martha Nussbaum:** Not a cat, no. I think that you know, some animals do seem to have a sense of rule-following, and breaking of rules. Certainly chimpanzees, bonobos, in a different way I think dogs have some kind of comprehension of the notion of breaking a rule, and then elephants, we're finding out surprising things about elephants. They have a concept of the self, so we might find out in time that elephants too, have that, but you know, it's not in the form which would give rise to a very robust notion of moral blame. I don't think we can expect animals to exercise scrutiny over their inclinations and to learn to restrain some and cultivate others, the way we can with a human child who's growing up.

So thinking about the emotions, I want to say that animals can have a lot of the emotions humans have, including compassion, but that their compassion is different. Because human compassion usually involves the idea that this person isn't to blame for the bad predicament they're in, and animals don't have that thought. So sometimes that means they can actually do better than humans, because they, for example, you know Fontane's great novel, *Effi Brist*, with the fallen woman who has been abandoned by her society and her parents and so on because she committed an indiscretion, the only person who has compassion for her is her dog, because he's the only one can't form the notion of blame, and the bad woman. So you know, there I think what Fontane wanted to show is that sometimes blame gets in your way and the person who simply sees suffering and doesn't think so much about blame can sometimes be better off. But anyway more generally, I think we do need the idea of blame. Usually you can expect animals of some sorts to learn to obey rules, but not to have moral blame. I think you can't say it was morally bad of them not to inhibit their inclination to scratch you.

**Alan Saunders:** Actually of course in the Middle Ages, it was not unknown for pigs and other animals to be tried in court. Sometimes executed, but sometimes actually found not guilty. I don't know whether that means that they were regarded as members of the ethical community or whether this was some sort of play-acting.

**Martha Nussbaum:** I think it was kind of a pollution idea that you're going to cast out the source of the harm and you get rid of the pollution. Although it might just have been a diversion too. I know that there was a lawyer, the first female lawyer in India ended up defending an elephant, because she wasn't hired by the usual bar association, and so she ended up working for a Maharajah and he just thought it was fun to put the elephant on trial for trampling the bamboo grove. But I think that was just an entertainment.

But you see I think what's important for a political theory here, is that we cannot expect animals to discipline their predatory inclinations. We do expect humans to grow up and humans have predatory inclinations certainly, but we expect them to learn to sublimate them, and discipline them in other ways. We provide sports as an outlet for the predatory and competitive instincts in the hope that that will make people less likely to beat up on their fellows in their life. Now with animals, you know, we can't do that. We can't tell the tiger, Grow up and learn not to do that. So what do we do to protect the vulnerable creatures? And I don't think that's a trivial issue, because obviously the creature that's torn apart by a tiger suffers just as much as the creature who's shot by a human being's gun. Well, I think we can't expect them not to have pain and suffering if their predatory instincts are frustrated. So we have to think what we can do about that. Some zoos, for example, provide tigers with a weighted ball that they can play with, which can simulate the pleasure of combating a real animal, and they hope that in that way they don't have to give it a live animal to tear limb from limb.

**Alan Saunders:** Do I need to regard animals as members of the ethical community, or can I not simply rely on my instincts of compassion and empathy when it comes to dealing with them?

**Martha Nussbaum:** Our compassion I think, it's a very valuable resource, but it's also very easily led astray. Without it, we're morally blind, but we also know that human beings are very uneven in their compassion. They feel compassion for people they know and not for strangers, they feel compassion for people they approve of, and not for people they disapprove of. So what we need is a morally educated compassion and for that, we need true stories of the lives and the suffering of animals. Our Law School, for example, has pioneered the making of a label to go around all chicken and pork that will simply say to the person in the grocery store, These are the conditions that that animal lived in and we hope that in that way, because people do have compassion, if they combine the compassion with true information, they'll make more ethically responsible choices. They'll be more likely to buy free-range chicken that at least had a decent, non-confined life. Pay a little more for cage-free eggs. So I think that kind of morally educated compassion is extremely important.

**Alan Saunders:** On ABC Radio National, you're with *The Philosopher's Zone*, and I'm talking to Martha Nussbaum about the ethical status of animals.

Now her twist on the Liberal political theory is the capabilities approach. For her, the question to ask is, what are creatures actually able to do and to be? The answer to that question is their capabilities, what they're capable of, what their opportunities and options are. But if we're talking about animals, we're talking about a wide variety of kinds of life. Can the capabilities approach do justice to this variety?

**Martha Nussbaum:** Well I think it's a difficult challenge. You know, I think we need to first of all just know a lot. So any philosopher who's working on this had better be working in partnership with people who are doing real research, because we need to know which animals feel pain, and which ones don't. We now know for example, an amazing thing last year, we know that mice can have a kind of emotional contagion with the suffering of mice, if they have lived with those particular mice before, but not if they haven't. So what that means is mice are much more intelligent, much more complex than we ever knew before, because they can recognise particular pals.

In short, we need to have a lot more knowledge, and I think as time goes on, we're getting that. But then, what we need to do is really re-think the capabilities approach. I mean I made this list up thinking about humans, and I think it's a pretty good starting point to think about animals, but what we really should be aiming at is that each creature, each form of life, should have the opportunity to lead a decent life of the sort that's particular to that species. But I'm betting that a lot of the things on my list, such as health, bodily integrity, emotional health, play, recreation, those are still going to be very important things. There are going to be others like the freedom of religion, and the freedom of political expression that will be obviously less important in most animal lives.

**Alan Saunders:** And this is an issue of justice is it? You say that laws and political principles are made by humans, so we might wonder whether, given that animals haven't been involved in framing the principles of justice, how they can be subjects of them. But you do think this is an issue of justice, do you?

**Martha Nussbaum:** I do. Now it's very difficult to give an account of what makes something an issue of justice, and I think our intuitions are not very definite here. Mine just says Look, where every day's active striving, and the possibility of frustration, so I'm using the Aristotelian notion of a creature as being aimed at a certain kind of flourishing existence, it's there that we can locate the basis of the idea of justice. So I don't really think that there are issues of justice having to do with plants. There are other kinds of issues; issues of environmental quality and so on, but not justice. I don't think there are issues of justice having to do with animals if they're not moving and striving. So the kinds of animals that Aristotle calls stationary animals, like sponges, I don't know that I would say there are issues of justice there. But wherever we have striving, and with that usually goes sentience, I mean I would say almost always the two go hand-in-hand, then we have the beginning of an issue of justice.

**Alan Saunders:** When it comes to our own animal nature, part of my animal nature, and it's a surmountable part of my animal nature, but I haven't surmounted it yet, is a desire to eat animals for food. We do kill animals, not just for food, but for reasons of hygiene, we might lay down rat poison, or because they'd otherwise starve to death in the wild, how do we approach with the capabilities approach, how do we deal with this issue of the fact that we do kill animals and we do so presumably rather more knowingly than they kill each other?

**Martha Nussbaum:** First of all I'm not sure but right now I'm not against all killing of animals for food. Bentham already said, look, what can be a harm for a creature, who depends on the kind of life it lives. Animals don't have plans extending into the future in the same way that humans do, they don't have the anticipation of their own death, so a painless death for an animal that's lived a pretty flourishing life up to a certain point, is not a harm for that animal in the way that a painful death would be or also in the way that a death in infancy would be, and so on. And so what he thought is animals should have a pretty good shot at a flourishing life, but then to kill them painlessly was not necessarily so bad.

Now up till now, I tend to agree with that. I'm very tormented about it and I go back and forth. But that means that I myself would be willing to, I mean I do actually eat fish, I don't eat meat at all, but if the fish has been swimming around in the wild and then it's killed painlessly, and that's a bit if of course, then I would be willing to eat that. R.M. Hare, the British philosopher once wrote a paper called 'Why I'm Only a Demi-Vegetarian,' and he used that very example, and I'm agreeing with him here. And interestingly, Peter Singer said I think this is a pretty good position, and it's a morally acceptable position, and he said, The reason I don't take up that position myself is that I'm a public figure, the public needs something very simple that it can understand; but I do think that's a morally acceptable position.

So that's where I am right now, and I think that's a feasible test, because we can change the food industry, and we can bring it about that the animals that we eat, if we continue to eat animals, are animals who've led a pretty decent life, and then they're killed in a truly painless way. We can also do quite a lot to stop the suffering of animals in what people call 'the wild', but of course every part of the globe is under human dominion now, and we pervasively affect the habitats of all animals, so we can't get off the hook calling it 'the wild'.

We can use, for example, a lot more population control and contraception for humans in Africa, it's the population growth that's driving elephants into smaller and smaller territories but I also favour animal contraception. I think that the idea that we should let nature take its course, is not a particularly useful idea, and nature is always inflicting great torture on animals, humans are not the only ones who torture animals. So you know, animal contraception is also part of the solution. Over-population of elephants is not a good thing, and let's control both populations, and let's try to bring about a peaceable, mutually satisfactory coexistence.

Now sometimes, I do think we're going to still kill rats, we have a right of self-defence and there will still be instances where we haven't been able to control it adequately through contraceptive measures and we faced a threat, and we're entitled to respond. But that should be the rare case, because we should not be in a situation where the rats have multiplied out of all proportion, and then they're invading human habitats.

**Alan Saunders:** Just finally, your object in this book is to arrive at a global theory of justice; I assume that this is still an unfinished project. But looking specifically at our philosophical attitudes to animals, do you think that a century or so from now things will have shifted significantly as they have since the time of Bentham and the early Utilitarians?

**Martha Nussbaum:** Well you know, I think for a long time we were blocked, and Bentham thought of course that it would happen pretty soon, and we didn't see that. But I think now there are two things that have happened. First of all, people are much more aware of what the food industry does and the of the suffering of animals, and I give Peter Singer a lot of the credit for that, and a lot of courageous activists who are working on that. And so the sympathy that people have long had with domestic animals which has been translated into laws protecting domestic animals against cruelty and neglect, is beginning to be extended to more and more animals. So that's the first thing.

The second thing is that there's much more awareness of the whole issue of habitat, and so elephants we used to think Oh well, they just live out in the wild and what can we do about that? But now everyone knows that we do every time we use some ivory, we do something about that; we encourage poachers, but also when we don't protect these large tracts of land, we do something about that. So the control of humans over the natural world is beginning to be understood.

And you see, I actually think that referendum in California where the animals did better than the gays and lesbians is very revealing, because it shows you there's no great blockage in our psychology where animals are concerned. We're ready to have sympathy with the suffering of animals if we only know about it. Now I think quite unfortunately, where sexual orientation is concerned, human beings are very messed up, their deep instincts of disgust and self-protection and so on that get involved in debates about the sex acts of same-sex partners, and so people react with disgust in a way that they don't when they think about the suffering of a chicken, and so it's a very bizarre situation, you know. But all over America we had these victories on some issues, and we had these terrible results for sexual orientation. But so for animals you know, I actually think we're on the right track, and there are no major obstacles to doing much better.

**Alan Saunders:** Yes, I'm not quite sure what the future holds for gay chickens, but -

**Martha Nussbaum:** Yes, right!

**Alan Saunders:** Martha's book, *Frontiers of Justice, Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* is published by Harvard University Press. Details on our website.

Martha Nussbaum thank you very much for joining us.

**Martha Nussbaum:** Oh thank you so much, Alan, it was a tremendous pleasure.

**Alan Saunders:** The show is produced by Kyla Slaven, with technical production by Charlie McKune. I'm Alan Saunders and I'll be back next week with another *Philosopher's Zone*.

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# Free Talk

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## Overview

Having considered many of the key themes of the larger Winning Words curriculum—philosophy, wisdom, the good or best life, Socratic conversation, collaborative inquiry, and ethical reflection, the students should now be encouraged to play a more active role in guiding class discussion. This session is an opportunity for them to raise questions about what was covered in previous sessions, return to points that they found especially interesting, and propose ways to work together as a group on an appropriate philosophical project, whether this be a Socratic dialogue/skit, an Ethics Bowl, or some other activity. Having considered many of the key themes of the larger Winning Words curriculum—philosophy, wisdom, the good or best life, Socratic conversation, collaborative inquiry, and ethical reflection, the students should now be encouraged to play a more active role in guiding class discussion. This session is an opportunity for them to raise questions about what was covered in previous sessions, return to points that they found especially interesting, and propose ways to work together as a group on an appropriate philosophical project, whether this be a Socratic dialogue/skit, an Ethics Bowl, or some other activity.

## Objectives

The students will be encouraged to lead the discussion, raising questions about the material covered in previous sessions and expressing their views on what the most important and interesting points were. They will be allowed to think creatively about writing their own Socratic skit on an ethical topic of their choice, or creating their own “Ethics Bowl” or pursuing their own option. The aim is to get a better sense of the personality of the class as a whole, and how they might work together as a group.

## Essential Questions

- What do you (the student) think of Socrates?
- Philosophy?
- Winning Words?
- What kinds of conversations should you be having?
- What kinds of activities should the group pursue?

## Discussion

Remind the students that as the class moves ahead they will be thinking about Socrates very creatively, trying to imagine what he might have said about the Ethics Bowl problem cases, or how he would have conversed with such figures as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and explain that you want to open up the class for free discussion

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Winning Words

The Rainbow Core Curriculum

Lesson 12

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## Materials

Instructors should come to this session prepared to review or respond to questions about anything and everything from previous Winning Words sessions. They may want to use this opportunity to bring in more thought-provoking art or video presentations. They need to make sure that they have the appropriate means to record the class consensus, and may want to propose another round of the philosophy games used during session 1.

## Tips

Instructors must come to this session prepared to say less and listen more; getting a feel for the class dynamic is the crucial task.

and brainstorming. You could start by inviting them to write down their thoughts on a slip of paper without signing their names, so that you could collect these and share them. And you might want to remind them that by the end of the session they should have made some headway on a group project, and that the options include writing and performing a Socratic dialogue/skit, staging an Ethics Bowl, and other possibilities that will come up in future sessions. You might mention that you will be talking about oral history and doing interviews with older people. Try to give them a sense of what is to come, so that they will be able to think about a broad range of options. Give them some sense of how they might get to do their projects on the campus of UChicago, when all the Winning Words groups are brought together for a big collective event. If the class is up for it, go around the circle asking each individual to share his/her thoughts. Another possibility is to break up into small groups of two or three, with each group going off to huddle for 5-10 minutes before reporting back to the group as a whole. Small group work of this nature can be very productive.

## Closing

Emphasize again that as the class moves ahead during future sessions, they will be thinking about Socrates very creatively, trying to imagine what he might have said about the Ethics Bowl problem cases, or how he would have conversed with such figures as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Do your best to give an honest initial summary of how you will take the input from this session into account in planning the future sessions. If the class has settled on a group activity, more time will be allocated to working on that.

Be sure to thank the students for being part of Winning Words! **Remember, if you have any questions or concerns about what you are doing, you should immediately contact Bart Schultz, Director of the CKP, at [rschultz@uchicago.edu](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu)**