

# Brendan's Glossary of Philosophy

A Working Draft by Brendan Myers  
Cégep Heritage College, Gatineau, Quebec, Canada.  
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Concepts that appear in boldface are cross-references to other entries in this glossary, and/or entries in *Brendan's Outline History of Western Thought*.

For a more in-depth treatment of any of these concepts, I recommend:

- **The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy**: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>
  - **The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy**: <https://iep.utm.edu/>
  - **Encyclopaedia Britannica Online**: <https://www.britannica.com/>
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**A Fortiori.** (Latin: 'From what is stronger'). An indicator word used to show that some **conclusion** follows with stronger reason than another one.

**A Posteriori.** (Latin: 'After experience'). A **proposition** which gains its truth because of evidence, or something that can be observed with our bodily senses.

**A Priori.** (Latin: 'Before experience'). A proposition which gains its truth from its logical structure alone. Some types of **arguments** in **formal logic** are said to be **sound** because of *a priori reasoning*, as are many **theorems** in mathematics.

**Abstraction.** To speak of something 'in abstraction' is to speak of it in a general sort of way, as opposed to speaking of an specific example or observable instance of it; for instance, to speak of the colour blue instead of speaking of a particular object that happens to be blue. What makes this interesting and philosophical is that while we can see blue objects, we cannot see 'blueness' on its own. We know about the property of blueness, separate from what we know of blue objects, through a process of abstraction. The question of whether abstractions have their own reality features in discussions of **Plato's** Theory of **Platonic Forms**, and in **metaphysics**.

## **Absurdism.**

- [1] The worldview, introduced by **Albert Camus** and related to **Existentialism**, which holds that any act of self-creation or act of making meaning out of one's own free will, must nevertheless remain without meaning anyway, even for the person who did it. But we must make the attempt nonetheless, knowing that it is 'absurd' to do so.
- [2] An *absurdity* is something clearly false, contradictory, or ridiculous; something that fails to make sense or meaning.

**Act Vs Rule Utilitarianism.** Two different ways of conducting a **Utilitarian Calculus**. In 'Act Utility', you calculate how much utility will likely follow from any given choice you might make; this was **Bentham's** position. In 'Rule Utility', introduced by **John Stuart Mill**, you calculate the utility that will follow from the observance of various rules. And if the rule turns out not to produce a net result of more benefit than harm, then you change the rule. After all, in Utilitarianism, it's not the rules you care about. It's the **utility**.

**Aesthetics.** The branch of **philosophy** which considers questions about art, music, emotions, and feelings.

**Akrasia.** (from Greek: 'lack of strength', 'lack of self-control'). The quality of character possessed by someone who knows what to do but does not do it; moral cowardice; weakness of the will.

**Aletheia.**

[1] From the Greek: revealing, disclosure, un-hiddenness; the opposite of *lethe*, 'forgetfulness' or 'oblivion'.

[2] A theory of **truth** introduced by **Rudolph Bultman** and popularised by **Martin Heidegger**.

**Alienated Labour.** A principle in **Marxism**. In a **capitalist** system, working class people, especially industrial workers, are forcibly separated from their own labour, from the products of their labour, from the buyers of their products, and from each other. This, **Marx** asserts, has political as well as existential implications for workers (all of them bad).

**Alternative Facts.** A neologism coined in 2017 by a spokeswoman for US President Trump, intended as a euphemism for lies, half-truths, **Disinformation**, and/or **Bullshit**.

**Altruism.** Generosity, kindness; the position in ethics that one ought to do that which benefits others.

**Analytic Proposition.** A proposition which expresses only one thought; a simple sentence having only one meaning, and which is either true or false. (See also: **Synthetic Proposition**.)

**Analytic Tradition.** One of two dominant paths of Western philosophy in the twentieth century, characterised by Pragmatism, Empiricism, Epistemology, and Utilitarian ethics. (See also: **Continental Tradition**.)

**Animism.** In religion:

[1] The belief that everything in the world has an invisible, immaterial spirit dwelling in it, and with it, and as part of it.

[2] The belief that we share the world with a population of incorporeal spiritual beings like angels, ghosts, ancestor-spirits, and gods.

Although theologians don't talk about it much anymore, animism is the historical and logical foundation of all religious thought and feeling.

**Apollonian / Dionysian.** In Friedrich **Nietzsche**: two contrasting aesthetic cultures, and in general two contrasting approaches to life. The Apollonian culture aims for rationality, order, harmony, dreaminess, and peaceful; the Dionysian is chaotic, passionate, spontaneous, energetic, and dynamic. Though he believed both had their merits and flaws, he also believed Dionysian culture was more closely associated with life and the **will to power**.

**Aporia.** A state of puzzlement, confusion, or impasse; a problem in logic which appears, **prima facie**, impossible to solve. (See also: **Pickle**.)

**Arete.** Greek for 'excellence', 'virtue'. Major concept in **Areteology** / virtue ethics.

**Areteology.** Also known as **virtue ethics**: A branch of ethics which emphasizes character values and moral identity; the account (*logos*) of what is excellent (*arete*) in human affairs. The basic promise of areteology is that by living a life of moral excellence one may be successful in the pursuit of **eudaimonia**. (See also: **Logos, Ethics, Doctrine of the Mean, Ataraxia**.)

**Argument.** A collected series of statements intended to establish a proposition; any two or more propositions in which there is at least one premise, and the premise(s) lead to a Conclusion according to logical rules. A typology of common arguments is given in Chapter 5 of *Clear And Present Thinking, 2nd edition*.

**Argumentation.** The process of debating the worth and merits of a proposition.

**Art World Theory.** In **aesthetics**: the idea that an object is a work of art when it is treated as art by a social, economic, and institutional context called an 'art world': ie., a context of galleries, dealers, reviewers, buyers, art auction houses, school textbooks, art historians, critics and their publications, and so on. You might like to believe there is something intrinsic to the work itself, or the artist's process, or something like that, which makes something art. But it's terribly hard to figure out what that something is; and in its absence 'art world theory' often becomes a default theory.

**Ataraxia.** In ancient Greek philosophy: tranquility, peacefulness, enlightenment; literally, the state of being without disturbance. A psychological and spiritual goal for **Stoics** and **Epicureans** alike. Related term: *apatheia*, 'to be without passion'. (See: **eudaimonia**.)

**Atman.** In Hinduism: the higher self; the part of you which is part of **Brahmin**, and participates in the being of Brahmin.

**Attribute.** In **Scholastic** philosophy: a property of a **substance** which, if changed, would not necessarily render the object any different in terms of its **essence**; a property of an object which could have been different, and its change would not change the object's essence.

**Authenticity.** Individualism tends to come together with the claim that you are in some sense called, even *required*, to find an expression of your identity and selfhood which is not reducible to your social role (ie. your being a student, or a sibling, or a taxi driver, etc.). Thus when we behave authentically, we do so from our own individual will. (See: **individualism**, **humanism**, **existentialism**, **absurdism**, **Bad Faith**.)

**Avidya.** In Buddhism: ignorance, the works and efforts people do to oppose knowledge, the harm caused by that opposition, ignorance of moral and philosophical truths leading to suffering.

**Axiom.** In mathematics: a first principle which perhaps cannot be proven, or whose proof involves simply looking at it; a principle which is a necessary condition for doing any further mathematical work. **Euclid's** five postulates and five common notions are all axioms in this sense. (See also: **Theorem**, **Lemma**.)

**Bad Faith.** In **existentialism**: the attempt to deny one's own freedom; the words or actions we might do to pretend that we have no choices to speak or act otherwise; an explanation for one's actions or choices which refer to a determining force other than one's own free will (such as peer pressure, legal obligations, a psychological disposition, etc.). The opposite condition is **Authenticity**.

**Begging the Question.** Also known as Circular Fallacy. A type of logical **fallacy** in which a conclusion says exactly the same thing as the premises; an argument which presupposes its conclusion instead of providing reasons for it.

**Bias.**

[1] A set of judgments, or a way of seeing things, inherited from one's **worldview** or one's **ideologies**, which makes **objectivity** more difficult.

[2] A belief or a value to which one continues to subscribe even after that belief or value has been shown to be wrong, harmful, illogical, etc. Bias can also imply unfair judgment or contempt of something.

(See also: **Observer Bias**, **Mere Repetition Bias**.)

**Biconditional Statement.** In logic: two propositions which are treated as a single proposition, joined together by the relation of 'if and only if'.

**Bodhisatva.** In Buddhism: a saint; a spiritual being who has taken the Bodhisatva Vow: the promise to not enter the final stage of **nirvana** until first helping everyone else reach nirvana.

**Boolean Operators.** The three main logical operators 'And', 'Or', and 'Not', which are used in the fields of analytic logic and computer programming. Did you see how I used one of them, right there?

**Brahmin.** In Hinduism: the ultimate unity of the world, and the metaphysical ground of all things.

**Brain in a Vat.** A thought experiment invented by **Hilary Putnam**, concerning the trustworthiness of our physical senses, and whether we can know what reality is. Imagine that a mad scientist abducted you while you were sleeping, and surgically removed your brain. He places it in a vat full of nutritious chemicals, and connects it to electrodes controlled by a computer, which simulates the signals of your eyes and ears and other physical senses. Assuming there are no obvious glitches or faults in the simulation, how will you know that you are not seeing the real world?

**Buddha.** In Buddhism (obviously!): 'awakened one'; a 'victor' over **Samsara** and the **Veil of Maya**; one who has achieved **Nirvana**. Siddhartha Gautama himself is considered the first Buddha, and it's usually him people mean when they speak of 'The' Buddha. But he's not the only one, not the first, and not the last.

**Bullshit.** A discussion of events or facts about which the speaker lacks knowledge; a discussion of events or facts in which the speaker doesn't care whether his claims are true or false. Isn't it fun to include the word 'bullshit' in a serious academic glossary?

**Bundle Theory.** An argument introduced by **David Hume**, which suggests that **substances** (in the sense of **Scholastic** philosophy) don't exist. Try to imagine an object with no **attributes**: no size, shape, mass, colour, smell, etc. You can't. It follows that objects are nothing other than a bundle of attributes; there are no substances underlying the attributes.

**Burden of Proof.** The responsibility to bring forth the evidence or the **argument** that some proposition is true or false. This responsibility normally falls on the person who has advanced the proposition. (See also: **Extraordinary Claims**.)

**Capabilities Approach.** A theory of social **justice**, proposed by **Amartya Sen** and **Martha Nussbaum**, which holds that society should organize to provide and/or protect the following basic capacities for all its members: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; sense, imagination, and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation with others; concern for other species; play; and control over one's environment. (See also: **Civil Commons theory**.)

**Capitalism.** A **modern** system of economics in which the means of production (factories, farms, workshops, machinery, vehicles, etc) are owned by private individuals or by corporations, not by governments; and in which people may produce, buy, and sell almost anything at all. Supporters often claim capitalism provides more freedom to people than any other system of

economics. Its critics, **Karl Marx** among them, observe that the freedom it provides is available only to those who can pay for it. (See: **Adam Smith, Invisible Hand, Self-Interest, Liberty**. For criticism: see **Contradictions Of Capitalism**.)

**Cartesian Circle.** A property of **Descartes'** version of the **Ontological Argument for God**, which appears to be a case of the fallacy of **begging the question**.

**Categorical Imperative.** A principle of ethics proposed by **Immanuel Kant**: 'Act on that maxim which you can at the same time will that it shall be a universal law.' (See also: **Deontology, Practical Imperative, Ethics**.)

**Categorical Logic.** In formal logic: A branch of **Deduction**, involving **Syllogisms** and **Categorical Propositions**.

**Categorical Proposition.** A type of proposition which has two parts: A Subject (the thing under discussion) and a Predicate (a property attributed to the subject, or a classification in which the subject belongs), united by the copula verb 'is/are'. (See also: **Proposition, Categorical Logic, Formal Logic**.)

**Chinese Room.** A **thought experiment** by **John Searle**, which considers whether computers are conscious, or even intelligent. Imagine there is a locked room with two windows on opposite walls. There is a girl in the room who has a book about how to manipulate the symbols of Chinese writing, but she does not know how to read or speak Chinese. People outside the room write questions (in Chinese) and insert them into one of the windows. The girl receives the papers, and using the rules of her book she changes them into new symbols, and then sends the new symbols out the other window. The people outside received the changed symbols and find that their questions were answered. Does the girl in the room understand Chinese or not?

**Circular Fallacy.** See **Begging the Question**.

**Civil Commons Theory.** A theory of **justice** developed by **John McMurtry, Elinor Ostrom**, and others. A civil commons is any material or intangible resource that people depend on for their life, livelihood, freedom, dignity, health, happiness, and the fulfillment of other similar human needs, including the exercise of their individual freedoms and **human rights**, and which is managed and governed by the people who depend on it. As defined by McMurtry: the civil commons is "society's organized and community-funded capacity of universally accessible resources to provide for the life preservation and growth of society's members and their environmental life-host."

**Cognitive Dissonance.** The condition of unease or discomfort arising from holding two contradictory thoughts at the same time. Most people will try to resolve this dissonance as

soon as it arises, usually by rejecting one of the two thoughts regardless of its soundness or the implications of rejecting it.

**Coherence Theory Of Truth.** The position, first formulated by **Francis Herbert Bradley**, that a statement as true when it participates in a kind of community of ideas, a worldview, a *system*: “The general view, which others and myself may be said to have inherited [from Hegel], is this – that the criterion [of truth] lies in the idea of system. An idea is true theoretically because, and so far as, it takes its place in, and contributes to, the organism of knowledge. And, on the other hand, an idea is false of which the opposite holds good.” (See also: **Theory of Truth.**)

**Colonialism.** In politics and economics: the practice of (a) an economically or militarily powerful nation extending its influence over the lands, resources, and/or peoples of other nations, (b) possibly to the point of capturing, dominating, expelling, or otherwise oppressing them, while (c) **framing** themselves as members of a biologically or intellectually or culturally superior, historically destined, and/or God-favoured nation or race, who is (d) therefore justified to extend their influence that way, and (e) also justified to treat the captured people as **subalterns** or as slaves. There are, of course, other ways to define this concept, which give greater or lesser emphasis to one or more of the five points noted here. But I hope you can see the general idea, as well as the overlap with historical movements like empire-building, and imperialism. Colonialism was an essential feature of **mercantilism**; some scholars and activists believe elements of colonialism can also be found in **capitalism** and in **Enlightenment** values. Some 20th century **communist** nations, notably the Soviet Union, also behaved like colonial empires.

**Commodity Fetishism.** A principle in **Marxism**. It's the idea that in a **capitalist** system, people believe that certain material products have objective properties which they do not in fact possess; properties like the increase of their market value over time. Marx argued that these properties arise from human relations, not from the objects themselves.

**Communism.** A system of economics and politics in which the means of production are communally owned by the workers. (See: **Marxism, Socialism, Contradictions of Capitalism**)

**Conclusion.** The ‘point’ of an argument; that which a speaker wishes to persuade others to believe; a statement which is logically supported by one or more premises.

**Conditional Statement.** Two propositions that are treated as a single proposition, having been joined together by the relation of ‘if’ [first proposition], ‘then’ [second proposition].

**Confirmation Bias.** The preference for evidence which confirms one's assumptions; the deliberate resistance of evidence which goes against one's assumptions.

**Conflict of Interest.** A situation where some person or organization has multiple interests (plans, duties, wants, etc), some of which are incompatible with each other; a situation where one interest may improperly influence how someone makes decisions regarding another interest. For example, a manager might hire a family member to a job, instead of a better-qualified candidate. The interests in conflict here are his professional duty to his employer, and his family responsibility. The presence of a conflict of interest can serve as a **prima facie** reason to cast reasonable doubt upon someone's decisions. Corporations, government agencies, and the like, often have internal **ethics** policies that require someone to excuse themselves from a decision-making process when a conflict of interest arises.

**Conjecture:** a **hypothesis** or a **theorem** that is widely believed to be true but has not yet been proven.

**Conjunction.** In logic: two propositions that are treated as a single proposition, having been joined together by the Boolean Operator 'And'.

**Conservatism.** (adj: conservative.) A political **ideology** which prizes the values of tradition, social stability, social hierarchy, and resistance to change. 'Classical' conservatism comes from the Irish philosopher **Edmund Burke**, who believed that people are innately terrible, and so they require "a sufficient restraint upon their passions". Burke also believed it is the responsibility of cultural and political institutions like families, churches, and the "proper chieftains" and "great oaks" of society (ie. strong, wise, and stable political leaders) to provide that restraint. Modern conservatives also reject the idea of a **tabula rasa** for human nature, and reject the idea that social change can improve people's natures or improve the human condition. In this, they differ from liberals and from socialists.

Like other political worldviews, there is no single form of conservatism. Some are more religious, nationalist, and/or **capitalist** than others. Some overlap with **libertarianism**, while others believe it is justifiable to use the powers of government to impose various moral values on society. Some are happy to support scientific research and the introduction of new technologies into society. Some are so resistant to change that they will deny scientifically observable realities, and/or oppose efforts to solve pressing national or global problems like climate change.

**Conspiracy Theory.** An explanation for events that depends on a story about a nefarious organization working in secret to harm the public and/or conceal facts from the public. The evidence for this story tends to be vague, ambiguous, explainable in simpler terms, or otherwise open to doubt. (See also: **Extraordinary Claims**, **Reasonable Doubt**.)

**Continental Tradition.** One of two dominant paths of Western philosophy in the twentieth century, characterised by **Existentialism**, **Phenomenology**, **Hermeneutics**, and **Postmodernism**. See the entry in the Outline History.



**Contradictions of Capitalism.**

- [1] Various arguments raised by critics of **capitalism**, which show how the logic of capitalism itself must necessarily lead to extreme poverty, extreme wealth inequality, periodic destructive boom-and-bust cycles, and even warfare; possibly eventually resulting in the disintegration of capitalism itself and its replacement by something else.
- [2] An umbrella term for various **Marxist** principles including **alienated labour**, **commodity fetishism**, **fictitious capital**, and others.

**Contradictories.** In logic: two propositions which cannot both be true at the same time, but also cannot both be false at the same time. (See also: **Contraries**, **Subcontraries**, **Subalterns**.)

**Contraries.** In logic: two propositions which cannot both be true at the same time, although they can both be false at the same time. (See also: **Contradictories**, **Subcontraries**, **Subalterns**.)

**Conversational Implicature.** See Implicature.

**Correspondence Theory of Truth.** A theory of truth which holds that a statement is true if it refers to an observable state of affairs. (See also: **Theory of Truth**.)

**Covenant.** In Judaism: a contract-like relationship between God and all humanity, in which we humans are asked to follow laws of **justice** like the Ten Commandments, **Tikkun Olam**, etc., and in return God provides various benefits including peace, safety, good fortune, etc.

**Cow in the Field.** A **thought experiment** by **Edmund Gettier**, which considers whether it's possible to know something accidentally. Imagine that a farmer is worried that his cow has wandered away. He asks a neighbour to check and see if it's still there. The neighbour checks, and sees the cow, then reports to the farmer that the cow is fine. Later, the neighbour checks again and notices that the cow was hidden behind some bushes, and that what he thought was the cow when he checked the first time was actually some black-and-white plastic bags that got stuck on a wire fence. So, even though the cow was actually in the field, was the neighbour right when he told the farmer it was there? Is the farmer right to believe it's there?

**Critical Theory.** A branch of Continental social-political thought, created by the founders of the Frankfurt School (see the Outline History), which aimed to bring the concerns of philosophy together with those of the social sciences. There is no single method or hypothesis shared by all its practitioners. But we may generalize to say that most practitioners regarded social and cultural forces as more decisive than individuals in the process of cultural change; and that they aimed to understand, analyze, critique, and sometimes to dismantle, unjust power relations.

**Critique.** A method of logical investigation, pioneered by **Kant**, which aims to expose the various conditions for the possibility of some belief, concept, or practice.

**Cultural Relativism.**

- [1] In philosophy: The belief that an idea is true, right, etc., because it is generally believed by the members of some culture or society. Most philosophers treat cultural relativism as a bad **thinking habit**. (See also: **Relativism, Personal Belief Relativism**.)
- [2] In social science: The belief that everyone judges what is true, right, etc., according to their own culture(s), and no one stands outside of all cultures in a position of pure objectivity or neutrality. Stated as a fact like this, it is obvious. It is not really possible to do sociology or anthropology without assuming this position as part of one's working methodology, lest one risks descending into **colonialism**.

**Culture Jamming.** In Information Theory: a form of political protest and public activism, pioneered in the 1990s by *Adbusters* magazine. It involves inserting anti-consumerist messages into mainstream media, in such a way that the observers might not necessarily grasp that the message is fake.

**Dasein.** Being-in-the-world; the particularly human experience of existence. A concept in metaphysics and **phenomenology** first proposed by **Karl Jaspers**, reframed and popularized by **Martin Heidegger**.

**Deduction** (adj.: Deductive). A type of argument in which, if the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true. (See also: **Induction, Argument**.)

**Deep Ecology.** An environmental worldview crafted by **Arne Naess** and **George Sessions**, which holds that the ecology which surrounds every person is part of that person's larger, deeper, 'green self'. Therefore, so the argument goes, we should care for the environment, and protect it from exploitation and damage, with the same sense of moral priority as we care for and protect ourselves.

**Deepity.** A statement that sounds wise and important but actually has little or no meaning; a statement that has two meanings, one of which is true but trivial, and the other one sounds wise and important but is actually false. (See **Daniel Dennett**.)

**Deism.** A philosophical-religious worldview which arose during the **Enlightenment**, and which rejected the rituals and mythologies of Christianity, but aimed to preserve the idea of God as the creator of an orderly and rational universe. Deism holds that God created the world, set in motion the laws of physics and chemistry, etc., and then stepped back, to remain uninvolved in the day-to-day maintenance of the world.

**De Morgan's Theorems.** In logic: a set of theorems in formal **logic** that show how some types of complex propositions can be swapped with simpler ones without loss of meaning. (See also: **Formal Logic**.)

**Deontology:** A branch of ethics in which the right thing to do is that which is in accord with one's moral duty as determined by reason. The rightness of wrongness of the action is intrinsic to the action itself, and not its consequences. The duties may arise from nature, pure reason, God, or a similar foundation of moral authority. (See: **Categorical Imperative, Practical Imperative, Prima Facie Duties, Human Rights**; see also **Immanuel Kant, W.D. Ross.**)

**Design Argument.** One of **St Thomas Aquinas'** "Five Ways to God". (See: **Watchmaker Analogy, Fine-Tuning Argument.**) A short version of the argument goes like this:

We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously, but designedly. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God. (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Article 3, Question 2)

**Dharma.** In Hinduism and Buddhism: the law, the moral way of living. In most branches of these religions, dharma involves nonviolence, the fulfillment of the duties of one's caste, and a vegetarian diet. For priests, monks, sadus, etc., dharma may also require celibacy. (See also: **satyagraha.**)

**Dialectic.**

- [1] In ancient Greek philosophy: a conversation between two or more people who hold different opinions on a given topic, but who work together for intellectual progress, discovery, and truth in relation to that topic. (See: **Socratic Dialogue, Argumentation.**)
- [2] In **Continental** philosophy: A method of **reasoning**, derived from **Hegel** and **Marx**. In this method, we study and interpret world-processes with special attention to the various mutually opposed or even contradictory forces involved in the ongoing behaviour and development of that world-process over time.

**Dialectic of the Absolute.** A philosophical system developed by **G.W.F. Hegel**, in which all of history is framed as the work of the world-soul becoming aware of itself and, in a series of iterations, expressing itself with increasing clarity, completion, and perfection.

**Difference Principle.** A theory of **justice** proposed by **John Rawls**, which holds that any inequalities in a society's distribution of wealth and power must be acceptable to whoever gets the smallest share. The most just distribution is that which gives as much benefit as it can to society's worse-off members. (See also: **Thought Experiment, Original Position**, Matthew 25:40.)

**Digital Darkness, The.** In **Information Theory**: an event postulated for the future, in which technological changes in information technology will make information stored on obsolete tech impossible to retrieve. This can result in the loss of history and knowledge.

**DIKW Model.** In **Information Theory**: a theory of how information transforms over time from data, to information, to knowledge, to wisdom; also, the model poses various questions about how that transformation actually occurs. In this theory, knowledge and wisdom are products of data-processing, and wisdom is the ability to increase effectiveness. (See: **Shannon-Weaver Model**.)

**Dilemma.**

- [1] In logic: Ambiguous propositions; an argument with two or more possibilities which nonetheless lead to the same (usually unwelcome) conclusion.
- [2] In game theory: a type of decision where the players have to analyze the possible options and consequences of their decisions more carefully, and where there may well be no optimal choice. Dilemmas can be the kind of decision that a player must make while holding incomplete information about the state of a game. The **Prisoner's Dilemma** is a famous example of this.

**Discourse Ethics.** Principles of discussion or debate designed to ensure that argumentation is friendly, progressive, enlightening, and inclusive, and to prevent discussions from becoming unproductive shouting matches. (See: **Paradox of Tolerance**, **Flouting a Maxim**; see also **Jurgen Habermas**, **Paul Grice**)

**Disinformation.** A form of propaganda that deliberately lies to the audience, in its content and/or its apparent source; a form of Propaganda that aims to capture its audience in a fictitious reality. (See: **Fake News**.)

**Disjunction.** Two or more propositions that are treated as a single proposition, having been joined together by the **Boolean Operator 'Or'**.

**Doctrine of Dependent Origination.** In Buddhism: a teaching which explains how reincarnation, **samsara**, and existence itself, depends on ignorance. Thus, if someone were to educate themselves in the Buddhist way, banishing ignorance, then their suffering would cease, and the way to **nirvana** would be clear.

**Doctrine of No-Soul.** In Buddhism, the idea that there is no such thing as a permanent self; that the **atman**, and indeed one's whole sense of being a self, is an illusion, a feature of the **Veil of Maya**. What we think of as a self is a temporary assembly of five elements, called the Five Skandhas: form, sensation, perception, the predispositions (ie **karma**) and consciousness. (See the Outline History entry on **David Hume** for remarks on how this idea may have influenced him and his **Bundle Theory**.)

**Doctrine of Original Sin.** See: **Original Sin.**

**Doctrine of the Four Causes.** A procedure of scientific reasoning developed by **Aristotle**. It involves explaining things and events in terms of four 'causes': Efficient, material, formal, and final. (See: **Science**. See also: the entry on Aristotle in the Outline History.)

**Doctrine of the Mean.** A theory proposed by Aristotle which states that for every virtue there are two vices: A vice of not enough of the corresponding virtue, and a vice of too much of it. (See also: **Areteology**.)

**Doomsday Argument**, also called the **Carter-Leslie Doomsday Argument**. Introduced by **John Leslie** and Brandon Carter in 1983. It is an inductive, probabilistic argument which provides strong reasons for believing that a major collapse of human civilization may be much closer to our present time than is normally estimated. Here's an explanation in Leslie's own words:

Consider next your observed position in time. If the human race is going to last for at least a few thousand more centuries at the present size... then you are very exceptionally early among all the humans who will ever have been born, perhaps among the earliest 0.01 per cent. But if the race is instead due to end shortly... then you are fairly unexceptional. Because of the recent population growth, roughly 10 per cent of the humans who have been born up to date are still alive today. Now, shouldn't this influence you? Mayn't the rather unexceptional position which you'd have occupied in human population history, if that history were soon to end, give you some grounds, reinforcing those got through considering the ozone layer and H-bombs, for thinking it will indeed end fairly shortly?<sup>1</sup>

**Doubt.** See: **Reasonable Doubt**. See also Chapter 8 of *Clear And Present Thinking 2nd Edition*.

**Distributive Justice.** A branch of **ethics** and **justice** which studies how material and intangible goods like wealth, honour, etc., should be distributed among the members of a society. (See: **John Rawls**.)

**Dunning-Kruger Effect.** A form of **observer bias** in which unskilled, poorly-skilled, or incompetent (at some task) people believe that they are smarter or more competent at that task than they really are.

**Echo Chamber:** A social world in which ideas, voices, and **information** from outside is proactively discredited, often leading to the creation of a hostile attitude toward outsiders; a social world whose members constantly repeat and reiterate the same ideas, leading to an artificially inflated sense of their importance. (See also: **Epistemic Bubble**.)

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<sup>1</sup> J. Leslie, *The End of the World* (London: Routledge, 1996) pg. 187

**Ecofeminism:** a branch of environmental ethics created by Karen Warren and Vandana Shiva (see above) which holds that the oppression of women goes together with various forms of natural resource exploitation. They follow the same substantial value program, use the same language, etc. After Warren and Shiva's initial publications, ecofeminism branched out of philosophy and became interdisciplinary. Ecofeminism also explores ways that feminist values might help solve environmental problems, from local resource management to global climate change, and how feminist values could change humanity's relationship with the Earth.

**Eco-modernism:** a worldview that holds that the climate crisis can be solved by accelerating the pace of technological development, and that this can be achieved without reducing our material standards of living and without rejecting capitalism. A manifesto was published in April 2015, authored by eighteen scholars and entrepreneurs in various fields. Major financial supporter: **Bill Gates** (b. 1955, American) founder of Microsoft corporation, and author of *How To Avoid A Climate Disaster* (2021).

**Eightfold Path.** In Buddhism: the fourth of the **Four Noble Truths**; the set of practices which lead to the cessation of **samsara**. They are: right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

**Emergent Properties.** A property of a **system** which cannot be predicted from complete knowledge of all the system's parts and relationships. Emergent properties are what makes a system *complex*, as opposed to merely complicated.

**Empiricism:** A school of thought which holds that our most important source of knowledge is the experience of our physical senses, as well as the evidence of experiments with observable and mathematically quantifiable results. One of two major schools of thought to emerge from the **Enlightenment**.

**Enlightenment, The.** A movement in Europe's intellectual history, spanning roughly from 1650 to 1789, in which **science** and **reason** gained greater public legitimacy and prominence, and enjoyed more influence over politics, than ever before. The proponents of the movement aimed to use logic and science to solve philosophical, social, moral, and political problems, instead of resorting to theology, mysticism, or superstition. Enlightenment values include **humanism, human rights, democracy, liberty**, and confidence in the power of human rationality to solve all of our problems. For more details, see the Outline History; for criticism of enlightenment values, see **Romanticism, Colonialism, Ideology**.

**Enthymeme.** A categorical **syllogism** in which one of the premises is missing. (See also: **Argument, Categorical Logic**.)

**Epiphenomenalism.** In philosophy of mind: the idea that your thoughts, feelings, interior mental experiences, your whole first-person experiences of the world, are merely by-products of physical and chemical processes going on in your brain. They have no causal relationship on your behaviour. The argument for this position rests on a kind of **Reductionism**. If the mind can be explained entirely as a bio-physical process, as many reductionists argue, then it may follow that our thoughts, feelings, and other mental states, including consciousness itself, have no relevance to your existence at all. Most people probably would not want to believe this about themselves. But our scientific knowledge of the nature of the brain makes it hard to argue otherwise.

**Epistemic Bubbles.** A community or a social world which prevents or excludes the entry of **information** from outside of it, even when that information might be relevant or important to their interests; a community which isolates its members from external sources of information. This isolation may be deliberate or accidental. (See also: **Echo Chamber**.)

**Epistemic Values.** In science, a group of values proposed by Karl Popper which help distinguish **science** from non-science; including **falsification**, mathematical quantifiability, use of experiments.

**Epistemology.** The branch of philosophy that studies **knowledge, truth, and logic**.

**Epoché** (reduction, suspension, leading-back). A logical procedure invented by **Edmund Husserl**, in which one suspends judgements about the reality of things in order to study how they appear to one's perceptions. (See also: **Phenomenology, Continental Tradition**.)

**Equivocation.** In logic: A word or phrase that has two or more distinct meanings, and is used in those two or more senses within the same argument. (See also: **Fallacy**.)

**Essence.** That which something ultimately *is*. This might be its nature, or its spirit or soul, or some other quality about it which is not reducible to its material parts or elements. (See also: **Substance, Noumena, Thing-In-Itself, Bundle Theory**.)

**Estranged Labour.** See: **Alienated Labour**.

**Ethics.** The branch of philosophy that studies moral rightness and wrongness, goodness and badness, and similar matters, as well as their practical applications. Ethics has four major sub-branches of its own, corresponding to four different ways of thinking about ethics: **Utilitarianism, Deontology, Justice, and Virtue**.

**Ethics of Care.** The branch of **Utilitarianism** and **Virtue** developed by various American feminists, especially **Carol Gillian**. It holds that your most important moral responsibility is to show empathy and compassion to others, especially for those you are in an immediate

position to help, in proportion to their vulnerability, and in proportion to the significance of their relationship to you. (see also: **Feminism**.)

**Eudaimonia.** Happiness, well-habitedness, flourishing, a good or desirable or favourable fortune. Major concept in **Areteology** / **virtue** theory, and ancient Greek philosophy. (see also: **ataraxia**)

**Euthyphro Problem.** A kind of chicken-and-egg problem in religion, introduced by **Plato**, and concerning the interests of the gods. It states that something is pious because it is beloved by the gods (in which case, the pious may well be arbitrary), or it is beloved by the gods because it is pious (in which case, piety has nothing to do with the gods). And in either case, we don't know what it means to be pious, or what the gods might care about and why.

**“Existence Precedes Essence”.** See **Existentialism**.

**Existentialism.** A school of philosophy which holds that there is no intrinsic or pre-determined meaning in life, and no pre-determined human nature. Existentialism attributes great significance to **individualism**, freedom, and **authenticity**. One could summarize it in the three-word definition given by **Jean-Paul Sartre**: “existence precedes **essence**.” Here's how Sartre explained it:

What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself.<sup>2</sup>

**Extraordinary Claims.** A proposition about facts or events which, while perhaps not impossible, are nonetheless wild, outlandish, and/or unlikely; claims which require extraordinary evidence. When extraordinary claims arise, remember to quote Carl Sagan (See also: **Conspiracy Theory**, **Burden of Proof**.)

**Faith.**

- [1] In Christianity: faith is the most important source of all religious and sacred knowledge. As defined by St. Paul: faith is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1). It is by means of faith that Christians claim to know certain core teachings of Christianity. (For criticism, see: **Russell's Teapot**.)
- [2] In Islam: faith (*iman*) or belief, is the requirement for muslims to believe the following: (a) there is God, (b) there are angels, (c) there are prophets, (d) there are holy books, especially the Koran; (e), there is fate, and (f) there will be a day of judgment.

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<sup>2</sup> Macomber, trans. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (Yale University Press, 2007) pg.22



### **Fake News.**

[1] Lies that are deliberately, not accidentally, broadcast in the mass media.

[2] Essays, articles, photographs, reports, etc., which are designed to appear like professional journalism, but which deliberately deceive their audience, for purposes such as political or commercial gain.

Fake News can come from media organizations (newspapers, broadcasters, etc.) whose entire business is to produce and spread it, for commercial or political gain. It can also come from bloggers, YouTube video creators, and others who produce media content independently, especially if the fake news is an accepted part of their **echo chamber**. It is typically distributed by users of internet social media. (See also: **Propaganda, Alternative Facts.**)

**Fallacy.** A type of argument in which the conclusion does not follow from the premises because of a false premise or an invalid inference; a faulty argument; an error in **Logic**. Historically, philosophers have identified hundreds of fallacies; Chapter 7 of *Clear And Present Thinking 2nd Edition* covers a typology of common ones. In a rational discourse, the aim of pointing out the fallacies in someone's speech should not be to embarrass or subdue that person, but rather to encourage that person to find a better argument.

**Falsification.** A principle of scientific reasoning invented by Karl Popper that aims to solve the problem of induction. The idea is to find the true theory by eliminating all theories which can be proven false. (See also: **Epistemic Values.**)

**Fascism.** A political worldview which is notoriously difficult to define, because one of its features is the absence of an **ideology**. But fascism does have a 'style' of sorts. **Umberto Eco** in his 1995 essay *Ur-Fascism* described that style with the following fourteen points. (1) a cult of tradition, (2) a rejection of **modernism**, (3) action for action's sake, (4) no permissible disagreement with the leader, (5) fear of difference and diversity, (6) an appeal to a frustrated middle class who may feel deprived of a social identity, (7) obsession with plots and **conspiracies**, (8) exaggerated beliefs about the wealth and power of enemies, (9) contempt for peacemakers, love of war, (10) elitism, and contempt for the weak, (11) everyone is taught to be a hero, (12), machismo and misogyny, (13) selective populism, and opposition to democracy, and (14) the impoverishment of language in order to limit the capacity of critical reasoning. Eco argued that the more of these features a given political movement may possess, the more fascist it is. (In the Outline History, see: **Jason Stanley, Julius Evola.**)

### **Feminism.**

[1] A social and cultural movement which aims to examine, resist, and overcome the various forces that keep women marginalized or oppressed, and/or which perpetuate inequality between women and men.

[2] in philosophy: the analysis and critique of those forces; the analysis of the situation of women and of oppressed people generally; the examination of the feminist movement's various plans of action.

Feminism in Western-world countries passed through three, possibly four, distinct historical 'waves': see the Outline History for notes. It also comes in three main types: **Liberal**, **Social**, and **Radical**. (See also: **patriarchy**, **humanism**, **privilege**, **Queer Theory**.)

**Fictitious Capital.** The **Marxist** argument that in a **capitalist** system, some boom-and-bust cycles happen because people buy and sell products that don't exist, and/or make legal claims upon the profits generated by work that has not yet been done. Stocks, bonds, futures, derivatives, various credit instruments, and various forms of debt-packaging, are included here. Eventually, the owners of fictitious products like these will demand the profits that they believe they have bought (i.e. the return on investment). Or, they trade these products among themselves as if they are commodities in their own right, and in the process they auction-up their value. But if the work which was supposed to produce that profit didn't get done (for whatever reason: a famine, etc.), or if the value of the fictitious capital becomes greater than the value of the (future) work it was supposed to represent, then the capital becomes worthless, the market for it crashes, and other connected sectors of the market crash with it.

**Filial Piety.** In Confucianism: the relation between parents and children, in which children owe respect and obedience to their parents, and in turn parents owe kindness, protection, education, caregiving, etc., to their children. (See also: **The Five Relations**.)

**Fine-Tuning Argument.** A modern-day, scientific version of the Design Argument. It states that there are some physical constants of the universe, such as the strength of the force of gravity, which had to be extremely precise, in order to allow for the kind of world we live in to exist, i.e. a world where there is human life, mind, and civilization. (See: **Design Argument**, **Watchmaker Analogy**.)

**First Philosophy.** A branch of philosophy considered fundamental, and of greater importance than the others; the branch whose questions must be settled before one can move on to the questions posed by other branches. Various philosophers or philosophical schools have held different branches to be 'first': Medieval **Scholasticism** held that **Metaphysics** goes first; **Descartes** said it's **Epistemology**; **Levinas** claimed it's **Ethics**.

**Five Pillars of Islam, The.** In Islam: the five most important principles of religious practice. They are: *Shahada*: declaration of faith; *Salat*: daily prayer, facing the city of Mecca, five times every day; *Sawm*: fasting during daylight hours during the month of Ramadan; *Zakat*: charity and generosity; and *Hajj*: the pilgrimage to Mecca, once in your lifetime.

**Five Relations, The.** In Confucianism: five social relations, such that any two human beings may relate to each other by means of at least one of them, so that anyone, including perfect strangers, can know how to get along in peace. They are: ruler to minister, parent to child (see **Filial Piety**), husband and wife, elder brother to younger brother, and between friends.

**Five Skandhas, The.** See **Doctrine of No-Soul**.

**Flouting a Maxim.** In informal logic and discourse ethics, the act of deliberately breaking a rule of **discourse ethics**, without at the same time confusing one's meaning or intentions.

Informal signals such as physical gestures, tone of voice, a reference to a social context, or the use of an emoji, might accompany the words which flout the maxim, in order to clarify one's intentions or meanings (and, often, to make one's conveyance of meaning funny).

**Form, Platonic.** see: **Platonic Forms**.

**Formal Logic.** The study of propositions, arguments, inferences, etc., and the rules for reaching deductively necessary conclusions, and/or inductively strong conclusions. Formal logic typically abstracts the content of an argument using a symbolic notation system, in order to make the structure of an argument clearer. (See also: **Symbolic Logic**.)

**Four Noble Truths, The.** In Buddhism: the most important teachings of Buddhist philosophy and religion. They are: (1) Life is suffering, (2) Suffering is caused by attachment, (3) Suffering may be ended by letting go of our attachments, and (4) The way to let go of our attachments is to have right views, right intentions, etc.. The fourth Noble Truth is also known as the **Eightfold Path**.

**Framing Language.** A narrative; a form of spin or slant placed on a story or an account of things; the words, phrases, metaphors, symbols, definitions, grammatical structures, questions, and so on, which we use to think, speak of, and understand things in a certain way; the contexts, narratives, and intangible structures of meaning which both surround our worldviews and at the same time inform them and characterize them. (See also: **Worldview**, **Informal Logic**.)

**Game Theory.** In mathematics, the study of the competitive and cooperative interactions of decision-makers, where the results of each person's decisions also depend at least partially on the decisions of others, and where the people involved may or may not have information about each other's decisions. (See also: **Pascal's Wager**, **Prisoner's Dilemma**)

**Gender Essentialism.** The idea that there are differences of **essence** between men and women, leading to inequality, and indeed to the impossibility of men and women understanding each other. This was a feature of the second wave of **feminism**, but abandoned in the third. (See the Outline History entry on **Feminist Thought and Action**.)

**Godwin's Law.** An eponymous law describing people's behaviour in online discussion forums, coined in 1990 by Mike Godwin. It states that 'As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Hitler approaches 1.' Variation: Once a discussion reaches a comparison to Hitler or the Nazis, its usefulness is over. Note that Godwin's Law may not apply to discussions about persons who really are Nazis, and/or persons who really

are calling for the social exclusion or the death of some group of people because of that group's ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and so on. (See also: **Discourse Ethics**.)

**Golden Rule, The.** In Christianity, one of the most important statements of **ethics**. A well known version of it goes like this: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (See: Matthew 7:12.)

**Gordian Knot.** Early in his career, Alexander the Great encountered the kingdom of Phrygia (today Anatolia, in Turkey). Near the entrance to the capital city lay an ancient chariot reputed to belong to Gordius, an ancient king of Phrygia. This chariot had its pole and its yoke tied with a knot that was so complex and tight that no one had ever untied it. An oracle said that whoever untied the knot would rule all of Asia. Alexander the Great untied it by chopping it with his sword. Today, the story of the Gordian Knot is used by philosophers and mathematicians as a **parable** about whether careful logical argumentation, or brute force, is a better way to solve the 'knottiest' problems we know.

**Grue Paradox.** A version of the **Problem of Induction**, introduced by **Nelson Goodman**.

Consider the following statements:

1. All emeralds are green.
2. An object is grue if it is green and first observed *before* 1st January 2050, or if it's blue and first observed *after* 1st January 2050.
3. All emeralds, therefore, are grue.

Probably nobody would make an argument like this. It seems obvious that no emeralds are grue. But why not, exactly? There must be some important difference between the predicates 'green' and 'grue'. This paradox invites us to figure out what it is.

**Habits of Thinking.** Principles of **informal logic**, including good habits like curiosity, self-awareness, **skepticism**, etc., and bad habits like saving face, **relativism**, stereotyping, and laziness. (A longer list of good and bad thinking habits may be found in chapter 3 of *Clear And Present Thinking 2nd Edition*.)

**Hard Problem Of Consciousness.** In the philosophy of mind: the problem of explaining how our first-person experience of the world arises from the materials of our brains and bodies. This is in contrast to the 'soft' problem of consciousness, which seeks to explain only how the mind seems to work, or how it changes over time. The 'hard' problem asks *why* we have a first-person experience of life; it asks why we can describe what it feels like to *be* something.

**Heirophany.** In religion and theology: anything by which the sacred shows itself; the way that the sacred manifests 'in' things and 'with' things.

**Hermeneutics.** The branch of philosophy that studies how we interpret cultural materials, especially texts. There is a notable hermeneutic tradition among scholars of religious texts like the Bible, but hermeneutics can also apply to other texts. (See: **Hans-Georg Gadamer**.)

**Humanism.** A worldview in which: (a) human reason and rationality is the most important source of all our knowledge, including our ethical knowledge; (b) human accomplishments, powers, potentials, and freedoms, deserve protection and celebration; (c) everyone has equal dignity and rights; (d) religion and religious institutions should not have influence over education or politics; (e) the improvement of the human condition (our social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances) is an ethical and political priority.

The story of humanism in Western civilization is as old as philosophy itself. There were atheists and religious humanists even among the Pre-Socratics of ancient Greece. Humanism grows into its modern form during the **Renaissance** and the **Enlightenment**. (See also: **Modernism, Feminism**.)

### Humanity

- [1] In Confucianism: empathy, kindness, our original goodness as human beings (*ren*). This principle is to be practiced in concert with **Righteousness** (*li*), for without it, one's humanity might not know what to do.
- [2] for Kant: the quality or property of a being which entitles them to respect in terms of the **Practical Imperative**; the will, the freedom of the will; the autonomous capacity to determine one's own freedom and choices, to live by one's own law.

**Human rights.** A major value in **liberalism** and **modernism**, historically arising out of the **Enlightenment**. There are various definitions, and various types, though in all cases the postulation or legal enactment of a right creates moral and sometimes legal duties, for instance to refrain from interfering in someone's enjoyment of the right, prevent others from so interfering, and adopt policies or practices which enable the full realization of the right.

- [1] Functionalist: Human rights are regulations that govern people's behaviour in respect to each other, in some social context. Functionalist definitions emphasize how the idea of rights *work* in a society, and what they *do* for people.
- [2] Interest-based: A right is an interest of sufficient importance that the rights-holder can place others under a duty to have that interest fulfilled. In this way of thinking about it: you have a right to something, against whatever someone else might want or do, by virtue of a sufficiently compelling reason.
- [3] Will-based: A right is a means of exercising power, and of justifying some forms of power over others (ie. the 'divine right' of kings, etc.)

Various kinds of rights:

- [1] Moral rights: Rights that arise from philosophical, social, cultural **worldviews**, which may or may not be enshrined in legal codes and constitutions. Activist movements often aim to get moral rights acknowledged as civil rights.
- [2] Civil rights: Rights which are enshrined in legal codes and constitutions.

[3] Cultural rights: Rights held by groups of people, or by individuals in virtue of their membership in a group, for instance the right of the people in a First Nations community to go fishing out of season, or the right of a community to exist and to not be exterminated in genocidal violence. Note that most human rights theory is **individualist** in nature; the existence of cultural rights remains contested even among activists.

**Hyperobjects.** See: **Object-Oriented Ontology.**

**Hyper-Reality, The Hyper-Real.** A concept in metaphysics and phenomenology, introduced by **Jean Beaudrillard**. A situation or a cultural context in which simulations, information processing, knowledge industries, and the media become the primary means of grasping reality; a simulated, fake, or exaggerated representation of reality which (a) may have no original reality of which it is the copy or the model, and which (b) people prefer over the actual real world.

**Hypothesis.** In science, it is an educated guess; a **Prima Facie** explanation for things or events that could be put to some kind of experimental or empirical test. (See also: **Science, Epistemic Values, Theory.**)

**Idealism.** In metaphysics: the idea (!) that the physical, visible world is not the real world. Rather, the real world is a world of spirit or pure consciousness, knowable to us only through thought and contemplation, or perhaps through paranormal experiences and dreams. (See: **Platonic Forms, Realism.**)

**Ideology.** A **worldview**, especially in political and economic and religion, which (a) has an internal structure of logic which guides judgments of truth, falsehood, right, and wrong; (b) includes ideas about what is real, true, and right in matters of social interactions, institutional organizations, and other power-relations; (c) aims to persuade people to adopt the aforementioned ideas and join its community of believers; (d) over time, its believers aim to absorb, influence, and/or dominate worldviews in other fields, such as psychology, art, family life, science, etc.; and which (e) over time, becomes increasingly exclusive of other worldviews and belligerent to its critics and doubters. (See: **Worldview, Value Program**; see also **Slavoj Žižek.**)

**Implicature.** In informal logic and in discourse ethics: A group of values which help make it easier for others to understand the meaning of one's statements and expressions. (See: **Flouting a Maxim**; see also **Paul Grice.**)

**Incompleteness Theorem.** A mathematical theorem by **Kurt Gödel** which shows that in any given set (of numbers, etc.) there will still be at least one axiom which cannot be defined in terms of that set.

**Indicator Words.** Words like ‘because’, ‘given that’, ‘it follows that’, ‘therefore’, etc., which show a listener which **propositions** in a given argument are **premises** and which are **conclusions**.

**Indispensability Argument.** In **Analytic philosophy** and **metaphysics**: an argument introduced by **Willard Quine** and **Hilary Putnam**, which states that anything we absolutely must rely upon in order to do **science**, must be treated as real. So, numbers and other mathematical constructions, seeing as we need them to do science, are indeed real.

**Induction** (adj.: Inductive). A type of argument in which, if the premises are true, the conclusion is *probably* true. Inductions cannot give you certainty; they can only give you varying degrees of probability, although that probability can often be calculated with great precision. (See also: **Deduction, Argument.**)

**Individualism.** The claim that the most important fact about you is that you are an individual, able to decide for yourself what you want in life, what you plan to do with your life, what your values and priorities are, and even who you are. (see: **Authenticity, Liberalism, Modernism.**)

**Inference.** The logical relations between propositions in an argument. (See also: **Validity, Strength.**)

**Informal Logic.** Principles of reasoning which assist one's practical everyday decisions; principles of logic which use flexible and general rules for reaching conclusions, rather than hard logical deductions.

**Information.**

- [1] In computer science: well-formed and meaningful data, mathematically encoded and measured using a binary digit (a *bit*). Data is a collection of facts; data is considered well-formed when it reduces the amount of uncertainty we may have about the world.
- [2] In physics: A property of the universe, especially a property of molecules, atoms, sub-atomic particles (ie. their position in space, their mass, charge, spin, velocity, etc); this property can be measured by thermodynamic entropy.
- [3] In library science: a pattern of organization of matter and energy, given meaning by a living being.

**Information Literacy.** Practical knowledge of the way that information is framed, transmitted, legitimised, shared, etc., especially in the mass media; techniques of **reasonable doubt** applied to information that comes from mass-communication technologies and industries.

**Information Theory:** The study of how people transform data into knowledge and wisdom.

**Instrumental Values; Instrumentally Good.** A value or a good which is claimed to be desirable because of how it can help us acquire other things that are also regarded as valuable or good. Its contrasting principle is **Instrumental Values**.

**Intellectual Environment.** The site or location where thinking takes place; the ideas and beliefs that prevail in any given social group or cultural community. (See also: **Worldview**)

**Intentionality.** In **phenomenology**: the idea that all consciousness is 'consciousness of something', ie referring to or pointing to something. (See **Franz Brentano**.)

**Intrinsic Good, Intrinsically Valuable.** A value or a good which is claimed to be good in-itself, ie. something we value for its own sake, and not for the sake of something else it can help us to acquire. Various philosophers have posed various values for this position: God (most religious thinkers), Freedom (most Liberals and Libertarians), the Will (Nietzsche), Life (McMurtry). Its contrasting principle is **Instrumental Good**.

**Invisible Hand, The.** A concept in the work of **Adam Smith**, which holds that public goods follow from individual participants in the economy pursuing their own **self-interest**. This concept is one of the central principles of **capitalism**. Here are Smith's words on the matter:

...by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he [the capitalist entrepreneur] intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.

**Jahiliyya.** In Islam: backsliding, or ignorance. The condition of a person who has let their **faith** or their practice of the **Five Pillars** go lax.

**Jihad.** In Islam: struggle, especially the kinds of struggles which are basic facts of the human condition. There are 'lesser' struggles (physical violence or war-fighting), and there is a 'greater' struggle (against Jahiliyya).

**Jouissance.** A concept first introduced by **Lacan**, and probably untranslatable. It refers to the kinds of pleasures which transgress boundaries. The boundaries might be social, cultural or political; ie. boundaries of permitted and forbidden pleasures in a given community or culture. They might also be physical, as in a physical pleasure increased to an intensity where it becomes pain. (See also: **Zizek**, **Kristeva**, **Barthes**, and **Cixous**.)

**Justice.**

[1] In **ethics** generally: this is the study of the rightness or wrongness of the power-relations in a community or social group, including the rightness or wrongness of the distribution



of wealth, powers, honours, resources, rewards, and/or punishments. (See also: **Distributive Justice**.)

- [2] In **Areteology**, it refers to the **virtue** of giving to others what you owe to them and requiring from others what is owed to you; the virtue that helps people recognise fairness in their give-and-take relations with others.
- [3] A central spiritual principle in Judaism. (See: **Tikkun Olam**.)

### **Karma.**

- [1] In Hinduism and Buddhism: spiritual merit or demerit, as one's actions may determine; the way in which one's actions produce consequences for who you are, and for what your 'destiny' will be.
- [2] The thing which ran over my dogma.

**Knowledge.** Since the question 'What is knowledge?' is one of philosophy's oldest and deepest questions, no definition I give here is immune from criticism or analysis. But let's give it a go anyway:

- [1] **Information**, together with one's first-person awareness of possessing or processing it;
  - [2] the substance or the material of one's thinking, as distinct from the methods or procedures of thinking;
  - [3] information that one accepts and embeds in one's mind by means of a process of reasoning;
  - [4] a kind of potentiality for thought or feeling or action, embedded in one's mind by a process of reasoning.
  - [5] In analytic philosophy: Justified true belief.
- (See also: **Logic, Reason, Epistemology, Information Theory**.)

**Koan.** In Buddhism, and especially Chinese and Japanese Buddhism: a literary and pedagogical device, used by teachers to surprise and sometimes to shock their students into realizing the foolishness of their usual way of thinking about things, to prompt (or to provoke) students into letting go of their assumptions, and so inviting them to think differently.

**Koranic Challenge.** In Islam: the tradition of asserting the miraculous nature of the *Qur'ān* itself; i.e. the claim that the text is of such extraordinary poetic beauty that it cannot have been written by a mere mortal. It must have been written by God. The Challenge is also an invitation to anyone to write a piece of poetry that is better than the poetry of the Koran, in order to show that it cannot be done.

**Language Game.** A concept in **logic** and **epistemology**, introduced by **Wittgenstein**. The basic idea is that a word or a sentence has meaning only through the way it is used, and the way it is used must follow a simple set of rules, ie. a 'game'. Of course, which game a word is playing can be different from one moment or one context to another. Wittgenstein himself defined it as any form of language simpler than the whole of language itself, "consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven", and possibly connected to other language

games by a “family resemblance”. (*Philosophical Investigations*, §7.). See also: **Framing Language**.

**Lemma**. In mathematics: a minor **theorem** which has already been proved, and which is used to prove a larger, more significant theorem.

**Liberal Feminism**. A branch of modern **feminism** concerned with the equality of women and men, and the equitable distribution of power and wealth. Liberal feminism is **individualist** in character: it's concerned with the rights and freedoms individual women may (or don't but should) possess as individuals. Liberal feminism often supports legal measures designed to curb the forces that drive women toward traditional social roles that they might not want for themselves. It also tends to support proactive policies that benefit women, like employment equity. (See also: **Social Feminism**, **Radical Feminism**.)

**Liberalism**. The ‘classical’ form of liberalism, often attributed to **John Locke**, can be expressed in the maxim “everyone has a right to swing their fist as much as they like, as long as it does not injure their neighbour's nose.” Locke also believed that the only legitimate reason a government may interfere in someone's freedom is to prevent that person from harming others. In general, **modern** liberalism is the idea that governments must protect and support people's individual freedoms in order to be legitimate. This emphasis on **individualism** makes liberalism distinct from **conservatism**, **socialism**, and **communism**. Modern liberal values thus include freedom and liberty (hence the name), democracy, human rights, **capitalism**, and legal equality. There are various forms of liberalism today, with different opinions concerning how far governments can go to protect people and support their freedoms, whether liberal values are specific to politics and economics, or whether liberalism is a more comprehensive value system.

**Libertarianism**. A worldview which holds that **individual** freedom is the most important of all personal and political values, trumping all others. There are various kinds of libertarianism: some of which allow a role for government (albeit a small one), and others which want government entirely abolished; some which hold that people should care for each other, and others which hold that no one has any positive moral duties to others whatsoever. Most forms of libertarianism hold that people should guide themselves by rational **self-interest** and generally leave each other alone. Most also hold that all relations between people, from friendship and family life to political and economic relations, must be voluntary to be legitimate. Some also hold that property rights and **capitalist** values are absolute.

**Liberty**. A major value of the **Enlightenment**, and of **modernism**, **liberalism** and **libertarianism**.

[1] Freedom, especially political freedom;

[2] The major benefit of living in a society not ruled by unaccountable kings or priests;

[3] a life governed by rules and laws of one's own choosing, either personally through one's free will, or collectively through democratic institutions like elected parliaments;

[4] the **human right** to live and act as one may wish, according to one's own free will.

**Limit Situation** (From German: *Grenzsituation*). A situation in life, as described by philosopher **Karl Jaspers**, wherein one confronts the narrowness of one's usual way of thinking; a situation in which one's usual worldview is shown to be unhelpful or faulty; an event which prompts or demands a new way of thinking. (See also: **Informal Logic**, **Worldview**.)

**Lockean Provisio**. The proposition, appearing in the *Second Treatise of Government* (1690) by **John Locke**, which says that when harvesting resources from nature there should be "enough and as good left in common for others."

**Logic**. The procedures of good (correct, **Sound**, consistent) thinking; the procedure of thinking which begins with good questions and clear premises, and then moves from those premises to various deductively necessary or inductively prompted conclusions.

**Logical Positivism**. (See: Positivism.)

**Logos**. (From Greek: A saying, a speech, an account, a rationale, a word; the etymological root of the English word **logic**, and of the suffix *-ology*, as in psychology, anthropology, etc.)

[1] According to Heraclitus and other philosophers of the classical Greek era, Logos is a name for the organizing principle of the universe; the system of rational order by which all things are governed and by which all things can be understood. That system of order might be partially hidden from us; but it is the responsibility of **philosophers** to find it.

[2] In Christian thought, Logos is related to the nature of God (cf. John 1:1).

**Mandate of Heaven**. In Confucianism: the idea that there is a moral order of the universe, represented by heaven, which bestows upon good and virtuous people a 'mandate': a moral right to assume positions of leadership and authority. Heaven can withdraw this mandate if the leader proves to be unjust, or otherwise unfit.

**Marxism**. A philosophical worldview introduced by **Karl Marx**, and further developed by his successors, many of them belonging to the **Frankfurt School** of **continental** philosophy. Obviously, Marx is the father of **communism**, and some marxists use the words 'communism' and '**socialism**' interchangeably. But Marxism, as a philosophical school of thought, is what happened to Marx's ideas when his successors got hold of them, further developed them, and responded to the unfolding of events in real-world communist societies such as Soviet Russia. (See: **commodity fetishism**, **alienated labour**, **fictitious capital**, **contradictions of capitalism**, **dialectic**.)

**Mary's Room**. A thought experiment by **Frank Jackson**, concerning **Qualia**. Imagine a scientist named Mary, who lives alone in a single room. She has plenty of books, as well as a television: and everything is black and white. There's no colours of any kind in the room. Now suppose she has studied everything there is to know about colours: from wavelengths of

light, to the neurophysiology of the brain and its visual processing. If she steps out of the room and experiences colour for the first time, does she learn anything new? The point of this thought experiment is to examine whether a materialist, **reductionist** view of the world is, or isn't, a complete understanding of the world.

**Mean, Doctrine Of The.** In **Aristotle**: the proposition that for every **virtue** there are two vices, one of too much of that virtue, the other of not enough of it. The 'mean' is the position between them best suited for success in one's pursuit of **eudaimonia**.

**Mere Repetition Bias.** A type of observer **bias** in which one comes to believe something only because one has seen or heard it frequently, for a long time, and for no other reason. (See also: **Intellectual Environment, Disinformation, Observer Bias**.)

**Metanarrative.** A story about stories; a story which connects other stories together; a body of beliefs or commitments which influences how events are interpreted or how discussions are framed; a major part of a worldview. (See also: **Worldview, Framing Language, Narrative**.)

**Metaphysics.** The branch of **philosophy** that studies reality. It deals with questions concerning being, human nature, freedom and free will, God, death, time, and the meaning of life.

**Methodological Doubt.** In epistemology: a **thought experiment** developed by **René Descartes**. In this method, you assume that if there is any reason to doubt something, then you should assume it is false, and move on to the next thing. If, by this process of elimination, you encounter something that you cannot doubt, that indubitable thing must be the foundation of all knowledge. Descartes came to believe that the only thing he could not doubt was his own existence as a thinking being: hence the famous motto, *Cogito, ergo sum*; 'I think, therefore I am.'

**Mercantilism.** The system of economics and politics which was the historical predecessor of capitalism. It was characterised by, among other things, (a) nation-states importing raw materials from colonies and exporting finished products to the world, (b) the grant of exclusive monopolies to certain individuals and corporations on some trade routes, commodities, and ports-of-call, (c) with the expectation that they'd use the profits for the benefit of the nation. They didn't. In fact, the whole system created too many incentives for nations to create **colonial** empires and fight wars against each other. Hence, the transition to **capitalism**.

**Midrash.** In Judaism: interpretation, explanation, study, especially of the Bible, and using techniques described in Rabbinic teachings.

**Mitzvah.** In Judaism: moral teachings, guidance, advice; religious duties, religious commandments; a good deed done in fulfillment of such a commandment. In Jewish tradition

from **Moses Maimonides** onward, there are 613 religious Mitzvot (the plural of Mitzvah), including the 'Ten Commandments'.

**Modernism.**

[1] A **worldview** characterised by confidence in the universality of the values of the **Enlightenment**.

[2] A worldview characterized by the values of **scientific** reasoning, technological and social progress, **liberty**, democracy, **capitalism**, **human rights**, secularism, **humanism**, and **individualism**. (See also: **Postmodernism**)

[2] The worldview of one's present time; the values, beliefs, and ideas which are widely considered up-to-date, of-the-now, the most advanced, emerging from and/or belonging to the current age of history.

**Modus Ponens.** In formal logic, a standard pattern of argument that takes this form: If P then Q; P, therefore Q.

**Modus Tollens.** In formal logic, a standard pattern of argument that takes this form: If P then Q; not-Q, therefore not-P.

**Moksha.** In Hinduism: enlightenment, literally 'liberation' from **samsara**. Not to be confused with **nirvana**.

**Moral Statement.** A proposition that says something about what's good or evil, just or unjust, virtuous or vicious, etc.

**Moral Luck.** A situation in which a person may be held responsible for the consequences of an action, despite the necessary involvement of a number of factors beyond their control. So, you can have good moral luck, and also bad luck. (See: **Bernard Williams**, **Thomas Nagel**.)

**Narrative.** A story; a body of knowledge organized in the form of a story; an interpretation or an accounting of events in the form of a story. (See also: **Worldview**, **Framing Language**, **Metanarrative**.)

**Narrative Identity.** A theory of personal identity, introduced by **Paul Ricoeur** and **Alasdair MacIntyre**, which states that the unity of one's identity over time is that of a story; the idea that the structure of storytelling is what makes human life intelligible. Ricoeur's version is a direct reply to the **Reductionism** of **Derek Parfit**.

**Naturalistic Fallacy.** A form of bad reasoning, in which propositions about facts lead to inappropriate conclusions about morality. An early version of this was **David Hume's** Is-Ought Problem. The fallacy in its most widely accepted form was introduced by **G.E. Moore** in 1903. (See also: **Fallacy**.)

**Necessary Condition.** In science and in analytic logic, a condition which must be the case in order for a proposition to be true. (See also: **Science, Sufficient Conditions.**)

**Negation.** A proposition which asserts that something is not the case. (See also: **Proposition.**)

**Nihilism.** (From the Latin *nihil*, 'nothing'). A worldview which holds that nothing is valuable, nothing is worthwhile, nothing is ultimately meaningful.

**Nirvana.** In Buddhism: enlightenment; literally "extinction" of the self. Not to be confused with **moksha**.

**Nocebo Effect.** The experience of pain, or the medical symptom of some disease, when one is not physically injured or sick. This effect is triggered when the subject in a clinical trial has been administered an inert substance that she believes may have harmed her; a self-generated 'side effect' that a trial subject might experience; the opposite of a placebo. (See: **Observer Bias.**)

**Noise.** In **Information Theory**: anything which causes information to be lost. Garbled sounds, fading old photographs, the decay of books, the degradation of magnetic fields on computer disks, interference from other signals, etc. (See also: **Weeding, Digital Darkness.**)

**Noumena.** The existence of an object in its own right, apart from how it appears to one's physical senses or to one's consciousness. (See also: **Phenomena, Essence, Thing-In-Itself.**)

**Nous.** (Greek: mind, reason, mindful consciousness). A principle that features in some ancient Greek schools, notably **NeoPlatonism**, as a principle of reality more fundamental than the observable physical world.

**Objectivity** (adj.: Objective). A way of thinking or a state of mind in which one is as free as possible from the influence of personal feelings, biases, expectations; a way of thinking which observes events as an uninvolved or disinterested third-person observer would see them. Most philosophers, and also many psychologists, journalists, etc., believe that pure and perfect objectivity is not possible for anyone. There are varying opinions on whether it is possible to be objective *enough* to make good decisions about what to believe and what to do. Note that objectivity in this **sense** has no relation to 'Objectivism', the worldview of American novelist Ayn Rand. (See also: **Bias.**)

**Object-oriented ontology.** A theory of **metaphysics** in **analytic** philosophy, introduced by **Graham Harman** and **Timothy Morton**, which states that only objects exist, but objects can be multi-faceted and even multi-dimensional: thus some objects are actually 'hyperobjects'. As Morton defines them, hyperobjects are "massively distributed in time and space", and "'hyper' in relation to some other entity, whether they are manufactured by humans or not". (Morton, *Hyperobjects*, University of Minnesota Press (2013), pg.1)

**Ockham's Razor.** In logic: a requirement of logical simplicity, attributed to William of Ockham; the requirement that in argumentation there should be 'no unnecessary repetition of identicals'. In Bertrand Russell's formulation: 'The explanation with the fewest assumptions tends to be the truth.' In pop culture: 'The simplest explanation tends to be the truth.'

**Ontology** (Adj: ontological). From the Greek ὄντος, *óntos*, 'being'. So, ontology is the philosophical study of Being, and an ontological argument is an argument about something's Being.

**Ontological Argument for God.** In religion: any of several **a priori** arguments, for instance by **St. Anselm**, by **Rene Descartes**, etc., which purports to show that the idea of God somehow necessitates the existence of God. That is to say, God's existence is proven not by referring to facts or empirical evidence, but instead by referring to the logical implications that must follow from the concept of God.

**Original Position.** A **thought experiment** by **John Rawls**; a modern version of the concept of the **State Of Nature**. Its purpose is to help establish principles of **distributive justice**. Imagine if everyone in society sat down at a bargaining table together, to decide how the wealth and power of their society will be distributed to all of society's members. And imagine that we entered this negotiation without any individual knowing anything about who they are, or what place in society they will eventually occupy. In this hypothetical position, Rawls says, "No one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like."

**Original Sin.** In Christianity: the idea that all human beings are by nature predisposed to be sinful, selfish, unjust to each other, and disobedient against God. This doctrine was put into its most well known form by the philosopher **Augustine**, in *The City of God*, using precedents in the books of Genesis and the letters of St. Paul. The doctrine exists in tension (sometimes creative, sometimes not) with Christianity's other big theory of human nature: that we are all "made in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27)

**Otherness.** In **ethics** and **phenomenology**: the capacity of other people to be autonomous, independent, free-willed, different, and authentically themselves: and therefore unexpected, surprising, unpredictable, and undefineable by anyone's definitions but their own. (See: **Emmanuel Levinas**, **Simone de Beauvoir**.)

**Overdetermination.** In science, a theory which is confirmed by more evidence than is needed. (See also: **Science**, **Underdetermination**.)

**Parable.** A work of intellectual imagination, in which a story is told in order to teach something (especially to do with religion or **ethics**), or to draw attention to facts and concepts that the speaker wishes emphasized, or which serves as part of a **Thought Experiment**.

**Paradigm.** A **worldview** in relation to science and scientific method. As defined by **Thomas Kuhn**, it is the sum of all the facts, predictions, and methods which guide a scientist's work.

**Paradigm Shift.** The period of time during which a sufficiently large number of anomalies in the observed results of routine scientific work may cause scientists to doubt, and possibly to reject, their current paradigm; this period of doubt (a 'crisis', to use Kuhn's terminology) often leads to the adoption of a new paradigm.

**Paradox.** An argument which has true premises and valid inferences, yet nonetheless appears to produce a wrong conclusion.

**Paradox of Tolerance.** This is the situation described by **Karl Popper** in which it can become necessary to exclude a belligerent person from a discussion in order to preserve the inclusiveness of the discussion. (See also: **Discourse Ethics**.)

**Pareidolia.** A psychological phenomenon in which one perceives patterns in the world which aren't really there. Usually, pareidolia is associated with visual perceptions, such as the appearance of a human face in the bark of a tree. It can also apply to the perception of non-existent, poorly-evidenced, or coincidental patterns in a social world or a media environment, leading to conspiracy theories, prejudices, etc. (See also: **Skepticism, Observer Bias**.)

**Parrhesia.** (Greek: Bold speech). A true statement which incurs some danger for the person who utters it. A person who utters bold speech is called a *Parrhesiastes*. (See also: **Whistle-blowing**.)

**Pascal's Wager.** An early form of **Game Theory** developed by **Blaise Pascal**, which purports to show why it is rational to believe in God. A simplistic version of it might go like this: It is better to believe in God because if God does exist and you don't believe, the consequences for you would be worse than if God does not exist and yet you do believe. In that argument, there isn't a lack of information about the other party's decisions, as in other puzzles in **game theory**. Rather, there is a lack of information about whether the other party exists at all.

**Patriarchy.** (From the latin: *pater*, 'father'; and the greek *arche*, 'priority', or 'going first'. Literally: 'rule by the fathers'). A general, umbrella term for the various forces, customs, institutions, laws, practices, etc., which grant to men a monopoly on social, cultural, political, and economic power, and which excludes (most) women from power. (See **Feminism, Privilege**.)

**Perceptual Intelligence.** An intellectual exercise which takes place beneath one's conscious notice, in which present events are compared to similar past events, and then a conclusion is



drawn about likely near-future events. This conclusion is reported to the conscious mind in the form of a dream, a hunch, an instinct, or a 'gut feeling'.<sup>3</sup>

**Perscriptivism.** In ethics: a form of moral **relativism**. It's the idea that all moral statements about right or wrong, are really statements in which the speaker declares that everyone should believe that something is right or wrong.

**Personal Belief Relativism.** The belief that an idea is true if someone believes it, and further that it is true only for the person or people who believe it and not necessarily for anyone else. (See also: **Relativism, Cultural Relativism.**)

**Phenomena.** An object, or some feature or event of the world, as it appears to one's physical senses and to one's consciousness, as opposed to the object or event in itself, ie. the **Noumena**. (See: **Phenomenology.**)

**Phenomenology.**

- [1] The philosophical study of the structures of consciousness, from the first-person point of view. (See also: **Continental Tradition.**)
- [2] The study of essences (c.f. **Edmund Husserl.**)

**Philosopher.**

- [1] Broad meaning: Any person who studies and practices philosophy.
- [2] Narrow: A professor of philosophy; a person who has earned or is pursuing a graduate degree in philosophy; a person who studies, practices, and teaches philosophy at a college or university.
- [3] Historical: A public menace, a threat to all social and moral values, a corruptor of the young.
- [4] Socratic: A gadfly who rouses a sluggish society into a more examined life.
- [5] Nietzschean: A terrible explosive that endangers everything.

**Philosophy** (From Greek: *Philia sophia*, the love of wisdom; the friendship with **knowledge**).

The trouble with any definition of philosophy is that the question, 'What is philosophy?', is itself a philosophical question. But I like my definitions here. I hope you like them too.

- [1] The pursuit of answers to the highest and deepest questions by means of logic and systematic critical reason.
- [2] the ongoing and never-ending struggle against ignorance, stupidity, and evil, especially when conducted at the highest and deepest frontiers of human knowledge.
- [3] the ongoing activity of expanding the possibilities for human thought; the progressive investigation, as much by invention as by discovery, of what the human mind is really capable of, and how far the mind can go.

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<sup>3</sup> See Myers, *Circles of Meaning, Labyrinths of Fear* (Moon Books, 2012) pg. 75

- [4] A kind of no-man's-land between science, religion, mathematics, and literature, overlapping with all of them, yet having its own distinct character and independent set of goals.
- [5] A way of life, a way of being in the world, which prioritizes the cultivation of the real, the good, the true, and the beautiful. (Some philosophers, after all, teach us things not through their writings, but through the example of their lives.)

**Pickle.** An especially vexing problem; an unpleasant social or interpersonal situation that seems hard to escape from; an unexpected turn of events which makes it harder to accomplish something. I just thought it would be fun to include the word 'pickle' in this glossary. (Synonyms: Fine Kettle Of Fish, Sticky Situation, Bind, Box, Jam, Tight Spot.)

**Plato's Cave.** The most famous and influential, and puzzling, of Plato's many **parables** about **knowledge**. In Book 7 of *The Republic*, Plato invites us to imagine prisoners shackled in a cave, for the whole of their lives. Behind them, people walk by holding puppets, whose shadows the prisoners can see on the wall in front of them. These prisoners, knowing only the shadows, would come to believe that the shadows are the whole of reality. If someone were to liberate a prisoner and show them the puppets, and indeed the world outside the cave, the former prisoner might have a hard time accepting the truth. And if they were returned to their former position in the cave, the other prisoners might not believe or even understand anything the returning prisoner says about the real world. Well, this is a short and incomplete one-paragraph summary: but it's easy enough to find out more from Plato's original text, and from the mountains of commentary written about it over the centuries. There is simply no underestimating the influence and intellectual fertility of this story. (See: **Metaphysics**)

**Platonic Forms.** Entities whose existence is immaterial, eternal, unchanging, knowable only to the mind and not the senses, perfect, and which are responsible for the 'being' of everything else. Objects which are available to our physical senses 'participate' in the Being of the Forms, and are less real than the Forms, in a manner comparable to how the reflection of an object in a mirror is less real than the object itself. For Plato, all the world is an imperfect reflection of the world of Forms. This is Plato's most famous theory, and perhaps the most famous version of **idealism**.

**Poe's Law.** Identified in 2005 by Christianforums.com participant Nathan Poe, this law states that: 'Without a winking smiley or other blatant display of humour, it is utterly impossible to parody a Creationist in such a way that *someone* won't mistake for the genuine article.' More generally, Poe's Law states that without some obvious indicator of the author's intent (such as a smiley or an emoticon), parodies of extremist views in any field might still be mistaken for a real view.

**Poisoning the Well.** A variation of the Genetic Fallacy and the *ad hominem* fallacy; a way of **framing** a debate to ensure that all ideas and arguments from a particular person or source are pre-emptively dismissed, or treated with unnecessarily severe suspicion. It is a way of

attacking someone's honesty or reputation before that person presents any of her ideas, and so undermining the possibility of continued rational discussion. (See also: **Fallacy**, **Framing Language**.)

**Polytheism.** In religion, the idea that there are many gods. Historically, this idea is older than monotheism; and psychologically, it is more consistent with people's actual religious experiences. Nonetheless, theologians in monotheist traditions often devote their time to showing why polytheism is wrong.

**Posthuman.** A theorized species of sentient being, who might live in the far future, and who evolved via technology from present-day humans. (See: **TESCREAL Bundle**, in the Outline History.)

**Positivism, Logical Positivism.** A position or a tendency of analytic philosophy which holds that propositions are meaningful only if they refer to something in the observable world, and if they can be shown either true or false.

**Postmodernism.** Incredulity toward metanarratives (see **Lyotard**). A position or tendency of philosophical thought characterised by radical skepticism of any truths, worldviews, narratives, and values which claim to be 'universal'. Also characterised by the analysis and criticism of those universal values by way of historical or social contexts, outsider positions and experience, relativism, and irony. (See also: **Modernism**, **Continental Tradition**.)

**Post-Truth** (Era of). Some cultural critics say that in our times, objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. (See also: **Fake News**, **Alternative Facts**, **Truthiness**, **Rhetoric**.)

**Practical Imperative.** A principle of ethics proposed by Immanuel Kant: 'Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in yourself or in another, as an end in itself, never as a means to an end.' (See also: **Deontology**, **Categorical Imperative**, **Ethics**.)

**Pragmatism.** A theory of truth developed by **Charles Sanders Peirce**, which holds that propositions can be true if they happen to be empirically useful to believe. Note that this theory of truth was meant to apply especially to empirical propositions (that is, propositions about observable facts), and not social or ethical ones. (See also: **Theory of Truth**.)

**Precautionary Principle.** A principle of environmental ethics, introduced by **Hans Jonas**. It states that "When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Raffensperger and Tickner, *Protecting Public Health and the Environment: Implementing the Precautionary Principle* (Washington DC USA: Island Press, 1999) pg. 8

**Premise.** A proposition given in support of a conclusion. (See also: **Argument**.)

**Prima Facie.** (Latin: 'At first glance' or 'on the face'). A conclusion one might draw about things or events from a brief or superficial inspection before investigating more deeply.

**Prima Facie Duties.** A theory of **Deontology**, developed by **W.D. Ross**, which holds that instead of following **Kant's** inflexible imperatives, we should follow a list of basic moral duties as follows: fidelity, reparation, gratitude, non-maleficence, beneficence, justice, and self-improvement. Ross also included in his theory four **intrinsic goods**: **virtue**, **knowledge**, **justice**, and pleasure.

**Principle of Charity.** A professional courtesy among philosophers: The assumption that other people are rational unless there are good reasons to assume otherwise; the practice of interpreting other people's arguments in the best possible light.

**Prisoner's Dilemma.** A type of **game theory** problem. The Prisoner's Dilemma was first invented by American mathematicians working for the RAND corporation. But it was put into its best known form and given its name by Canadian-born mathematician Albert Tucker. It can arise in all kinds of circumstances: from negotiating business deals to international diplomatic relations.

Here's one version of the dilemma. Suppose you and an accomplice have been arrested for committing some minor crime. The police separate you, and tell you that if your accomplice doesn't confess you'll get one year in jail if you confess, but two years if you don't confess. If your accomplice confesses, you'll get three years if you confess, and four years if you don't. They also say they're offering the same deal to your accomplice. The payoff matrix thus looks like this:

	<b>You: Cooperate with silence</b>	<b>You: Defect with a confession</b>
<b>Accomplice: Cooperate with silence</b>	You both get 2 years	You get 1 year Accomplice gets 4 years
<b>Accomplice: Defect with a confession</b>	You get 4 years Accomplice gets 1 year	You both get 3 years

You can see how it is to your advantage to defect, and thus get only one year in jail. But your accomplice can see this too: so he also defects, and so you get three years. On the other hand, if you cooperate, and your accomplice also cooperates, you get only two years.

**Privilege.** The social and/or political advantages that people may have but which they didn't earn; advantages associated with membership in a socially favoured or dominant group, such as the advantages of being male, white, able-bodied, middle-class, upper-class, a member of a majority religious group, etc. The possessor of such privileges might not even know he or she has them; and might use them either to obstruct or to assist the liberation of oppressed or marginalized people around them. (See: **ethics, feminism, queer theory.**)

**Proof.**

- [1] Evidence; an observable state of affairs in the world whose expression in a sentence can be used as a first premise in an argument (see: **Truth, Correspondence theory of truth**)
- [2] In mathematics: an argument used by mathematicians to show that a conclusion is logically guaranteed by the **axioms**; a demonstration that a given **theorem** is true. There are many mathematical forms of proof: direct, combinatorial, statistical, visual, by transposition, by construction, by exhaustion, etc.

**Problem of Communication:** In Information Theory: the problem of “reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point” (c.f. **Claude Shannon.**)

**Problem of Evil.** A dilemma posed by an apparent contradiction between religious **faith** and the existence of evil in the world. To explain: it's rational to suppose that if the gods are all-powerful and all-good, as most people believe they are, then they would have got rid of evil by now. Since this has not happened, it follows that either the gods are unable to get rid of evil (so, they're not all-powerful), or that they do not want to (so, they're not all-good). In either case something is seriously wrong with the usual idea of the nature of the gods. The ancient **Skeptic** philosophers, who discovered this problem, thought that its solution was to claim that the gods are not all-good; they do not interfere with most moral affairs because to do so would disturb their **ataraxia**.

**Problem of Induction.** A logical puzzle identified by David Hume. It states that all inductive arguments that aim to predict something about the future rest on hidden and indefensible premises about past experiences. This problem seemed to make all scientific endeavours impossible; or, if not impossible, then at least incapable of reaching the certainty that scientists wanted. (See also: **Falsification, Skepticism.**)

**Propaganda.** A communication from any political organization (government, churches, corporations, charities, etc.) intended to raise public support for its projects. Most people today use the word in a pejorative or ironic sense.

**Proposition.** A statement; a claim. In analytic logic, a simple sentence that has only one meaning, which can be either true or false.

**Propositional Logic.** A branch of formal logic involving propositions and argument structures of various kinds, some Deductive and some Inductive; any type of argument in formal logic that doesn't fall under **Categorical Logic**.

**Qualia.** In analytic philosophy of mind: the characteristics of our sense-experiences, as distinct from the properties of the things sensed. For example, if an object might emit light at a wavelength of 400 nanometers, your mind perceives this light as 'red'. The photons exist in the world, but the 'redness' of the light is a qualia, existing only in your mind. It is the same for sounds, tastes, etc. (See also: **Mary's Room**, **Hard Problem of Consciousness**.)

**Queer Theory.** Historically, Queer Theory begins as a branch of **feminism** and **critical theory** which studied the lives, experiences, cultures, etc., of gays and lesbians, and the problems and oppressions they face. It rejects heteronormativity: the claim that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural form of human sexuality; the queer-theory analogue of **patriarchy**. It also examines the **privileges** enjoyed by sexually hetero-normative people. Introduced by **Michel Foucault**, **Judith Butler**, etc., it expanded to include the study of a wider variety of marginalized and/or nonconforming people, especially (though not exclusively) in relation to their sexuality. It also contributes to debates about personal identity, **ethics**, and **justice**.

**Questions.** You already know what questions are, but I think it's awesome that you're reading this glossary. Cheers! Oh and by the way, a typology of good and bad questions can be found in chapter 2 of *Clear And Present Thinking 2nd Edition*.

**Radical Feminism.** A branch of modern feminism which prioritizes women's and women-centred perspectives, examines and creates women-centred cultures, and works for the elimination of all forms of gender discrimination. Radical feminism is more likely to advocate the abolition of social systems which contribute to women's oppression, rather than their transformation or their change. It's also more likely to attribute women's oppression to a deliberate and/or organized effort by men to preserve the **Patriarchy**. (See also: **Liberal Feminism**, **Social Feminism**.)

**Rationalism.** A school of thought, emerging in the **Enlightenment**, which holds that at least some of our knowledge can be **a priori**.

**Rationality.** See: **Reason**.

**Raven Paradox.** A version of the **Problem of Induction**, introduced by **Carl Hempel**. Consider the following two statements:

1. All ravens are black.
2. All things that are not black are not ravens.

These two statements are logically equivalent: they have the same meaning. So, it must follow that any support for one statement would also support the other statement. If we had some kind of objective evidence that proved (1) is true, then that evidence would also prove (2) is true. Yet there's something absurd in that. Surely a trivial observation about, for example, a stop sign at a road intersection, cannot tell you anything important about ravens.

**Realpolitik.** In political philosophy: a way of governing which emphasizes practical concerns over ideological ones; especially concerning how to gain and preserve political power.

**Reason, Rationality.** (Adj: Rational.)

- [1] Organized curiosity.
- [2] The capacity of the human mind to understand the world; the process of rendering the world intelligible and unmysterious; The capacity of the human mind to solve difficult problems or complete difficult tasks using **logic**, mathematics, and/or the **scientific method**.
- [3] As a singular noun ('a reason'), it is an explanation or a justification for one's ideas or beliefs. (See: **Inference, Conclusion**.)
- [4] As a verb ('to reason') it is the activity of investigating and understanding something, of solving problems (as per [2]), and of discussing things with others so that people can teach and learn from each other, and/or come to agreement with each other. (see: **Dialectic, Socratic Dialogue**.)
- [5] In ethics: the capacity to make deliberate responsible choices; 'responsible' in the sense that one is 'able to respond', by way of moral principles, when asked to explain oneself. In **capitalism** and in **libertarianism**, for example, **self-interest** is considered rational. In virtue theory, rationality is a virtue, necessary for the pursuit of **eudaimonia**.

**Reasonable Doubt.** Healthy skepticism; the suspension of acceptance of some statement or proposition, due to an absence of sufficient support for it. (See also: **Skepticism**.)

**Rectification of Names, The.** An ethical and logical principle attributed to Confucius, which requires people to use appropriate and correct words to describe their plans and situations.

**Reduction, Reductionism.**

- [1] In analytic philosophy: The substitution of complex statements for simpler ones having the same meaning; the activity of analyzing any complex phenomenon in terms of its simplest and most elementary parts and processes. Sometimes this is coupled with the claim that the reductionist explanation of the given phenomenon is all the explanation you need. Arguments like this have been used to deny the existence of the soul, the mind, personal identity, God, and so on.
- [2] In the analytic philosophy of personal identity: the claim that one's personal identity consists in psychological and physiological connectedness over time with the right kind of cause, and nothing else (See also: **Derek Parfit**).

[3] In analytic philosophy of mind: the claim that the mind can be entirely explained as a bio-physical process taking place in one's brain and nervous system.

[4] in **phenomenology**: the result of applying an act of **epoché** to one's perceptions, in order to study the pure phenomena. (See also: **Edmund Husserl**.)

**Reference**. The contribution to the meaning of a proposition that derives from the definition of words, and from the events or things in the world those words indicate. (See also: **Sense**).

**Relativism**. The belief that a claim is true or false only in relation to some other condition; the belief that no claim is absolutely true for all times places and people, nor absolutely false for all times, places and people. Relativism is often well-intentioned: For instance, it may help people with different worldviews understand each other and coexist in peace. However, it can also obscure or derail the search for truth, and it can serve as a justification for prejudice, bad thinking habits, and **value programs** generally. (See also: **Cultural Relativism**, **Personal Belief Relativism**.)

**Renaissance, the**. A period in European history, spanning roughly from 1450-1650, in which philosophical knowledge lost since the end of the Classical period was rediscovered, and **humanist** ideas rose to prominence. See the Outline History for more details.

**Renaissance Man**: a person who is highly educated, multi-talented, capable, a polymath in a variety of arts and sciences; basically someone who is a lot like **Leonardo DaVinci**.

**Rhetoric**. The art of effective persuasion, especially in speaking and writing; the use of composition techniques and figures of speech to impress or influence an audience, possibly with little concern for what is truly right or wrong, and/or what the speaker actually believes.

**Rhetorical Question**. A proposition phrased in the form of a question, for which the speaker usually expects a very specific answer, one which suits their purposes. (See also: **Rhetoric**.)

**Righteousness (li)**. In Confucianism: knowledge of, and observance of, the many rules of etiquette and propriety. This principle is meant to be practiced in concert with **Humanity (ren)**; for without it, *li* may lack sincerity. (See also: **The Five Relations**.)

**Romanticism**. This was a movement in Europe's intellectual history spanning roughly from 1750-1850, which served as a counterpoint to the **Enlightenment**. It held that art, passion, feeling, imagination, and especially struggle, were the most important sources of knowledge and meaning in life, both personally and politically. (See the Outline History for details.)

**Rule Utilitarianism**. See **Act Vs Rule Utilitarianism**.

**Russell's Paradox**. Imagine there's a town with only one barber, and he shaves all those, and only those, who do not shave themselves. Who, then, shaves the barber? If he shaves himself,



then he cannot be the barber who shaves all and only those who don't shave themselves. If he does not shave himself, then he falls into the class of people he must shave. To put the problem more precisely: in any discussion of Set Theory (a branch of mathematics), can the set of all sets be a member of itself? (See also: **Incompleteness Theorem, Paradox, Bertrand Russell**)

**Russell's Teapot.** Imagine there's a china teapot orbiting the sun between the orbits of Earth and Mars. Suppose it's too small to be seen, even by our most powerful telescopes. You could have 'faith' that the teapot exists. But that would show how 'faith' can be a ground for believing anything at all, no matter how ridiculous. (See also: **Faith, Bertrand Russell.**)

**Sage Gentleman, The.** (*Junzi*. literally: "the lord's son") In Confucianism: the model of the ideal civilized person; a man (sorry, but it's usually a man) who has completely embodied the Confucian ethical ideals of **humanity, righteousness, filial piety**, etc. (See also: **Rectification of Names, Mandate of Heaven.**)

**Sample Size.** In inductive logic, and especially in inductive arguments concerning statistics, the sample size is the number or the fraction of the members of a group one studies in order to draw conclusions about all members of the group. Errors in logic follow when the sample size is too small to be indicative of properties of the larger group. (See also: **Induction.**)

**Samsara.** In Hinduism and Buddhism: the suffering that arises from attachment.

**Sanctity of Life.** In Bioethics: the idea that there is something ethically special, important, or sacred about human life, such that its preservation and protection is a fundamental moral priority. Often drawing on religious ethics for its foundation, the Sanctity of Life principle often appears in arguments about the wrongness of abortion, doctor-assisted suicide, and active euthanasia.

**Satyagraha.** In Hinduism: 'holding firm', or 'truth-force', or (in practical terms, as demonstrated by the Great Soul, **Mohandas Ghandi**), passive resistance. One can fight an oppressor by interrupting their capacity to oppress, by refusing to be an accomplice or an enabler of their oppression, by exposing the oppressor's hidden **value programs** to public critical attention. (See: **Ethics.**)

**Scholasticism.** The dominant school of thought in Europe's Middle Ages, which demanded strict logical deduction and which aimed to unite classical Greek and Roman philosophy with Christian theology. (See also: **Doctrine of the Mean, Logos, Syllogism.**)

**Science.** (From Latin: *Scientia*, knowledge). Procedures for reasoning about the nature of the world using evidence, experiments, mathematical quantification of experimental results, and the testing of **Hypotheses**.

**Scientific Method.** See: **Science.**

**Self-interest.**

[1] In economics and in game theory, the central assumption about human nature and rational decision-making, rarely if ever questioned, is that all participants in the economy are 'rational self-maximizers'; that is, they're all working to benefit themselves. There might be various strategies involved, in which a rational self-maximizer balances short term and long term interests, and balances competition and cooperation with others. (See: **Adam Smith, Capitalism, Utility**).

[2] In **informal logic**, this is a type of bad thinking habit, typically leading to observer bias—especially when disconnected from **ethics** or from **objectivity**. (See also: **Habit of Thinking**.)

**Sense.** The contribution to the meaning of a proposition which comes from the context in which the proposition is uttered. (See also: **Reference, Worldview, Intellectual Environment**).

**Semiotics.** The branch of philosophy that studies signs, symbols, their interpretations, and how meaning arises from them. (See: **Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce**.)

**Seven Bridges of Konigsberg Problem:** The city of Koningsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia) used to have seven bridges across its river and central island. They were arranged in such a way that it was mathematically not possible for someone to cross all seven of them, once each, without retracing their steps— though plenty of mathematicians tried to find such a way.

**Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication.** A principle in **Information Theory**, in which information moves from source to transmitter to receiver to destination, but at various points along this process the information can be garbled or rendered meaningless by a source of interference or **noise**. (See: **Information Theory**, see also **Claude Shannon**.)

**Shariah.** In Islam: law, especially the laws described in the Koran, and/or based on the Hadith (stories of the life and teachings of the prophet Muhammed), as well as the mountains of judicial precedents and traditions which have accumulated over the centuries.

**“Shut up and calculate!”** A flippant remark by the physicist N. David Mermin, attempting to summarize what scientists should do about the weirdness of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics.

**Simulation Argument.** An argument by **Nick Bostrom**, following from various ideas in the **TESCREAL Bundle** of worldviews (see the Outline History), which suggests it is very probable that we are all living in a computer-generated simulation, and not in the real world. You can think of it almost like a modern day version of Plato's Cave. The argument is the claim that one of the following three propositions must be true:

1. the human species is very likely to go extinct before reaching a “**posthuman**” stage,
2. any posthuman civilization is extremely unlikely to run a significant number of simulations of their evolutionary history,
3. we are almost certainly living in a computer simulation.<sup>5</sup>

### **Singularity.**

- [1] The point in the centre of a black hole, where matter reaches infinite density. Mathematicians and physicists alike still puzzle over how that could be possible.
- [2] In the **TESCREAL Bundle** of worldviews: an event postulated to take place in the future, when artificially intelligent computers become more intelligent than we are. It's a modern-day technological equivalent of a religious prophesy about a God who will some day come down from heaven and save us all from— well, from everything. Maybe from reality itself. Who knows.

**Ship of Theseus.** A famous **thought experiment**, from ancient Greek philosophy. Imagine a wooden sailing ship setting out from Athens. Each day of its journey, Theseus and the crew remove one plank and replace it with a new one. By the time they return, every plank on the ship has been replaced. Now, is it still the same ship as the one that first set out? If it's not, then could a definite time be fixed as to when the ship became no longer the same? As you have probably realized, this experiment is not really about ship building. It's about selfhood, and personal identity over time, and the Greeks who invented this story knew that. It's a way of asking questions like this: Given that your body and perhaps your thoughts are not the same now as they were in the past, and given that the material which makes up your body is changing all the time, how do you know you are the same person now as you were an hour ago? A week ago? Ten years ago? And so on.

**Skepticism.** From the Greek: *σκέψις*, *skepsis*, an examination, an investigation.

- [1] A school of philosophy from ancient Greece, which held that it is not possible to have certain knowledge about anything. One can make useful generalizations. But even so, you must retain some amount of doubt about anything you think you know, for it is always possible that you are wrong. (See the entry in the Outline History.)
- [2] Unwillingness to accept that (some) things are (always) as they appear to be.
- [3] Unwillingness to accept that which is not obviously evident, or that which requires extraordinary evidence, without further investigation.
- [4] Unwillingness to accept the views of others, no matter how earnestly those views are believed and no matter how numerous the believers, if one finds the reasons for those views are not strong enough, or if there are simpler reasons backed with better evidence that support different views.

(See also: **Habits of Thinking, Reasonable Doubt, Informal Logic, Ockham's Razor.**)

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<sup>5</sup> Bostrom, N. “Are you living in a computer simulation?” *Philosophical Quarterly* (2003) Vol. 53, No. 211, pp. 243-255.

**Social Contract.** A theory of **Justice** proposed by **Thomas Hobbes**, **John Locke**, and **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**, which holds that all the members of a given society are involved in a contract relationship with one another. In this contract, individual people owe various responsibilities to society, and society provides various benefits to the individual members in return; benefits which make individuals better off than they would be without a social contract. (See also: **State of Nature**.)

**Social Feminism.** A branch of modern **feminism** which examines the social and cultural institutions that contribute to the oppression of women, and examines the relation between a woman's private life and her public life. Social feminism places greater emphasis on criticizing, and changing, the social forces which contribute to the oppression of women. (See also: **Liberal Feminism**, **Radical Feminism**.)

**Socialism.** A system of economics and politics in which some of the necessities of civilization (knowledge, freedom, health, roads and bridges, etc.) are universally available, taxpayer-funded, and government regulated. Like other political worldviews, socialism can come in many forms, depending on how many or how few of those necessities are in public hands, and the extent to which their regulation is subject to democratic oversight. Thus, 'state socialism', 'national socialism', and 'democratic socialism' are three *very* different things. (see also: **Civil Commons**, **Capitalism**, **Communism**.)

**Socratic Dialogue.** A method of logical enquiry developed by **Socrates**: One person poses philosophical questions to the other, not only to discover acceptable answers, but also to find and eliminate logical inconsistencies or other **Aporia**.

**Socratic Wisdom.** The knowledge of one's own ignorance; the knowledge of the limits of one's knowledge; the knowledge that one knows nothing of great importance. The willingness to admit that you don't know something. Named for **Socrates**, the Greek philosopher whose most important claim to fame was that he knew *that* he knew nothing of importance at all.

**Solipsism.** The view that only one's own mind exists; everything else is a projection. It's quite silly to believe this, but it's also annoyingly difficult to disprove.

**Sophistry.** The use of **Logic**, and also logical **Fallacies**, to dominate debates and/or to deceive people; argumentation which, on a superficial level, appears sound, but upon closer inspection is shown to be unsound. (See also: **Rhetoric**.)

**State of Nature.** A **thought experiment** invented by **Thomas Hobbes**, and used by various philosophers afterward who study theories of **justice**, including **Locke** and **Rousseau**. It imagines what life might be like for people if they have only their own human nature to guide their behaviour and relations: so, no government, no codes of law, no churches, no markets, no forms of organized civil society of any kind. The conclusions drawn from this experiment will vary, depending on one's assumptions about human nature. But in general

the idea is to show that we are better-off living in a civil state with a clear **social contract**. (See also: **Original Position**.)

**Statement.** See Proposition.

**Stoicism.** (adj.: Stoic.) A school of thought in classical Greece and Rome, founded by Zeno of Citium (336-264 BCE), which holds that the cosmos is governed by an all-unifying rational order, comparable to the **Logos** but perhaps closer to **Nous** (Greek: 'Mind'); and that happiness comes from letting go of that which we cannot control. (See also: the entry in the Outline History).

**Strength.** In analytic logic, a property of correct inferences in **Inductive** arguments.

**Soundness.** In analytic logic, a property of arguments as a whole; a property of arguments which have true premises and valid (or strong) **Inferences**.

**Subalterns.**

- [1] In formal logic, this refers to two statements which can both be true at the same time because one of them is a universal statement and the other is particular statement that is implied by the universal. (See also: **Contraries**, **Contradictories**, **Subcontraries**.)
- [2] A concept proposed by philosopher and sociologist **Antonio Gramsci**: a name for the people living in a colonised society who are excluded from the hierarchies of colonial power.

**Subcontraries.** In logic: two statements which could both be true, but which cannot both be false. (See also: **Contraries**, **Contradictories**, **Subalterns**.)

**Subjective Relativism.** (See also: Personal Belief Relativism.)

**Substance.** In Aristotle's **philosophy** and also in **Scholasticism**: the essence of an object; the ultimate **noumena** of something, to which may be attached properties or **attributes** like size, shape, colour, mass, etc.

**Sufficient Conditions.** In science and in analytic logic, a condition which—if fulfilled—is enough to make a proposition true. (See also: **Necessary Conditions**).

**Sustainable Development.** In environmental ethics: "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The World Commission on Environment and Development / The Brundtland Commission. *Our Common Future*. (Oxford University Press, 1987) pg. 43.

**Syllogism.** A type of formal argument pattern that was the most important type of argumentation from the time of its invention by Aristotle until the rise of Empiricism. It consists of three categorical propositions: The first is the major premise, the second is the minor premise, and the third is the conclusion. (See also: **Categorical Logic, Categorical Proposition, Scholasticism, Argument.**)

**Symbolic Logic, Symbolic Language System.** A procedure of simplifying and clarifying arguments using symbols to represent propositions and logical relations, first developed by **Gottfried Leibniz** and further developed by various philosophers in the analytic tradition.

**Synthetic Proposition.** A logical proposition which expresses two or more thoughts, combined (synthesized) together, usually by a **Boolean operator**. (See also: **Analytic Proposition.**)

**Tabula Rasa.** (Latin: "Blank slate"). A theory of human nature, introduced by **John Locke**, which says that we human beings do not have a pre-determined nature. We become naturally one way or another through the influence of our choices, and our environments.

**Tao, The.** Major concept in Taoism, an influential ancient Chinese religion and worldview. Notoriously difficult to translate into English: it can be thought of as the way or the guide of nature.

**Tautology.** A proposition or argument which is true because of its logical form alone; an argument in which the premises and conclusion have exactly the same meaning, and therefore nothing may be concluded.

**Theorem.** A mathematical statement which has been proved on the basis of **axioms** and other previously proven theorems. (See also: **Lemma.**)

**Theory.** In science, an explanation of things or events which has thus far resisted all attempts to prove it false; the best explanation of things or events scientists presently work with. (See also **Science, Hypothesis.**)

**Theory of Truth.** A theory that attempts to explain how one might find out whether a given proposition is true. In analytic philosophy there are three main theories: **Correspondence, Coherence, and Pragmatic.**

**Thick and Thin Moral Concepts.** When we make moral evaluations of someone's behaviour, we tend not to judge their self or their essence. Instead we might say they were kind, or cowardly, or generous, or miserly, etc. But at the same time we might also include some practical or non-moral evaluations: we might say someone is wise, clever, foolish, talented, or annoying. The inclusion of these non-moral concepts in moral evaluations is what makes the moral concepts 'thick'. When we judge someone's actions as 'good' or 'bad' in general,

without otherwise saying anything about it, we're using 'thin' concepts. (See: **Bernard Williams**, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, 1985).

**Thing-In-Itself.** In epistemology: the existence of an object in the world; its objective being; its actual nature or properties, apart from that which appears to the physical senses and to consciousness. Kant argued (much to his own disappointment) that the thing-in-itself cannot be known. (See also: **Phenomenology**, **Noumena**, **Immanuel Kant**.)

**Thought Experiment.** A work of intellectual imagination, in which concepts or problems are clarified, special attention is drawn to unexpected or unusual facts, or questions are cast into a clear light. Questions posed by thought experiments are not always easily answerable; there can be more than one good answer, and there could also be no answer at all. (See: **Parable**.)

**Teletransporter.** A **thought experiment** by **Derek Parfit**, and a kind of science-fiction version of the **Ship Of Theseus** problem. Imagine a machine that can disassemble the molecules in your body, then beam the information to another location where a similar machine can reassemble you. Suppose you step into the machine in order to beam yourself to Mars. The machine does its work, and then you step out and find yourself still on Earth. A technician tells you there has been an accident: Instead of transferring all your information to Mars the machine only copied it. There is now another 'you' on Mars. The other you calls you on a video phone to and says, 'I'm terribly sorry about the accident, but since I have all of your memories, feelings, and values, I will carry on with your life the same way you would have done.' Which is the real you?

**Tikkun Olam.** In Judaism: the duty to pursue **justice**; the duty "to mend the world". Expressions of this principle can be found in the Torah (for example: Deuteronomy 16:20, Leviticus 19:33-34, Micah 6:8), the Pirke Avot, the Talmud, and other rabbinic texts.

**Torah, The.** In Judaism: the name for the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. By the way, the Hebrew Bible is that part of the Bible written in the Hebrew language, which Christians refer to as the 'Old Testament'. (See the Outline History for remarks on the composition and canonization of the Bible.)

**Transhumanism:** A cultural and scientific movement, and part of the **TESCREAL Bundle** of worldviews (see the Outline History), which holds that the current condition of humanity need not be its final evolutionary state. Transhumanists believe we must enhance the human condition by genetically modifying ourselves, implanting technology into our bodies, colonizing other planets, etc. (See: **Nick Bostrom**, **Posthuman**)

**Trivially True.** To say that something is 'trivially true' is to say that it is true but also unimportant, insignificant, barely worth mentioning. It's like the intellectual equivalent of giving someone a slap in the face for being stupid. (See: **Deepity**.)

**Trolley Problem.** A **thought experiment** created by **Philippa Foot** and **Judith Jarvis**

**Thompson**, concerning difficulties in the Utilitarian calculus. Imagine you are at the controls of a runaway trolley, and it is about to strike and kill five people who are tied to the rails ahead. You cannot stop or derail the trolley, but you can switch it to a different track, where it will hit and kill only one person. What would you do? Consider also some variations of the Trolley Problem. For example: would it matter if someone tied to the tracks is a violent offender, or a great philanthropist? Or someone you know?

**Truth.** In analytic logic, a property of propositions. (See also: **Theory of Truth**, **Aletheia**, **Deepity**, your nearest **philosophy** professor, or your nearest source of overwhelming beauty. I prefer meadows and forests, art galleries, live music shows, and some of Einstein's field equations. You might prefer a well-played goal in your favourite sport. Or tomorrow morning's sunrise. The **Romantic** poet John Keats said: 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all ye know on earth, all ye need to know.' Was he right? Or was T.S. Eliot right to say that line was meaningless? I should get back to writing this glossary.)

**Truthiness.** A property of sentences, arguments, discussions, ideas, etc., that feel like they're correct, regardless of facts, evidence, or **logic**. A tactic for appealing to intuitions, feelings, 'gut feelings', and prejudices, to make someone believe that something is true. (Coined by the American comedian Stephen Colbert.)

**Turing Test:** A **thought experiment** invented by **Alan Turing**. He supposed that a computer can be said to be conscious if someone were to have a conversation with it, and be unable to tell the difference between the computer and a biological human.

**Underdetermination.** In science, an observation that confirms more than one theory. (See also: **Science**, **Overdetermination**.)

**Undistributed Middle.** A **fallacy** that arises when the middle premise of a **categorical syllogism** has not been placed in its proper position in the first and second premises.

**Utilitarian Calculus.** A procedure in ethics, in which one tries to count up how much benefit and harm is likely to follow from any choice you might make, according to various criteria: number of people affected, duration of the effect, its intensity, the likelihood of repetition in the future, etc. **Bentham** thought that through this procedure, it is possible to be mathematical and scientific about ethics, especially when drafting new laws or public policies.

**Utilitarianism.** A branch of **ethics**, given its name by **Jeremy Bentham**, that emphasizes consequences, outcomes, and results. In general, Utilitarianism holds that an action is morally right when it produces more benefit than harm for everyone affected. Some harms may be justified, so the theory goes, if they are compensated by equal or greater benefits. It also holds that everyone's right to happiness is the same as everyone else's. As Bentham



wrote: "Each to count for one, and none to count for more than one." (See: **Utility, Act vs Rule Utilitarianism.**)

**Utility.** The central concept of **utilitarianism**. Defined by various philosophers as happiness, pleasure, benefit, the satisfaction of wants and needs. Its opposite, disutility, has been variously defined as pain, harm, suffering, oppression, the denial or the deprivation of wants and needs.

**Validity.** In analytic logic, a property of correct inferences in **Deductive** arguments. Not to be confused with **soundness**.

**Value Program.** A type of faulty **worldview**. A value program (a) takes itself to be an absolute, unquestionable, universal truth, even while (b) fulfilling its requirements causes enormous and preventable suffering to people and environments, and even while (c) some of its propositions run contrary to observable facts of reality. A value program thus allows for no critical examination of its most important moral values, and justifies the harms caused by its believers. (See **John McMurtry** in the Outline History.)

**Veil of Ignorance.** See **Original Position, John Rawls**.

**Veil of Maya.** In Hinduism and Buddhism: illusion, fantasy, magic, wealth, beauty. In Hinduism, everything that produces the belief that things are disconnected or unrelated to each other is Maya; similarly, anything that interferes or obstructs the perception of **atman** and the pursuit of **moksha** is also Maya. That's true in Buddhism too, though Buddhism also adds that the **atman** is also Maya.

**Venn Diagram.** A visual method of testing the soundness of **categorical syllogisms**, that uses overlapping circles.

**Vinegar Tasters, The.** In Taoism: a **parable** about the differences between China's main religious world views, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The story goes that three sages were tasting some vinegar. The Buddhist said it tasted bitter, the Confucian said it tasted sour, and the Taoist said it tasted just right. This vinegar is obviously a symbol for something. I'm sure you can figure it out.

**Virtue.** The central concept in **Areteology** / Virtue Theory. A virtue could be defined as: a special quality of character; a behavioural or psychological disposition; a way of 'holding' or 'having' yourself; even a way of being in the world. In ancient Greek thought, **Aristotle** defined it as "A settled disposition of habit determining the choice of actions and emotions" which emerge over time through one's "transactions with your fellow-men". In the 20th century revival of virtue theory, **Philippa Foot** defined them as agent-centred values which benefit those who possess them, are involved with the will, and act as correctives to faults in human nature. (See also: **Doctrine of the Mean.**)

**Virtue Theory.** See **Virtue, Areteology.**

**Watchmaker Analogy.** An early-modern version of the Design Argument, developed by **William Paley**. It states that the universe is of such complexity and such elegant inter-relatedness, that it must have been deliberately designed that way by God, in a manner comparable to how a pocket-watch is also a device of such complexity and elegance that it cannot have emerged from a blind process of nature. This point, Paley believed, would be clear even to someone encountering a pocketwatch for the first time in their lives, having no prior knowledge of pocketwatches. (See: **Design Argument, Fine-Tuning Argument.**)

**Weasel Words.** Statements or phrases that are deliberately ambiguous; statements or phrases which, while not actually false, nevertheless give the listener a misleading picture of the facts.

**Weeding.** In Library Science: the process by which librarians select what books, periodicals, or other library resources, will be removed from a collection, perhaps because they're obsolete, out of date, left unused for too long, or they just need room for other things. Although this is a form of **information** loss, it is often necessary for preserving the usefulness and relevance of the collection.

**Whistle-blowing.** A form of **Parrhesia**; the act of drawing public attention to some kind of moral wrongdoing or illegal act in one's workplace, or one's community, especially if that wrongdoing is perpetrated covered-up by those in power.

**Will To Power.** In **ethics**: the argument, introduced by **Friedrich Nietzsche**, that the most important psychological motivation in people's lives is not a wish for peace or justice or salvation or any other high-minded value prized by most religious worldviews, but instead, the struggle for power.

What is good?— Whatever augments the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself, in man.

What is bad?— Whatever springs from weakness

What is happiness?— The feeling that power *increases*— that resistance is overcome.

Not contentment, but more power; *not* peace at any price, but war; not virtue but efficiency (virtue in the Renaissance sense, *virtù*, free of moral acid.)<sup>7</sup>

**Worldview.** In informal logic: The sum of one's answers to the highest and deepest questions in life; the intellectual **narrative** in terms of which the actions, choices, and purposes of individuals and groups make sense; a mindset; a way of perceiving and interpreting things; a way of thinking; that which is revealed by someone's use of a **framing language**. Attributed to **Albert Schweitzer**, who defined it as: 'The content of the thoughts of society and the

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<sup>7</sup> H.L. Menken, trans. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (Noontide Press, (1980) § 2, pg, 42-3

individuals which compose it about the nature and object of the world in which they live, and the position and the destiny of mankind and of individual men within it.' (See also:

**Metanarrative, Limit Situation, Intellectual Environment, Value Program, Ideology.**)

**Wu-Wei.** In Taoism: non-action, non-interference; the practice of accomplishing tasks by making good use of natural forces already at work in the world around you; working 'with' nature instead of 'against' it. (See: **The Tao.**)

**Zeno's Paradoxes.** A group of contradictory and/or perplexing sayings, attributed to the early Greek philosopher **Zeno of Elea**, which seem to show logical problems in everyday events such as motion through space. Here's how they go:

(1) *The first paradox: The Stadium.* Imagine you want to walk from one end of a soccer field to another. Before you get to the other side, you have to cross the half-way line. But before you can cross the half-way line, you have to cross the one-quarter line, and so on, ad infinitum. The point is, if you want to move from one point in space to another, you have to cross some half-way point, which is impossible, since space is infinitely divisible. So, motion is impossible.

(2) *The Second Paradox: Achilles and the Tortoise.* Suppose Achilles and a tortoise were in a running race. Suppose, also, that Achilles gave the tortoise a generous head start. The trouble is that when Achilles begins running, he can quickly reach the point where the tortoise began but by that time the tortoise will have moved on. So, to win the race, Achilles first has to run to the point where the tortoise is, but by that time it will have moved on. And this, too, continues forever. So, Achilles can never catch up to the tortoise.

(3) *The Third Paradox: The Flying Arrow.* Here, Zeno tries to show a problem in the way we talk about things in motion. An object, like an arrow, is at rest when it occupies a space equal to its own dimensions. But even after you launch an arrow from your bow, it always occupies a space equal to its own dimensions. So an arrow in flight is actually at rest.

(4) *The Fourth Paradox: The Moving Rows.* Imagine three rows of people, all the same size. One group remains stationary. The second group runs toward the first group, in a line parallel to the first group. And the third runs at the first group, in the same parallel line and at the same speed but from the opposite direction. Each member of the second group will pass each member of the third group in half the time as it passes each member of the first. So at some point in the process, one group might only half-overlap another, while fully overlapping (or not) a third. In order for that to be true, each member of each group cannot be an indivisible unit of space. The point here is to show that **Leucippus'** atomism is wrong.

It may appear as if Zeno is only playing language games with you, or that these paradoxes could be solved if only we could imagine some other form of reality besides time-and-space. But it's also possible that he prefigured some of the 20th century's thorniest math problems, such as **Bertrand Russell's** famous aporia that 'the class of all classes cannot be a member of itself'. (See also: **Aporia, Paradox.**)