1: Possible world - Wikipedia

Martin Benjamin's Philosophy & this Actual World is a brilliant book and a joy to read. Benjamin has surpassed all of those who have attempted to reconcile the 19th century American philosophical tradition with contemporary analytic philosophy.

She acted on that knowledge and quenched her thirst. Your helpful statement expressed a paradigmatic instance of knowledge of the external world. According to Locke there are two main questions to ask about any kind of knowledge, including cases like the knowledge of the external world you shared with your friend. First, what do you know? Second, how do you acquire or achieve such knowledge? The Content of Sensitive Knowledge For now we will simply suppose that you did have some knowledge of the external world to share with your friend. Assuming that you did have some knowledge to share, what exactly did you know and share with your friend? Or, as we might put it in more technical terms, what is the content of your knowledge in this case? More generally, what do we know in cases of knowledge of the external world? Locke argues that we can know three different kinds of things really exist. First, each person can know their own existence at any given time. I can know now that I exist at this time. You can know, as you read this, that you exist while you read this. Second, Locke believes that we can know that God exists. Third, we can know that other things distinct from our minds really exist. When you said to your friend that there was a water fountain over there, the knowledge of real existence you expressed was of this third kind. As you looked at the fountain you knew that there was then something distinct from your mind really existingâ€"the water fountain. Presumably you also knew many other things distinct from your mind to exist at that time: The knowledge you shared with your friend, however, concerned the existence of the water fountain. You knew that the water fountain existed distinct from your mind. How We Come to have Sensitive Knowledge Locke gives a somewhat unusual name to knowledge of the external world. There is something special, according to Locke, about how knowledge of the external world is achieved that sets it apart from how knowledge of other matters, such as mathematical knowledge, is achieved. According to Locke, knowledge of the external world is different than what he calls intuitive knowledge. Intuitive knowledge is knowledge that we grasp immediately and without any need for proof or explanation. For example, anyone who has ideas of the colors white and black and compares those ideas immediately knows that white is not black. This is the kind of knowledge we often have concerning the meanings of words, at least when words are given explicit definition. Locke also holds that knowledge of the external world is different than the kind of knowledge we achieve through proofs or argument. When someone proves that the sum of the three interior angles of a triangle is equal to the sum of two right angles through a proof with multiple steps, Locke calls such knowledge demonstrative knowledge. Locke would say that such a person has demonstrated their conclusion. Knowledge of the external world is not arrived at by any such argument or proof. Knowledge of the external world is not achieved through thinking about the definitions of our terms or comparing ideas that we have already acquired. Instead, knowledge of the external world is achieved in sensory experience. It is through the entrance of an idea into our mind through the senses that we have knowledge of the external world. Suppose that the water fountain you saw was newly installed and had a fresh coat of crimson paint. As you looked at the water fountain and light reflected from the fountain to your eyes an idea of that distinct crimson color entered your mind. According to Locke, as the sensation of that color entered your mind you knew that something crimson existed distinct from your mind by its somehow producing that sensation in you. Your knowledge of the existence of something crimson is therefore acquired in a way distinct from either intuitive or demonstrative knowledge. It does not depend on a proof or on comparing ideas already existing in your mind. The Limitations of Sensitive Knowledge So far, then, we have seen both the what and the how of knowledge of the external world according to Locke. What we know is real existence. How we know it is through sensationâ€"through the reception of ideas into our minds. The what and the how combine to place some severe limits on what Locke thinks we can know about the external world. First, our knowledge of the external world only extends as far as current sensory experience. As you look at the water fountain you know that it now exists. When you look away from the water fountain as you turn back

to your friend, you no longer know that it now exists. You only now know that it existed when you were looking at it. Similarly, you do not know that it existed before you looked at it. Locke does think that it is highly probable for you that the water fountain existed before and after you look at it. Indeed, he thinks that it is nearly, if not completely, impossible for you to avoid believing that the fountain existed before you saw it and continues to exist after you turn away. Your belief that the water fountain exists when you are not looking at it, then, is both rational and psychologically compelling, according to Locke. Our knowledge extends over relatively little of the world we ordinarily believe to exist. We only know to exist the sensible objects of our immediate sensory environment that are currently affecting us. Second, we only know the world as it appears to us through our senses. We do not know its underlying nature as it is in itself. This point can be helpfully illustrated by considering a new case. Suppose, for example, that you go on a field trip to gold country. You and the rest of the class dip a sieve into the river and sift out a few flakes of a yellowish metal. The class then goes into a mine, chips off chunks of rock, crush them up, and sift out more pieces of yellowish metal from the crushed stone. At the end of the field trip the class spreads all of the collected pieces of yellowish metal in front of them. As you survey the spread of hunks of yellowish metal you can know that there now exist several distinct objects that affect your mind by producing certain ideas in itâ€"sensations of yellow, solidity, etc. What you do not know is that there is some underlying nature that now exists in each of these hunks of stuff. Moreover, you do not know that they all have the same underlying nature. We are ignorant, in other words, about both the underlying nature of each individual object as well as whether the objects that appear similarly to us have similar underlying natures. There may be tremendous evidence supporting the theory that describes the underlying microstructure of these hunks of stuff and even explains why a microstructure of that type produces the appearances you now see. Such microstructure or underlying nature, however, is not part of how the hunks of stuff now appear to you. Thus, while it may be overwhelmingly probable that some underlying common nature exists in all of the things spread before you, you do not know that that nature exists before you. The belief that gold exists would be a very rational one to hold, based on all of the evidence we have to support our best physical and chemical theories. Nevertheless, such a belief would not be knowledge. Third, knowledge of the external world does not extend to other minds. Recall that Locke takes knowledge of the external world to be sensitive knowledge. Sensitive knowledge is achieved as a result of things operating on us through our senses. Locke does not think that other minds affect us directly through our senses. Our own mind produces ideas in us through what Locke calls reflection, a kind of inner sense directed at our own mind. Those bodies then affect our minds through our senses. As a result, no other minds directly produce ideas in our minds through our senses. When you saw the water fountain, for example, you knew that a crimson thing, that is a thing with a power to produce a certain sensation in you, then existed. When you saw the water fountain, for example, you knew that a thing produced a certain visual idea in your mind at that time; that a crimson sensation was then entering your mind. Locke begins Book IV with a definition of knowledge. To appreciate the potential tension between the definition of knowledge and sensitive knowledge it is worth quoting the definition at length. Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is, there is knowledge, and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge. This entry will adopt that convention. Foremost is how to resolve an ambiguity in the definition. Second, one may read the definition as stating that knowledge is the perception of agreement between ideasâ€"the perception of agreement of one idea with another idea. As we will see below in section 2. In the margin next to the paragraph following the definition of knowledge, Locke noted in his personal copy of the Essay that knowledge is the perception of agreement between two ideas. To begin, one might wonder: Knowledge of the external world, according to Locke, is knowledge of the existence of something distinct from our mind and so, of course, distinct from the ideas in our mind. Even Locke himself notes that the mere existence of an idea of something does not guarantee the existence of what that idea is an idea of. Merely having an idea of a freshly painted crimson water fountain does not guarantee that a freshly painted crimson water fountain really exists. At this point, if there is to be any hope, we ought to take a step back and ask: It seems clear that if I know the crimson water fountain exists, my idea of it will be one of

the ideas. What is the second idea? We might start making progress on this question by considering the content of sensitive knowledge. As detailed in section one above, we know that a thing exists distinct from our mind. For example, when you saw the freshly painted crimson water fountain down the hall, you knew that a crimson thing really exists. Perhaps, then, sensitive knowledge involves the perception of agreement between the idea of a thing and the idea of real existence. When you look down the hall and know the water fountain exists you perceive an agreement between your idea of the crimson water fountain and the idea of real existence.

2: Possible Worlds (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Philosophy & this actual world: an introduction to practical philosophical inquiry. [Martin Benjamin] -- Academic philosophy has become so technical and inbred that it often fails to connect with the questions and concerns of educated nonspecialists.

What Counts as Process Philosophy a. The Perennial Process Tradition Process philosophy argues that the language of development and change are more appropriate descriptors of reality than the language of static being. This tradition has roots in the West in the pre-Socratic Heraclitus , who likened the structure of reality to the element of fire, as change is reality and stability is illusion. Heraclitus is famous for the aphorism that one can never step in the same river twice. More recently on the continent, one finds process philosophers in Hegel, who saw the history of the world as processive and dialectic unfolding of Absolute Spirit and in Gottfried Leibniz , Henri Bergson, Nikolai Berdyaev, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Process Philosophy found its most fertile ground and active development in 20th century North America. He defines truth as the unattainable goal of a never-ending process of inquiry. Thus, Peirce correlates meaning with an ongoing and indeterminate historical process interpretation. Finally, Peirce was a staunch anti-determinist and advocated tychism, the belief that the operations of the natural world were not fixed and regular, but exhibit considerable spontaneity. James is considered a process philosopher for several reasons. Also, James was a strong proponent of libertarianism the belief in genuinely free choice, not the political ideology and argued that determinism was not a genuine candidate for belief. Likewise, the naming of objects is always tentative and human knowing cannot be divorced from its temporal context. Robert Mesle, among others. Assumptions and Method a. In Pursuit of a Holistic Worldview Whitehead begins the preface to his Science and the Modern World by noting that the human intuitions of science, aesthetics, ethics, and religion each make a positive contribution to the worldview of a community. In each historical period, any one or combination of these intuitions may receive emphasis and thus influence the dominant worldview of its people. It is a peculiar characteristic of the last three now four centuries that scientific pursuits have come to dominate the worldview of Western minds. For this reason, Whitehead seeks to establish a comprehensive cosmologyâ€"understood here in the sense of a systematic descriptive theory of the worldâ€"that does justice to all of the human intuitions and not only the scientific ones. Process philosophy is frequently used as a conceptual bridge to facilitate discussions between religion, philosophy, and science. Neo-Classical Realism Process philosophy represents an aberration in the history of philosophy, as it rejects the peculiarly Modern practice of beginning with philosophical analysis of the knowing subject and moving outwards toward descriptions of the world. Since Rene Descartes , epistemology the investigation of the origin, structure, methods and validity of knowledge has been primary and foundational, while ontology the study of fundamental principles of being has been secondary and only attempted once its possibility has been established by epistemological analysis. Process philosophers, however, tend to embrace the reverse, which was more common in classical Greek philosophy. Hartshorne was neoclassical not only because his philosophy was theocentric rather than egocentric, but also because of his strong tendencies toward rationalism. Hartshorne defended a variety of the ontological argument for the existence of God. It is a matter of debate between process philosophers and their critics, however, whether process philosophy is pre-modern or post-modern in this respect. Speculative Metaphysics Process philosophy as a whole employs three methodologies, usually simultaneously: Philosophy begins on the ground with the concrete reality of lived experience. Experience provides us with the raw data for our theories. Then, our thought takes off, losing contact with the ground and soaring into heights of imaginative speculation. During speculation, we use rational criteria and imagination to synthesize facts into a relatively systematic worldview. In the end, however, our theories must eventually land and once again make contact with the groundâ€"our speculations and hypotheses must ultimately answer once again to the authority of experience. The process of adjusting our metaphysics to meet the demands of experience is a task with no end in sight, as experience continually provides the philosopher with new facts. Thus, process metaphysics regards the status of its own claims as

contingent and tentative. This differs significantly from classical metaphysical systems, which are regarded as final, authoritative, and necessary. Creativity as Ultimate Whitehead argues that the best description of ultimate reality is through the principle of creativity. Creativity is the universal of universalsâ€"that which is only actual in virtue of its accidents or instances. Creativity is the most general notion at the base of all that actually exists. Whitehead also characterizes creativity as the principle of novelty. The events of the past are ceaselessly synthesized into a new and unique event, which becomes data for future events. This focus on oscillation between one and many forms the foundation of the process metaphysic. Events, not Substances The most counter-intuitive doctrine of process philosophy is its sharp break from the Aristotelian metaphysics of substance, that actuality is not made up of inert substances that are extended in space and time and only externally related to each other. Process thought instead states that actuality is made up of atomic or momentary events. They occur very briefly and are characterized by the power of self-determination and subjective immediacy though not necessarily conscious experience. The enduring objects one perceives with the senses for example, rocks, trees, persons, etc. Likewise, these individuals may aggregate together to form larger societies for example, rocks, trees, animal bodies. According to this model, a single electron would be a series of momentary electron-occasions. Whereas matter is self-sustaining, externally related, valueless, passive, and without an intrinsic principle of motion; organisms are interdependent, internally and externally related, value-laden, active, and intrinsically active. Internal and External Relations Process philosophy rejects the doctrine of scientific materialism and substance-based metaphysics that entities can only influence each other by means of external relations. In a metaphysic of material substance, solid bodies are only able to influence other solid bodies by making physical contact with them or exerting some force on them. Although these interaction produce change, they do not affect the intrinsic constitution of the bodies acted upon. As a result, the actualities of materialist metaphysics are able to endure interaction without any changes to their constitution. Process philosophy asserts that actual occasions influence each other by internal and external relations. When one actual occasion is internally related to another, the past occasions participate in and contribute to the intrinsic character of the present. Prehension is the experiential activity of an actual occasion by which characteristics of one occasion come to be present in another. Thus, one occasion may prehend certain qualities of an occasion in its past for example, a shade of red or a certain proposition. By means of prehension, a past occasion comes to be constitutively present in the contemporary occasion and contributes to its intrinsic character. This is not a voluntary or a necessarily conscious activity. One important consequence of this doctrine is the principle of relativity, which states that every actual occasion is internally related to every other actual occasion in its past that is, the entire past history of the universe , though the efficacy each past occasion exerts upon the present occasion may vary widely. Thus process philosophers describe the world as a vast and tangled web of relationalty and interdependence. The divine actuality, according to Whitehead, primordially envisages and orders the eternal objects into an ideal pattern s. Eternal objects are tiered in complexity. Several simple eternal objects can be ordered into a single complex eternal object, which would be an ordered arrangement of simpler eternal objects. The divine actuality mediates eternal objectsâ€"both simple and complexâ€"to other actual occasions by means of prehension. A person who experiences a musty smell feels that datum as a complex eternal object that was present in the occasions that make up the moldy book. The direct transmission of eternal objects from the divine actuality to worldly actual occasions is the chief source of novelty in the world. Hartshorne contends that Whitehead has obscured or overlooked the distinction between what is determinable and what is determinate. The former consists in unactualized possibility that is in no way settled beforehand. Hartshorne asks us to consider the advance possibilities of a painter creating a painting. Certainly the possible outcomes are partially definite. There are only so many pigments in existence and the perceptual range of human vision is fixed, but the precise outcome of this creative act is not pre-existent as an eternal object. Not even God, claims Hartshorne, can anticipate the products of human creativity. Prior to completion, the finished painting is determinable, but not determinate. Hartshorne, however, does not endorse nominalism, which he defines as the denial of a genuine distinction between the universal and the particular. Nominalists either deny ontological status to all universals or to all particulars. In this sense, Hartshorne is a realist, just not as robustly realist as Whitehead. He allows that some

universals are eternal for example, the necessary aspect of deity and numbers , but most are emergent and contingent upon the temporal flow of actual events. The Human Person a. Panexperientialism with Organizational Duality Process metaphysics doctrine of panpsychism or panexperientialism state that all individual actual entitiesâ€"from electrons to human personsâ€"are essentially self-determining and possess the ability to experience the world around them. Although actual entities possess experience, it is not necessarily conscious experience. Whitehead argues that consciousness presupposes experience and not vice versa. Panexperientialism is another significant departure from the dominant metaphysical theories of idealism all is mind , dualism mind and matter are equally fundamental , or materialism all is matter. Everything that is actual is composed of actual occasions. Actual occasions are themselves diverse; they vary in size and complexity. Electronic occasions have limited freedom and opportunities, while human persons are capable of incredibly rich experiences. Despite the great range of complexity, these differences are differences of degree, not of kind. Thus, the traditional problems of mind-body interaction are not present in process metaphysics because reality, at its base, is not purely mental or physical. Actual entities, as events, are at their foundation experiential and one can have physical experiences and mental experiences. The most obvious example of this is when the molecule-occasions and cell-occasions in a body produce, by means of a central nervous system, a mind or soul. This mind or soul prehends all the feeling and experience of the billions of other bodily occasions and coordinates and integrates them into higher and more complex forms of experience. Other times, however, a bodily society of occasions lacks a dominant member to organize and integrate the experiences of others. Rocks, trees, and other non-sentient objects are examples of these aggregate or corpuscular societies. In this case, the diverse experiences of the multitude of actual occasions conflict, compete, and are for the most part lost and cancel each other out. Those things that seem to be purely physical are corpuscular societies of occasions, while those objects that seem to possess consciousness, intelligence, or subjectivity are compound individuals. Perception and Prehension Every actual occasion receives data from every other actual occasion in its past by means of prehension. In human beings and all other sufficiently complex animals , the concrescing structure of the dominant occasions entails that consciousness is a derivative form of experience that only appears in the latest stage of concrescence. Thus, sense perception, because it is conscious, is considered by Whitehead to be a relatively superficial mode of perception. In fact, Whitehead argues that human beings perceive in three modes, of which sensory perception is only one. Whitehead argues that all actualities experience perception in the mode of causal efficacy, and it is by far the most significant and fundamental mode of causation. Thus, contrary to Hume, we do perceive the causal influence of other actualities, although not always consciously.

Presupposing little or no formal background, Philosophy & This Actual World addresses general questions of knowledge, reality, mind, will, and ethics, as well as more specific questions about moral pluralism, assisted suicide, the nature of death, and life's meaning.

For each distinct way the world could have been, there is said to be a distinct possible world; the actual world is the one we in fact live in. Among such theorists there is disagreement about the nature of possible worlds; their precise ontological status is disputed, and especially the difference, if any, in ontological status between the actual world and all the other possible worlds. There is a close relation between propositions and possible worlds. We note that every proposition is either true or false at any given possible world; then the modal status of a proposition is understood in terms of the worlds in which it is true and worlds in which it is false. The following are among the assertions we may now usefully make: True propositions are those that are true in the actual world for example: False propositions are those that are false in the actual world for example: Possible propositions are those that are true in at least one possible world for example: Humphrey did run for president in , and thus could have been elected. This includes propositions which are necessarily true, in the sense below. Impossible propositions or necessarily false propositions are those that are true in no possible world for example: Necessarily true propositions often simply called necessary propositions are those that are true in all possible worlds for example: The idea of possible worlds is most commonly attributed to Gottfried Leibniz , who spoke of possible worlds as ideas in the mind of God and used the notion to argue that our actually created world must be "the best of all possible worlds ". Arthur Schopenhauer argued that on the contrary our world must be the worst of all possible worlds, because if it were only a little worse it could not continue to exist. Formal semantics of modal logics[edit] Main article: A statement in modal logic that is possible is said to be true in at least one possible world; a statement that is necessary is said to be true in all possible worlds. From modal logic to philosophical tool[edit] From this groundwork, the theory of possible worlds became a central part of many philosophical developments, from the s onwards â€" including, most famously, the analysis of counterfactual conditionals in terms of "nearby possible worlds" developed by David Lewis and Robert Stalnaker. On this analysis, when we discuss what would happen if some set of conditions were the case, the truth of our claims is determined by what is true at the nearest possible world or the set of nearest possible worlds where the conditions obtain. A possible world W1 is said to be near to another possible world W2 in respect of R to the degree that the same things happen in W1 and W2 in respect of R; the more different something happens in two possible worlds in a certain respect, the "further" they are from one another in that respect. Consider this conditional sentence: Today, possible worlds play a central role in many debates in philosophy, including especially debates over the Zombie Argument , and physicalism and supervenience in the philosophy of mind. Many debates in the philosophy of religion have been reawakened by the use of possible worlds. The fundamental question here is: Lewis argued that what we range over are real, concrete worlds that exist just as unequivocally as our actual world exists, but that are distinguished from the actual world simply by standing in no spatial, temporal, or causal relations with the actual world. This doctrine is called "the indexicality of actuality": Lewis describes their position, and similar positions such as those advocated by Alvin Plantinga and Peter Forrest , as "ersatz modal realism", arguing that such theories try to get the benefits of possible worlds semantics for modal logic "on the cheap", but that they ultimately fail to provide an adequate explanation. Possible-world theory in literary studies[edit] Possible worlds theory in literary studies uses concepts from possible-world logic and applies them to worlds that are created by fictional texts, fictional universe. In particular, possible-world theory provides a useful vocabulary and conceptual framework with which to describe such worlds. However, a literary world is a specific type of possible world, quite distinct from the possible worlds in logic. This is because a literary text houses its own system of modality, consisting of actual worlds actual events and possible worlds possible events. In fiction, the principle of simultaneity, it extends to cover the dimensional aspect, when it is contemplated that two or more physical objects, realities, perceptions and objects non-physical, can coexist in the same space-time.

Taxonomies of fictional possibilities have also been proposed where the likelihood of a fictional world is assessed. Possible-world theory is also used within narratology to divide a specific text into its constituent worlds, possible and actual. In this approach, the modal structure of the fictional text is analysed in relation to its narrative and thematic concerns. Rein Raud has extended this approach onto "cultural" worlds, comparing possible worlds to the particular constructions of reality of different cultures.

4: Philosophy and the Real World: An Introduction to Karl Popper by Bryan Magee

In short: the actual world is regarded as merely one among an infinite set of logically possible worlds, some "nearer" to the actual world and some more remote. Other theorists may use the Possible World framework to express and explore problems without committing to it ontologically.

September 21, Philosophy and the Real World Philosophy is much more than late night chats about right and wrong. At Carnegie Mellon University, it uses research and technology to make an impact in the complex world we live in. Over the past three decades, the Department of Philosophy has made great strides in many areas, including ethics, medicine and neuroscience. As the department celebrates its thirtieth anniversary on October 16th and 17th , it is also celebrating its impressive contributions to the world outside of campus. Seniors in the EHPP track work in project teams on a significant social issue. Last spring, the project focused on the use of drones in American cities and how they impact day-to-day life. Upon inspection, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto stated that the findings would be a feasible addition to the City of Pittsburgh. Indeed, alumni of the department have gone on to a diverse set of careers. She now works in the intellectual property, media and technology group at Hogan Lovells. London has written extensively on issues relating to the ethical conduct of scientific studies involving human participants. CIOMS revises the standards for the conducting of research when human participants are involved. The CIOMS guidelines are one of the oldest and most respected guidance documents, and are widely used by international organizations and governments in low and middle-income countries to regulate biomedical research. London is in part responsible for developing a complete revision of the ethical standards in research in an international context. This exemplifies how philosophy is not a single subject matter. At CMU, the Department of Philosophy connects to the real world in a unique way by asking foundational questions that then flow into other areas of study. David Danks , head of the department, explained that the faculty teach what people expect from a philosophy track, but with a more expansive and productive view. The great figures in philosophy were trying to make contributions to the foundations of science, ethics and other areas of inquiry. They wanted their work to be relevant to people outside of philosophy. Our vision, however, is more ambitious; it is to emulate the great philosophers, not simply by studying their work, but by taking up their project and producing work that makes a contribution beyond the halls of philosophy. Through innovative research, engaged students and faculty, and ambitious technology, the department will continue to evolve and grow philosophically as it relates to our world today.

5: Philosophy - Simple English Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Academic philosophy has become so technical and inbred that it often fails to connect with the questions and concerns of educated nonspecialists. Martin Benjamin aims to bridge this gap. Presupposing little or no formal background, Philosophy & This Actual World addresses general questions of.

This work is available here free, so that those who cannot afford it can still have access to it, and so that no one has to pay before they read something that might not be what they really are seeking. But if you find it meaningful and helpful and would like to contribute whatever easily affordable amount you feel it is worth, please do do. I will appreciate it. The button to the right will take you to PayPal where you can make any size donation of 25 cents or more you wish, using either your PayPal account or a credit card without a PayPal account. It differs from science in that it includes the study of more than what is empirical i. Examples of philosophical writing that examine concepts and beliefs about various topics are many of my essays at www. In normal usage, the terms "philosophy" and "philosophical" have a number of trivial meanings which have nothing to do with the academic subject of philosophy or the slightly broader sense in which I use it here, that includes thinking more deeply and systematically about topics which may not be found in typical college philosophy department courses , so people tend to misunderstand what philosophy is, and see no point in studying it. It is not related to philosophy in the sense of sustained, systematic, reflective analysis of any topic. Loosely associated with this view of philosophy is the one that thinks philosophers are at best merely "book-smart" people who have no common sense because they come up with crackpot beliefs and ideas. While in some cases this may be true, more often it is believed because it is not the reasoning but only the conclusion that is looked at, and it is true that many conclusions philosophers reach are counter-intuitive or odd, or contrary to conventional belief. It is important, however, not to look just at conclusions that people reach, but the evidence and reasons they give for them. That is where insights lie if there are to be any. Thus, in a time of great economic, scientific, and technological advancement, one might mistakenly believe that there is no particular use for philosophy, because it deals with intangible ideas, some seemingly crazy, which cannot be proved scientifically or verified objectively, and which have nothing to do with providing greater creature comforts or material progress. So what is the use of philosophy? In the first, and narrowest, place, for some people philosophy simply satisfies a personal need or interest. Philosophy is, as it has always been, interesting in its own right for that minority of people who simply like to think about, or who are by nature driven to think about, and who appreciate and find great pleasure in discovering insights into, what seem to be intangible or complex issues, great or small. But the tools of philosophy can be important to everyone because it potentially helps one think better, more clearly, and with greater perspective about almost everything. There are numerous specific topic areas in academic philosophy, many of interest only to a few, even among philosophers, but there are features and techniques common to all of them, and it is those features and techniques which also can apply to almost anything in life. These features have to do with reasoning and with understanding concepts, and, to some small extent, with creativity. Normally, all other things being equal, the better one understands anything and can think clearly and logically about it, the better off one will be, and the better one will be able to act on that understanding and reasoning. It is my view , for example, that better conceptual understanding by NCAA and NFL administrators would lead to a far more workable and acceptable "instant replay review" policy. Furthermore, philosophy in many cases is about deciding which goals and values are worthy to pursue -- what ends are important. Philosophy is a way of scrutinizing ideas about which goals are the most worthy one. A healthy philosophical debate about what is ideal or which ideals ought to be sought and pursued, is important. Efficiency in the pursuit of the wrong values or ends is not a virtue. Kennedy, in speaking at Amherst College on a day honoring poet Robert Frost, said: It is also important that beliefs and goals be examined, even if they are idealistic; that is, even if society is nowhere near ready to proceed from where they are to some idealistic state. For it is important to know what is most reasonably ideal, and to understand the reasons for thinking it is the ideal, in order to try to make step-wise progress as society is ready to discover and accept any step in the right direction and in order to reassess what

one thinks is ideal when unexpected social responses show flaws or undesirable side-effect in the concept. For example, welfare and housing for the poor have often run into unexpected difficulties and in some cases have been counterproductive to the desire to help people improve their lives. While the basic goals of helping people escape poverty and substandard housing in order to become productive, secure, and hopeful about their lives may remain ideal, supplying homes or money in certain ways may not be the effective means to that, or may not be the equivalent to it as an end. While science tests hypotheses by empirical means, philosophical pursuit of values and ideals tests concepts of the ideal in two ways: Social progress toward an ideal often takes place in small stages, and sometimes flaws in the ideal become visible as the stages are implemented. It takes understanding of the stated values, ends, and means in order to recognize missteps. However, it must be pointed out that there are people trained in philosophy who do not think very well, at least not on all, if any, topics. And there are people who have never had any sort of philosophy or logic course who are quite astute in their thinking in general. The study of philosophy is something like the intellectual equivalent of training in sports. Those with natural talent and no training will often be better than those with training but little natural talent, but proper training should develop and enhance whatever talent most people have to begin with. And it also must be pointed out that not all philosophical writing or thinking is very good, and, perhaps more importantly, not all philosophy courses are very well taught or very good. In some cases, however, where teachers are entertaining and articulate, students come out favorably impressed, but still with little or no understanding. So when I talk about the uses of philosophy or about "philosophy" itself, I really mean to be referring to the best of what philosophy has to offer, not necessarily what one might learn in some particular philosophy , or even upperclass or graduate level, course, and not necessarily what one might find in a book chosen randomly from the philosophy section of a university library or bookstore. The tools of philosophy are important to individuals and to society because as long as we are not omniscient, factual knowledge by itself is no substitute for philosophy, just as philosophy is no substitute for factual knowledge. Philosophy is about the intelligent and rational uses of knowledge, and it is about the scrutiny of beliefs to see how clear and how reasonable they are in the light of knowledge we have. Knowledge is the substance of philosophy, not its opposite. As I explain in " Words, Pictures, Logic, Ethics, and Not Being God " because there is much we cannot know directly or even by observation, much of our knowledge comes from our use of reason. And philosophy, when done properly, perhaps more than any other field, gives training and practice in the most general and basic elements of reasoning. The essay " Reasoning " explains what reasoning is, how it works, and why it is important. It also explains that it does not always yield the truth or knowledge, but that in certain circumstances, it is the best we can do to try to attain knowledge. In many cases, reasoning will show us what we need to find out in order to have knowledge about a particular phenomena, by showing us what the gaps are in the knowledge we have. What underlies most philosophy -- particularly perhaps British and American philosophy -- is training and practice in 1 analyzing and understanding concepts, 2 recognizing and showing the significance of hidden, unconscious, or unrealized assumptions, 3 recognizing and remedying various forms of unclear conceptualization and communication, such as vagueness and ambiguity, which are often unintended and at first unrealized 4 drawing reasonable conclusions from whatever evidence is at hand, and 5 recognizing evidence in the first place -- seeing, that is, that some knowledge can serve as evidence for more knowledge and is not just some sort of inert fact or end in itself. These things are, or can be, very important for science, social science, economics, business, and other practical and empirical pursuits, but they are crucial for knowledge about matters of value, interpretation, perspective, and that which is intangible. It turns out that much of science, social science, economics, and business contains elements of the intangible, and questions about values, which can only be dealt with philosophically. Moreover, even the most empirical matters have conceptual components that require careful analysis and understanding. Nobel physicist Richard Feynman had the view that if he could not explain a concept or principle in physics in a way that a college freshman who was interested in physics could understand it, he probably did not understand it himself as well as he thought he did. I think such understanding is often important or even necessary for teaching well, but I am not sure it is sufficient, because one might be able to understand a concept without seeing why or how it might be difficult for other people to understand it. Philosophers, or anyone who has analyzed concepts, ought to have some

advantage in teaching them, but that advantage may not be sufficient to teach those concepts to others very well. I have seen philosophers and others who were quite good at doing philosophy, not be able to teach it to beginners, simply because they left out too much in their explanations, did not start at a basic enough beginning place, did not wait to see whether there was comprehension before they continued from point to point, did not appreciate how strange or difficult or complex an idea was to the student, did not know how to get points across not only logically but psychologically, and, in short, did not know what groundwork needed to be done in order to help the student understand and see the significance or meaning of the explanation being given. My long essay " The Concept and Teaching of Place Value " gives an explanation and an example of how understanding a concept, and understanding and appreciating the psychological difficulties of comprehending it, are necessary for teaching it well. Pervasive Philosophical Subject Matter While the application of systematic thought to any avowedly practical enterprise such as science or business can be productive, it is also unnecessary in the sense that much is often accomplished without it, and what cannot be accomplished without it is often not missed. It only seems important in cases where practical matters come to an impasse or where an idea bears such great and obvious practical fruit that it cannot be ignored. But there are pervasive philosophical areas of life that nearly everyone recognizes as important, though perhaps not recognizing them as primarily philosophical in nature, and perhaps not recognizing that they require deeper and more sustained thought than is typically given to them, even by supposed experts. While everyone has "opinions" or beliefs about many of these intangible things, there are better and worse opinions, beliefs that are more reasonable or less reasonable than others. Not all opinions or beliefs are equal in quality or in value. One opinion is not necessarily as good or as reasonable as another; is not likely to withstand scrutiny or to be compatible with all the evidence available. Unfortunately in many cases, politicians, bureaucrats, news commentators. So a natural hunger for philosophical wisdom is only partially addressed, and not always in the most satisfying, nutritious, or practically useful and advantageous manner. Shallowness in these area is often sufficient as long as it sounds good or seems deep to those who think less or who do not think much for themselves at all. Still the issues are philosophical ones, and they are often recognized as such, even if most do not realize that there are better answers and better ways of thinking about them than they are aware. So although these are areas where people could benefit from philosophy, they usually do not, and do not care to. In that sense philosophy is just of potential benefit. But it is not unlike other, practical, areas of potential benefit that are ignored. When the inventor of the Xerox photocopy machine was looking for financial backing, almost all the large business concerns of the day turned him down. The primary reason given was that there was no need for copy machines; we already had carbon paper to make copies of documents. Not only have prominent inventions and scientific ideas been rejected, but so have business ideas and management plans. Many a successful enterprise has resulted from employees going into competition with their former bosses who would not listen to, or could not understand or appreciate, their ideas for innovation. Philosophy is about careful, sustained, and systematic thinking. It is about a willingness to pursue the possible truth and value of ideas and the evidence for them, no matter what conclusions might result or how strange they might initially seem. Philosophy does not always lead to truth or to ideas of great value, but it can. And the potential always exists. There is much yet to be learned by the application of thought to what is already known or believed to be known.

Marx and Engels once remarked that "philosophy stands in the same relation to the study of the actual world as masturbation to sexual love." Just about everyone else who's written about.

Among the most important of these abstract objects as they are now called, because they are not located in space or time are goodness, beauty, equality, bigness, likeness, unity, being, sameness, difference, change, and changelessness. Nearly every major work of Plato is, in some way, devoted to or dependent on this distinction. Many of them explore the ethical and practical consequences of conceiving of reality in this bifurcated way. We are urged to transform our values by taking to heart the greater reality of the forms and the defectiveness of the corporeal world. We must recognize that the soul is a different sort of object from the bodyâ€"so much so that it does not depend on the existence of the body for its functioning, and can in fact grasp the nature of the forms far more easily when it is not encumbered by its attachment to anything corporeal. To understand which things are good and why they are good and if we are not interested in such questions, how can we become good? For example, the forms are sometimes described as hypotheses see for example Phaedo. The form of good in particular is described as something of a mystery whose real nature is elusive and as yet unknown to anyone at all Republic. Puzzles are raisedâ€"and not overtly answeredâ€"about how any of the forms can be known and how we are to talk about them without falling into contradiction Parmenides , or about what it is to know anything Theaetetus or to name anything Cratylus. When one compares Plato with some of the other philosophers who are often ranked with himâ€"Aristotle, Aquinas, and Kant, for exampleâ€"he can be recognized to be far more exploratory, incompletely systematic, elusive, and playful than they. His readers are not presented with an elaborate system of doctrines held to be so fully worked out that they are in no need of further exploration or development; instead, what we often receive from Plato is a few key ideas together with a series of suggestions and problems about how those ideas are to be interrogated and deployed. Readers of a Platonic dialogue are drawn into thinking for themselves about the issues raised, if they are to learn what the dialogue itself might be thought to say about them. Many of his works therefore give their readers a strong sense of philosophy as a living and unfinished subject perhaps one that can never be completed to which they themselves will have to contribute. Nearly everything he wrote takes the form of a dialogue. There is one striking exception: However, even there, Socrates is presented at one point addressing questions of a philosophical character to his accuser, Meletus, and responding to them. In addition, since antiquity, a collection of 13 letters has been included among his collected works, but their authenticity as compositions of Plato is not universally accepted among scholars, and many or most of them are almost certainly not his. Most of them purport to be the outcome of his involvement in the politics of Syracuse, a heavily populated Greek city located in Sicily and ruled by tyrants. We are of course familiar with the dialogue form through our acquaintance with the literary genre of drama. Nor are they all presented in the form of a drama: As a group, they form vivid portraits of a social world, and are not purely intellectual exchanges between characterless and socially unmarked speakers. However, it must be added that in some of his works the speakers display little or no character. See, for example, Sophist and Statesmanâ€"dialogues in which a visitor from the town of Elea in Southern Italy leads the discussion; and Laws, a discussion between an unnamed Athenian and two named fictional characters, one from Crete and the other from Sparta. In many of his dialogues though not all , Plato is not only attempting to draw his readers into a discussion, but is also commenting on the social milieu that he is depicting, and criticizing the character and ways of life of his interlocutors. Some of the dialogues that most evidently fall into this category are Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Euthydemus, and Symposium. Plato was not the only author whose personal experience of Socrates led to the depiction of him as a character in one or more dramatic works. Furthermore, we have some fragmentary remains of dialogues written by other contemporaries of Socrates besides Plato and Xenophon Aeschines, Antisthenes, Eucleides, Phaedo , and these purport to describe conversations he conducted with others. So, when Plato wrote dialogues that feature Socrates as a principal speaker, he was both contributing to a genre that was inspired by the life of Socrates and participating in a lively literary debate about the kind of

person Socrates was and the value of the intellectual conversations in which he was involved. Evidently, the historical Socrates was the sort of person who provoked in those who knew him, or knew of him, a profound response, and he inspired many of those who came under his influence to write about him. But the portraits composed by Aristophanes, Xenophon, and Plato are the ones that have survived intact, and they are therefore the ones that must play the greatest role in shaping our conception of what Socrates was like. At any rate, no one certainly not Xenophon himself takes Xenophon to be a major philosopher in his own right; when we read his Socratic works, we are not encountering a great philosophical mind. But that is what we experience when we read Plato. No doubt he in some way borrowed in important ways from Socrates, though it is not easy to say where to draw the line between him and his teacher more about this below in section But it is widely agreed among scholars that Plato is not a mere transcriber of the words of Socrates any more than Xenophon or the other authors of Socratic discourses. He makes no appearance in Laws, and there are several dialogues Sophist, Statesman, Timaeus in which his role is small and peripheral, while some other figure dominates the conversation or even, as in the Timaeus and Critias, presents a long and elaborate, continuous discourse of their own. Symposium, for example, is a series of speeches, and there are also lengthy speeches in Apology, Menexenus, Protagoras, Crito, Phaedrus, Timaeus, and Critias; in fact, one might reasonably question whether these works are properly called dialogues. Plato never became a writer of philosophical treatises, even though the writing of treatises for example, on rhetoric, medicine, and geometry was a common practice among his predecessors and contemporaries. The closest we come to an exception to this generalization is the seventh letter, which contains a brief section in which the author, Plato or someone pretending to be him, commits himself to several philosophical points—while insisting, at the same time, that no philosopher will write about the deepest matters, but will communicate his thoughts only in private discussion with selected individuals. Whether Plato wrote it or not, it cannot be regarded as a philosophical treatise, and its author did not wish it to be so regarded. In all of his writings—except in the letters, if any of them are genuine—Plato never speaks to his audience directly and in his own voice. Strictly speaking, he does not himself affirm anything in his dialogues; rather, it is the interlocutors in his dialogues who are made by Plato to do all of the affirming, doubting, questioning, arguing, and so on. Whatever he wishes to communicate to us is conveyed indirectly. Since he does not himself affirm anything in any of his dialogues, can we ever be on secure ground in attributing a philosophical doctrine to him as opposed to one of his characters? Did he himself have philosophical convictions, and can we discover what they were? Or, if we attribute some view to Plato himself, are we being unfaithful to the spirit in which he intended the dialogues to be read? Is his whole point, in refraining from writing treatises, to discourage the readers of his works from asking what their author believes and to encourage them instead simply to consider the plausibility or implausibility of what his characters are saying? Is that why Plato wrote dialogues? If not for this reason, then what was his purpose in refraining from addressing his audience in a more direct way? There are other important questions about the particular shape his dialogues take: Rather than commit oneself to any hypothesis about what he is trying to communicate to his readers, one might adopt a stance of neutrality about his intentions, and confine oneself to talking only about what is said by his dramatis personae. It is equally correct to point out that other principal speakers in that work, Glaucon and Adeimantus, accept the arguments that Socrates gives for that definition of justice. Perhaps there is no need for us to say more—to say, for example, that Plato himself agrees that this is how justice should be defined, or that Plato himself accepts the arguments that Socrates gives in support of this definition. Should we not read his works for their intrinsic philosophical value, and not as tools to be used for entering into the mind of their author? We should not lose sight of this obvious fact: We need to interpret the work itself to find out what it, or Plato the author, is saying. Similarly, when we ask how a word that has several different senses is best understood, we are asking what Plato means to communicate to us through the speaker who uses that word. Penetrating the mind of Plato and comprehending what his interlocutors mean by what they say are not two separate tasks but one, and if we do not ask what his interlocutors mean by what they say, and what the dialogue itself indicates we should think about what they mean, we will not profit from reading his dialogues. Furthermore, the dialogues have certain characteristics that are most easily explained by supposing that Plato is using them as vehicles for inducing his readers to become convinced or more

convinced than they already are of certain propositions—for example, that there are forms, that the soul is not corporeal, that knowledge can be acquired only by means of a study of the forms, and so on. Why, after all, did Plato write so many works for example: Phaedo, Symposium, Republic, Phaedrus, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Timaeus, Philebus, Laws in which one character dominates the conversation often, but not always, Socrates and convinces the other speakers at times, after encountering initial resistance that they should accept or reject certain conclusions, on the basis of the arguments presented? The only plausible way of answering that question is to say that these dialogues were intended by Plato to be devices by which he might induce the audience for which they are intended to reflect on and accept the arguments and conclusions offered by his principal interlocutor. If preludes can educate a whole citizenry that is prepared to learn from them, then surely Plato thinks that other sorts of written texts—for example, his own dialogues—can also serve an educative function. This does not mean that Plato thinks that his readers can become wise simply by reading and studying his works. On the contrary, it is highly likely that he wanted all of his writings to be supplementary aids to philosophical conversation: In those face-to-face conversations with a knowledgeable leader, positions are taken, arguments are given, and conclusions are drawn. Socrates as the dominant speaker If we take Plato to be trying to persuade us, in many of his works, to accept the conclusions arrived at by his principal interlocutors or to persuade us of the refutations of their opponents , we can easily explain why he so often chooses Socrates as the dominant speaker in his dialogues. Furthermore, if Plato felt strongly indebted to Socrates for many of his philosophical techniques and ideas, that would give him further reason for assigning a dominant role to him in many of his works. More about this in section Of course, there are other more speculative possible ways of explaining why Plato so often makes Socrates his principal speaker. Plato could have written into his works clear signals to the reader that the arguments of Socrates do not work, and that his interlocutors are foolish to accept them. But there are many signs in such works as Meno, Phaedo, Republic, and Phaedrus that point in the opposite direction. And the great admiration Plato feels for Socrates is also evident from his Apology. The reader is given every encouragement to believe that the reason why Socrates is successful in persuading his interlocutors on those occasions when he does succeed is that his arguments are powerful ones. The reader, in other words, is being encouraged by the author to accept those arguments, if not as definitive then at least as highly arresting and deserving of careful and full positive consideration. When we interpret the dialogues in this way, we cannot escape the fact that we are entering into the mind of Plato, and attributing to him, their author, a positive evaluation of the arguments that his speakers present to each other. Links between the dialogues There is a further reason for entertaining hypotheses about what Plato intended and believed, and not merely confining ourselves to observations about what sorts of people his characters are and what they say to each other. When we undertake a serious study of Plato, and go beyond reading just one of his works, we are inevitably confronted with the question of how we are to link the work we are currently reading with the many others that Plato composed. Admittedly, many of his dialogues make a fresh start in their setting and their interlocutors: For example, in Phaedo 73a-b , Socrates says that one argument for the immortality of the soul derives from the fact that when people are asked certain kinds of questions, and are aided with diagrams, they answer in a way that shows that they are not learning afresh from the diagrams or from information provided in the questions, but are drawing their knowledge of the answers from within themselves. That remark would be of little worth for an audience that had not already read Meno. Several pages later, Socrates tells his interlocutors that his argument about our prior knowledge of equality itself the form of equality applies no less to other forms—to the beautiful, good, just, pious and to all the other things that are involved in their asking and answering of questions 75d. Evidently, Plato is assuming that readers of Phaedo have already read several of his other works, and will bring to bear on the current argument all of the lessons that they have learned from them. He will introduce new ideas and raise fresh difficulties, but he will also expect his readers to have already familiarized themselves with the conversations held by the interlocutors of other dialogues—even when there is some alteration among those interlocutors. Meno does not re-appear in Phaedo; Timaeus was not among the interlocutors of Republic. Why does Plato have his dominant characters Socrates, the Eleatic visitor reaffirm some of the same points from one dialogue to another, and build on ideas that were made in earlier works? If the dialogues were merely meant as provocations to

thought—mere exercises for the mind—there would be no need for Plato to identify his leading characters with a consistent and ever-developing doctrine. For example, Socrates continues to maintain, over a large number of dialogues, that there are such things as forms—and there is no better explanation for this continuity than to suppose that Plato is recommending that doctrine to his readers. Furthermore, when Socrates is replaced as the principal investigator by the visitor from Elea in Sophist and Statesman , the existence of forms continues to be taken for granted, and the visitor criticizes any conception of reality that excludes such incorporeal objects as souls and forms. The Eleatic visitor, in other words, upholds a metaphysics that is, in many respects, like the one that Socrates is made to defend. Again, the best explanation for this continuity is that Plato is using both characters—Socrates and the Eleatic visitor—as devices for the presentation and defense of a doctrine that he embraces and wants his readers to embrace as well. Does Plato change his mind about forms? It is, in fact, a difficult and delicate matter to determine, on the basis of our reading of the dialogues, whether Plato means to modify or reject in one dialogue what he has his main interlocutor affirm in some other. One of the most intriguing and controversial questions about his treatment of the forms, for example, is whether he concedes that his conception of those abstract entities is vulnerable to criticism; and, if so, whether he revises some of the assumptions he had been making about them, or develops a more elaborate picture of them that allows him to respond to that criticism. In Parmenides, the principal interlocutor not Socrates—he is here portrayed as a promising, young philosopher in need of further training—but rather the pre-Socratic from Elea who gives the dialogue its name: Parmenides subjects the forms to withering criticism, and then consents to conduct an inquiry into the nature of oneness that has no overt connection to his critique of the forms. Does the discussion of oneness a baffling series of contradictions—or at any rate, propositions that seem, on the surface, to be contradictions in some way help address the problems raised about forms? That is one way of reading the dialogue. And if we do read it in this way, does that show that Plato has changed his mind about some of the ideas about forms he inserted into earlier dialogues? It is not easy to say.

7: Reality - Wikipedia

Presupposing little or no formal background,Philosophy & This Actual World addresses general questions of knowledge, reality, mind, will, and ethics, as well as more specific questions about moral pluralism, assisted suicide, the nature of death, and life's meaning.

Bryan Magee was his friend and worthy interlocutor. In this "review" I am going to do something unusual and append a wonderful essay by the American humanist, Joe Barnhart, as a complement, enjoy. Popper, who died in September at the age of 92, will be remembered as one of the most influen This book was my introduction to Karl Popper. Popper, who died in September at the age of 92, will be remembered as one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century. Although German was his native language, he was accomplished in his use of English to explicate humanistic values. Referring to himself as an agnostic and an advocate of critical rationalism, Popper gained an early reputation as the chief exponent of the principle of falsification rather than verification. By contrast, in the past four decades, an increasing appreciation of his critique has helped us to better understand the phenomenal growth of scientific theory and the close relationship between science and the humanities. In his books Objective Knowledge and Conjectures and Refutations, Popper demonstrates brilliantly the roles of myth and metaphysics in the scientific enterprise. Myths represent our human need to expand the horizon of explanation and to find our place in the vast scheme of things. Myths sometimes graduate to the status of metaphysics when subjected to sustained and rigorous criticism. Metaphysics is the work we do when we carry out comparative analysis of our cosmological myths and theories. It is our drive to eliminate inconsistencies, to broaden the scope of our explanations, and to provide depth of detail. If there are priests of myth who insist on perpetuating the myths without correction or revision, there are others among us who both subject the myths to criticism and offer rival theoretical explanations. Of late, the term metaphysics has been adopted and used to propagate the uncritical and highly anthropomorphic notions of pop culture. This is not the tradition of rigorous metaphysics of which Popper speaks. Far from being meaningless, critical metaphysics and cosmology provide the cognitive background for the growth of scientific theory. Logical positivists failed to see that, without metaphysics to work upon and to refine, science would stagnate. In some ways, science is the metaphysics that succeeded in spawning bold theories which are not only well articulated and critically debated but also observably testable—and by testable, Popper means falsifiable. Perhaps the major contribution made to science by Popper emerges from his argument that the job of scientific experiment is to seek evidence not to support a proposed theory but, rather, to refute it. He contends that science becomes mere ritual, making only meager progress, when it settles for testing to verify a favored hypothesis. One way to put a theory or hypothesis to the test is to draw from it predictions about observable events in time and space. A theory becomes scientific when it is specific enough to be falsifiable and when it covers specified events observable in time and space. It ceases to be scientific when it hides behind vagueness or risks no bold and daring predictions going beyond the general consensus. According to Popper, the whole point of seeking to shoot down our scientific theories is not simply to increase our supply of skepticism. Rather, the goal is to generate better theories—ones which are both bold and able to stand up under rigorous criticism without resorting to verbal tricks and vagueness. Intellectual courage and honesty in uncovering contradictions are thus essential to the search for both better explanations and better plans of action. Those who call themselves skeptics sometimes quote W. Instead of advocating that we pile up sufficient positive evidence to prove or verify a belief, Popper offers an entire new way to think about testing our beliefs and corroborating them. I know of no one who practices either wholesale skepticism or wholesale faith. All believers in certain claims are skeptics about rival claims. And all skeptics regarding some claims are believers regarding other claims. All of us, however, have pockets in our lives in which we would be better off if we showed more faith or trust. At the same time, there are pockets in which we would be better off if we trusted less—or at least shifted our faith to something or somebody more trustworthy. Trust and faith, like skepticism, are essential ingredients to human living. Skepticism per se is neither the enemy nor ally of faith per se, for the simple reason that neither exists. Errors and the Search for Better Explanations. Our mistakes in

solving problems need not be viewed as failures but as a means for spawning still better solutions. This is especially true both when we try to learn how our mistakes were made and when we free our imagination to try out new conjectures. Intuitions become a part of every variety of genuine thinking, including science, because they are accepted as trials rather than dogmas. Most of our scientific intuitions and conjectures have proved to be unsatisfactory. But Popper argues that some falsified theories have contributed more to the growth of science than have safe, shallow theories that no one has bothered to falsify. Science needs fruitful and falsifiable hypotheses that not only venture into new territory but seemingly go counter to common sense. His epistemology is truly liberating, saying in effect that we should not worry about our theories cracking or collapsing because there are always more where they came from. Do they really want to assert that creationism is falsifiable? Do they want to try to expose its weaknesses and flaws? Do they seek to correct and revise the doctrine? As is well known, creationists take great delight in pointing out that the theory of evolution is, after all, a theory. But this should pose no problem. All scientific theories are theories. Do creationists want to say that creationism is a theory? Do they want to say that the notion of the Bible as inerrant revelation is a theory? The real question has to do with how well they are articulated, how well they serve to advance further research, and how well they survive rigorous criticism. The overwhelming majority of biologists and anthropologists have found creationism to be a poor rival to evolution in the attempt to expand our knowledge. Contrary to what some creationists claim, scientists tend to favor evolution as an explanatory theory not because of some presupposition that blinds them to the truth but, rather, because it is scientifically more fruitful than creationism and enjoys greater explanatory power. In effect, it says that we always start with biases. Furthermore, we can never free ourselves of biases for the simple reason that they are essential to thinking. It is good to have biases, for they provide us with the raw material to examine, criticize, and revise or replace with new and we hope better biases. Some evangelical theologians make a great deal out of presuppositions. They charge that evolutionists presuppose from the start a naturalistic rather than theistic framework. This charge is not entirely accurate, for there are theistic evolutionists. They have no diplomatic immunity. According to Popper, objectivity is, therefore, not a psychological state of mind purified of all biases and presuppositions he never confuses an open mind with a blank mind but, rather, a two-pronged openness: Many humanists have been perpetually ambivalent about whether or not to indoctrinate the young into humanistic views and values. Indeed, some humanists in the past seem to have believed that objectivity or openness of mind required weak indoctrination. From the perspective of Karl Popper, by contrast, indoctrination should be thorough, not in the sense of shutting off all criticisms but in the sense of being done competently and by someone who is informed and articulate. Popper sees the importance and necessity of indoctrination. Without it, there could be no education or objective inquiry. Humanists need to understand more clearly that each generation needs to be indoctrinated in humanistic values if these values are to be improved and passed on from generation to generation. Although indoctrination is an absolutely essential ingredient of education or objective inquiry, it is never a sufficient ingredient. Indoctrination moves toward education only as it is combined with openness to criticism and to rival indoctrinations, views, conjecture, theories, and doctrines. Such openness of inquiry gives humanists hope that their humanistic convictions, commitments, and beliefs will in the future be even more profoundly articulated and more effectively communicated. We who now live are parts of a humanity that extends into the remote past, a humanity that interacts with nature. The things in civilization we prize most are not of ourselves. They exist by the grace of the doings and sufferings of the continuous human community in which we are a link. Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, and expanding the heritage of values we have received [so] that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it.

8: The Uses of Philosophy in Today's World

1. Possible Worlds and Modal Logic. Although 'possible world' has been part of the philosophical lexicon at least since Leibniz, the notion became firmly entrenched in contemporary philosophy with the development of possible world semantics for the languages of propositional and first-order modal logic.

For every world w, every individual x in w that is a dog is a mammal: However, unlike possible world semantics, predicates are not to be thought of as having different extensions at different worlds. Rather, for Lewis, each n-place predicate has a single extension that can contain n-tuples of objects across many different worlds â€" intuitively, all of the objects that have the property or n-tuples of objects that stand in the relation expressed by the predicate across all possible worlds. Such a move is not feasible in basic possible world semantics, which is designed for a metaphysics in which one and the same individual can exemplify a given property in some worlds in which they exist but not others. Hence, a typical predicate will be true of an individual with respect to some worlds and false of it with respect to others. For example, since Algol is in fact a pet, given worldboundedness and the definition AE1 of existence in a world w, we have: Hence, 19 might appear to be exactly the concretist truth condition for the denial of the right conjunct of 16 , i. In fact, Lewis whole-heartedly accepts that things have accidental properties and, indeed, would accept that 16 is robustly true. His explanation involves one of the most interesting and provocative elements of his theory: Roughly, an object y in a world w2 is a counterpart of an object x in w1 if y resembles x and nothing else in w2 resembles x more than y. A typical other-worldly counterpart of Algol, for example, might resemble her very closely up to some point in her history â€" a point, say, after which she continued to live out her life as a stray instead of being brought home by our kindly dog-lover John. Hence, sentences making de re assertions about what Algol might have done or what she could or could not have been are unpacked, semantically, as sentences about her counterparts in other possible worlds. Thus, when we analyze 16 accordingly, we have the entirely unproblematic concretist truth condition: Algol is a pet, but there is a world in which exists a counterpart of hers that is not: Ascriptions of essential properties, as in 15 , are likewise unpacked in terms of counterparts: The Analysis of Intensions. As in basic possible world semantics, intensional entities in general can be defined in terms of the basic ontology of the theory independent of the linguistic roles they can play as the intensions of predicates. A proposition is any set of worlds. A property is any set of individuals. Note that propositions are thus simply properties of worlds on these definitions. To the extent that these notions are free of modality, Lewis has arguably reduced modal notions to non-modal. The chief question Lewis faces in this regard is whether there are enough worlds to do the job. From this it would follow that the worlds required by the concretist truth condition for any intuitive modal truth exist. Toward this end, Lewis initially considers the evocative principle: Ways Absolutely every way that a world could be is a way that some world is. Since, in particular, a world satisfying 20 seems quite obviously to be a way a world could be, by Ways such a world exists. But there is a fatal flaw here: Lewis himself , 84 identifies ways that a world could be with worlds themselves. So understood, Ways collapses into the triviality that every world is identical to some world. The principle has two aspects. Given that individuals are worldbound, however, the principle is expressed more rigorously and more generally in terms of other-worldly duplicates: R1 For any finite or infinite number of objects a1, a2, To express this a bit more rigorously, say that objects a1, a2, R2 For any world w any finite or infinite number of objects a1, a2, Worlds that satisfy the concretist truth conditions for workaday possibilities like 16 are easily conceived as consisting of duplicates of relevant parts of the actual world â€" suitably organized to retain their actual properties, or not, as needed. Hence, the existence of such worlds does indeed appear to follow from the existence of the actual world by recombination. Worlds containing talking donkeys, exotic species resulting from a wholly different evolutionary history, worlds with silicon-based life forms, and so on present a bigger challenge to the view. Nonetheless, it is not entirely implausible to think such worlds exist given suitable duplication and reorganization of microphysical objects. Hence, there is no obvious reason why he cannot respond to charges of incompleteness by saying that it is simply a presupposition of his theory that logical space has no gaps, that there are always enough worlds to satisfy the concretist truth condition for

any intuitive modal truth. Their role, therefore, is to give us insight into the richness and diversity of set theoretic space, not a complete mechanism for proving which particular sets do or do not exist. Lewis faces this objection head on: However, Lewis argues that no other theory explains so much so economically. The theoretical benefits are worth it. They are states or conditions, of varying detail and complexity, that a concrete world could be in â€" they are ways that things, as a whole, could be. We can now imagine, as in our example, further detail being successively added to that description to yield more complex ways things could be: Anne working at her desk in her office; music being in the background; her husband being on the phone in the next room; her neighbor mowing the lawn next door; and so on. Thus, for example, that things could be in the simple state described above might be spelled out in one of the following ways: The proposition that Anne is in her office and at her desk is possibly true. Possible worlds are then defined as special cases of the type of entity in question that are in some relevant sense total. Adams , for example, defines possible worlds to be consistent sets of propositions that are total in the sense of containing, for every proposition p, either p or its negation; Fine , fleshing out ideas of Prior, defines a possible world to be a consistent proposition w that is total in the sense that, for every proposition p, w entails either p or its negation. Just as some propositions are true and others are not, some SOAs are actual and others are not. It is simply to say that it is not, in fact, a condition, or state, that the concrete world is actually in. So, henceforth, to express that an SOA is actual we will usually say that it obtains. An SOA is said to be possible necessary, impossible insofar as it is possible necessary, impossible that it obtain. Abstractionist possible worlds are now definable straightaway: Note also that, for the abstractionist, as for the concretist, the actual world is no different in kind from any other possible world; all possible worlds exist, and in precisely the same sense as the actual world. The actual world is simply the total possible SOA that, in fact, obtains. And non-actual worlds are simply those total possible SOAs that do not. What of existence in such worlds? Clearly, because SOAs are abstract, individuals cannot exist in abstractionist worlds in anything like the same literal, mereological sense. Accordingly, the abstractionist defines existence in a world simply to be a special case of the inclusion relation: Unlike concretism, then, abstractionism does not entail that individuals are worldbound; there is no inconsistency whatever in the idea that many distinct worlds can include the existence of one and the same individual. Indeed, typically, abstractionists are staunchly committed to transworld identity and hold that most any given individual exists in many possible worlds and, moreover, that contingent individuals, at least, can exemplify very different properties from world to world. Abstractionists, therefore, have no need to appeal to counterparts to understand de re modalities and can therefore accept the truth conditions for such modalities given by basic possible world semantics spelled out, of course, in terms of their definitions AW2 and AE2. In particular, they can take the standard possible world truth condition for, e. The reason for this is clear: If we now unpack the modal operators in 22 using the corresponding truth conditional clauses of standard possible world semantics, the result will contain further world quantifiers. More generally, and a bit more exactly, put: As noted above, the logical framework of basic possible world semantics is classical predicate logic. The logical framework of abstractionism is modal predicate logic. Hence, if possible world semantics is supplemented with abstractionist definitions of possible worlds, then the logical framework of possible world semantics becomes modal predicate logic as well and, as a consequence, the extensionality of the semantics is lost once again. This point is expressed somewhat more formally in the supplemental document The Intensionality of Abstractionist Possible World Semantics. Since, as noted above, the central motivation for possible world semantics was to deliver an extensional semantics for modal languages, any motivation for abstractionism as a semantic theory is arguably undermined. The reductionist wants to understand modality in terms of worlds; the abstractionist, by contrast, wants to understand worlds in terms of modality. That is, abstractionists can argue that we begin with a primitive notion of modality and, typically upon a certain amount of philosophical reflection, we subsequently discover an intimate connection to the notion of a possible world, as revealed in the principles Nec and Poss. The analysis that abstractionists provide is designed to make this connection explicit, ideally, in such a way that Nec and Poss fall out as theorems of their theory see, e. Hand in glove with the irreducible nature of modality is the nature of intensional entities. Abstractionists, by contrast, define worlds in terms of intensional entities. This divergence in their choice of

ontological primitives reflects, not only their differing stances toward modality, but also an important methodological difference with regard to metaphysical inquiry. Within a given theory, any entities that can play those roles fruitfully for the purposes at hand are justifiably identified with those notions â€" regardless of how well they comport with pre-theoretic intuitions. By contrast, at least some abstractionists â€" Plantinga perhaps most notably â€" believe that we have intuitive, pre-theoretic knowledge of intensional entities that precludes their being identified with set theoretic constructions of any sort. For abstractionists, however, actuality is a special property that distinguishes exactly one possible world from all others â€" the actual world is the only world that happens to obtain; it is the one and only way things could be that is the way things as a whole, in fact, are. However, for most abstractionists, the distinctiveness of the actual world does not lie simply in its actuality but in its ontological comprehensiveness: Actualism is the thesis that everything that there is, everything that has being in any sense, is actual. In terms of possible worlds: Everything that exists in any world exists in the actual world. However, although possibilism and abstractionism are entirely compatible â€" Zalta , for example, embraces both positions â€" abstractionists tend to be actualists. Basic possible world semantics appears to be committed to possibilism and abstractionism promises a way of avoiding that commitment. The specter of possibilism first arises with regard to non-actual possible worlds, which would seem by definition to be prime examples of mere possibilia. However, we have just seen that the abstractionist can avoid this apparent commitment to possibilism by defining possible worlds to be SOAs of a certain sort. So defined, non-actual worlds, i. However, the specter of possibilism is not so easily exorcised. For non-actual worlds are not the only, or even the most compelling, examples of mere possibilia that seem to emerge out of basic possible world semantics. For instance, it is quite reasonable to think that evolution could have taken a very different course or, if you like, that God could have made very different creative choices and that there could have been individuals â€" call them Exotics â€" that are biologically very different from all actually existing individuals; so different, in fact, that no actually existing thing could possibly have been an Exotic. There is a possible world w and an individual a in w such that a is an Exotic in w, which, a bit less formally, is simply to say that Some individual is an Exotic in some possible world. However, since no actually existing thing could have been an Exotic, anything that is an Exotic in some possible world cannot be among the things that exist in the actual world. Thus, the truth conditions that basic possible world semantics assigns to some of our intuitive modal beliefs appear to entail that there are non-actual individuals as well as non-actual possible worlds. Defining possible worlds as SOAs provided a way for the actualist to embrace non-actual worlds without compromising her actualism. But how is the actualist to understand the apparent commitment to non-actual individuals in such truth conditions as 25?

Those theorists who use the concept of possible worlds consider the actual world to be one of the many possible worlds. For each distinct way the world could have been, there is said to be a distinct possible world; the actual world is the one we in fact live in.

Is time really money? Does love, beauty, or justice hold any value? Other divisions include eschatology , teleology and theology. In past centuries natural science was included in philosophy, and called "natural philosophy". Is philosophy good or bad? Very few people would dispute this. It is easy to argue that philosophy is a good thing, because it helps people to think more clearly. Philosophy helps people to understand the world and the way people act and think. Philosophers believe that asking philosophical questions is useful because it brings wisdom and helps people to learn about the world and each other. Some philosophers might even argue that the question "Is philosophy good or bad? However, some people think that philosophy is harmful, as philosophy encourages free-thinking and often questions the beliefs that others hold. For example, philosophies such as some existentialist views say that there is no meaning to life or human existence, except the meaning that we make up or invent. People from some religions do not agree with the beliefs of existentialism. It should be noted that every major science, including physics, biology, and chemistry are all disciplines that originally were considered philosophy. As speculation and analysis about nature became more developed, these subjects branched away. This is a process that continues even today; psychology only split in the past century. In our own time, subjects such as consciousness studies, decision theory, and applied ethics have increasingly found independence from philosophy as a whole. Because of this, philosophy seems useful because it makes new kinds of science. What philosophers do[change change source] Philosophers ask questions about ideas concepts. They try to find answers to those questions. Some thinkers find it very hard to find those words that best describe the ideas they have. When they find answers to some of these questions philosophers often have the same problem, that is how to best tell the answers they found to other people. Depending on the meaning of the words they use, the answers change. Some philosophers are full-time thinkers called academics , who work for universities or colleges. These philosophers write books and articles about philosophy and teach classes about philosophy to university or college students. Other philosophers are just " hobby " thinkers who think about philosophy during their free time. A small number of hobby thinkers have thought so much about philosophy that they are able to write articles for philosophy magazines. Other people approach philosophy from another job. For example, monks , artists , and scientists may think about philosophical ideas and questions. Most philosophers work by asking questions and looking for good definitions meanings of words to help them understand what a question means. Some philosophers say the only thing needed to answer a question is to find out what it means. The only thing that makes philosophical questions such as those above difficult is that people do not really know what they mean Ludwig Wittgenstein held this view. Philosophers often use both real and imaginary examples to make a point. For example, they may write about a real or fictional person in order to show what they think a good person or a bad person is like. Some philosophers look for the simplest way to answer a question and say that is probably the right answer. Others believe that complicated answers to questions can also be right. For an example of a philosophical problem, see the God paradox. Philosophers use logic to solve problems and answer questions. Logical consistency is a cornerstone of any acceptable theory. Philosophers who disagree with a theory will often try to find a logical contradiction in a theory. If they find a contradiction, this gives them a reason to reject that theory. If they do not find an inconsistency, the philosopher might show that the theory leads to a conclusion which is either unacceptable or ridiculous. This second approach is usually called reductio ad absurdum.

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