

| **Philosophy Packet** |

Kyle David Bennett, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Director, Spirituality and Leadership Institute

Caldwell University

<http://www.kyledavidbennett.com>

@kyle_d_bennett

© Kyle David Bennett
Not to be cited or circulated without the author's permission
[Last updated: Spring 2017]

The unexamined life is not worth living.
~Socrates

Living, naturally, is never easy.
~ Albert Camus

You are sheep among wolves; be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.
~ Jesus of Nazareth

Work like a peasant and think like a philosopher.
~ Jean-Jacques Rousseau

How to Do Well in a Philosophy Course

On Reading Philosophy

- Philosophy is an abstract and conceptually challenging discipline. The philosophical writer is not always straightforward and the ideas she is discussing are not always simple. Although, I would argue that they are quite simple, we just don't often think about them, which is why they are difficult to grasp. Be prepared to think about what you take for granted everyday.
- Here a few tips for reading philosophy.
 - Read the essay or treatise quickly. Your goal should be to get an overall grasp of the argument: the issue, which side the writer is on, and how she arrives at her conclusion.
 - Now read it again. This time read it slowly and carefully. Your aim this time should be to understand every sentence, if possible. See how one sentence leads to the next, how one argument leads to the next.
 - After we discuss it in class, scan it one more time. This time make notes that will help you review the piece at a later date. Use this time to revisit difficult passages and try to understand them in light of our discussion.
- It's vital that you remember what you read. To help facilitate memory, I would strongly recommend that you write a short summary of chapters or articles in addition to the annotations that you make in your book. A paragraph for each chapter is a good rule of thumb. Two to three sentences is essential.

How to Participate in a Philosophy Course

- Do the assigned reading. See the "Reading Philosophy" section above for tips and tricks.
- Attend class. Being in class will help facilitate comprehension and remembrance. If you happen to miss a class, keep up with the reading and ask one of your peers what we discussed in class time. Ask her questions if you don't understand. Beware of missing several classes. Your comprehension of the material will dwindle, which will affect your ability to do well on the exams.
- Be attentive and active in class and group discussions. Come to class sober-minded and well-rested. Being active doesn't necessarily translate to talking all of the time. You don't have to be the one always asking questions or commenting. But it does mean coming to class prepared, thinking, and speaking when you have something to say.
- Be interested. This may sound strange, but your level of interest is something you do have some control over. The more you engage yourself in the course, the more interesting you are likely to find it. Read articles; listen to podcasts; watch TV programs or online videos that relate to issues we discuss.

How to Write in a Philosophy Course

If I started to write elaborately, or like someone introducing or presenting something, I found that I could cut that scrollwork or ornament out and throw it away and start with the first true simple declarative sentence I had written.

~ Ernest Hemingway

Below are guidelines for writing a paper in any of my courses. I strongly suggest you consult Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*. This book is utterly invaluable for any kind of writing you do. You can find it online here: <http://www.crockford.com/wrrld/style.html> [accessed May 2016]. Read the following carefully. Then read it again.

Formatting

1. Heading of the paper:
 - Single space at top of page one
 - Your name
 - Course number PH 102 and section number
 - Name of assignment (e.g., Short Paper 1)
 - Date you write the paper (e.g., September 1, 2020)
 - Name of instructor (Prof. Kyle David Bennett)
2. Body of the paper:
 - Margins should be one inch (1") all around and no more.
 - Use 12-point font and single-space the body of the paper.
 - Use Times New Roman font.
 - Number pages.
 - Staple pages.
 - No footnotes or endnotes. Insert parenthetical references in the body of the paper (e.g., (pg. 14)) for quotes or paraphrases.
 - Avoid contractions (e.g., "isn't;" use "is not")

Content

- Prepare. If it's a research paper, research the topic. If it's an analysis paper, study the texts carefully. Make sure you understand the ideas and positions. Take copious notes on the text. See the "Reading Philosophy" section above for tips and tricks.
- Don't procrastinate. No one ever procrastinated and did the best job ever. Being well-prepared has never hurt anyone.

- Draft an outline. An outline will help you connect ideas and see where there may be gaps in your argument. It's better to do with early than in the midst of writing the paper. If done properly, an outline can help ensure that your paper has a solid structure and sequenced argument.
- Revise your paper. Let a friend or peer read it and consider their comments and critiques.
- Make sure you understand the philosophical terms you are using. If you don't, consult the Philosophy Dictionary in this Packet. If a term is still unclear to you, I would recommend the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/index.html>.
- Keep your writing simple and easy to understand. Rework awkward, ambiguous, and rambling sentences.
- Make sure every sentence means what you intend it to mean. For example, don't say: "existentialism believes . . ." Only people believe; existentialism is a movement. What you mean to say is "an existentialist like Jean-Paul Sartre believes . . ."
- **Find a proofreader at the Writing Center.**

Grading Rubric

Writing	Comprehension of material	Analysis or criticism of material	Use of material	Application of ideas in course
Deals with structure and flow of paper, proper formatting, sentence structure, word choice, and mechanics: spelling, punctuation, typography	Deals with clear and accurate presentation of material, ability to discuss it concisely, and creative discussion of the material in your own words.	Deals with insightful analysis of arguments, classification of positions, critique of sources, comparison of strengths and weakness in arguments, and ability to synthesize strong points	Deals with your ability to incorporate relevant material from course resources into one's own argument	Deals with your ability to move beyond the current discussion or debate and apply the course material to a new problem or pressing issue.
5: There are essentially no grammatical, syntactical, or structural errors. The prose is excellent and it is reader-friendly. Very polished and sophisticated, graceful even.	5: Very dense, accurate, and concise discussion of the material. This paper demonstrates your ability to summarize and describe what thinkers are doing with their arguments and why they are arguing in such a way.	5: This is an excellent, insightful analysis of individual positions. Moreover, you've creatively compared and/or synthesized the strong points of a variety of sources and ideas.	5: This demonstrates a creative and insightful use of a wide assortment of resources from course material.	5: This moves convincingly beyond the sources to address the original problem more adequately. You raise a significant new problem in the field or something that's been overlooked. Or you've applied this material to a significant problem in another field.
4: It is without errors, but lacking in sophistication. Or it is reader-friendly but marred by more than a few errors. The flow may be awkward.	4: Dense and accurate report of the main ideas. This paper demonstrates your ability to describe another person's views clearly.	4: This is a fine analysis of sources. You've also insightfully juxtaposed sources and reasonably assessed the strengths and weaknesses of each.	4: There is some creative and insightful use of sources here. But it is not highly insightful.	4: This clearly and convincingly develops or advances the problem. Or you've creatively applied it to a new problem.
3: Marked by flaws in structure, grammar, word choice, or mechanics. But otherwise, it is adequate.	3: This is a largely accurate account of the main sources and ideas we've discussed. But you've relied too much on quoting the sources or paraphrasing them instead of discussing and explaining them.	3: This is a fair analysis and critique of the material. You've also put forward some insightful comparisons or syntheses.	3: This demonstrates an adequate use of several sources, but not many and in a creative or insightful way.	3: You've made reasonable or tentative development but not with fully convincing argumentation.
2: Marked by serious errors in more than one category. This is serious enough to affect comprehension of the argument.	2: There are major inaccuracies here. You're also missing some main points. Or you've quoted or paraphrased too much.	2: Some of your analyses or arguments are mistaken or some of your criticisms are misplaced. You've failed to see connections between sources.	2: This is a minimal use of resources.	2: You make a variety of moves toward development or application but you haven't provided adequate arguments for any of them.
1: This is unsatisfactory. There are major errors overall and it is nearly unintelligible.	1: There are major inaccuracies here. You've failed to grasp the main points and/or you've quoted or paraphrased too much	1: You've failed to see the insight in the arguments. Because of this, your associations among authors are mistaken and/or your criticisms are misplaced.	1: This is evidence of very little benefit from course material.	1: This fails to make any credible application or development of course material.

Caldwell University – Academic Assessment Committee
Critical Thinking in Core Classes

One of the central goals of Caldwell's Core Curriculum is the development of critical thinking skills. In our evaluations of critical thinking in the core, we focus on four components of effective critical thinking.

Understanding of the task – Does the paper demonstrate a clear understanding of what the assignment is asking for?

Analysis – Does the paper include an analytical component which is relevant to the task given in the assignment?

Support for assertions – Does the paper provide evidence that supports its claims?

Conclusion – Does the paper include a conclusion that logically follows from the body of the paper?

	4 Exemplary	3 Successful	2 Needs Improvement	1 Poor
Understands the task	Demonstrates an excellent understanding of the task to be performed	Demonstrates an adequate understanding of the task to be performed	Demonstrates an insufficient understanding of the task to be performed	Does not demonstrate an understanding of the task to be performed
Performs analysis pertinent to the task	Excellent analysis of issues which are clearly related to the task	Adequate analysis of issues clearly related to the task	Insufficient analysis of issues clearly related to the task	Analysis is absent
Offers support for assertions	Convincing evidence provided in support of all assertions	Convincing evidence sometimes provided but not all assertions supported	Evidence is weak or frequently lacking	Evidence is absent
Offers a logical and relevant conclusion	Excellent conclusion which flows logically from the body of the paper and is clearly relevant to the task	Conclusion is adequate in its connection to the body of the paper and relevance to the task	Conclusion is poorly connected to the body of the paper or not clearly relevant to the task	Conclusion is absent

How to Think in a Philosophy Course

There is no royal road to logic, and really valuable ideas can only be had at the price of close attention.

~ Charles Sanders Peirce

Basic Argument Analysis

Propositions

- A *proposition* is a declarative sentence.
- A *declarative* sentence is one that can be true or false. For example: “Today is Tuesday.”
- Examples of non-declarative sentences:
 - A question: “Is today Tuesday?”
 - A command: “Do your homework.”
 - An exhortation: “Let’s just all get along!”
- A sentence can have more than one proposition.
 - For example: The sentence “I live in a red house by the lake” asserts the proposition that *I live in a red house by the lake*, but it also asserts the simpler propositions that *I live in a house*, that *the house is red*, and that *the house is by the lake*.
- Sentences that express more than one proposition do not always *assert* all the component propositions.
 - For example: “The reelection of the president depends on whether the economy will improve by November.” The proposition that *the economy will improve by November* is expressed in the sentence, but not asserted. (The sentence may be true even if the economy doesn’t improve by November.)

An Argument and its Parts: Premises and Conclusions

- An *argument* (or *inference*) aims to prove a proposition to be true. It is made up of one or more premises and a conclusion.
- *Premises* are propositions that are put forward as reasons for accepting the *conclusion*.
 - Indicators of a premise are typically words like “because, since, so.” But be careful: these words do not always indicate arguments; they may indicate explanations, instead.

- A *conclusion* is a proposition *inferred* from the premises.
- Indicators of a conclusion are typically words like “therefore, thus, hence, so, consequently, as a result, it follows that, this shows that, which implies that, ergo.”

Choosing Premises

As a rule of thumb, choose premises for your arguments that are:

- Widely accepted as facts or beliefs
- Supported by many accepted sources
- Testified to by credible witnesses

If your argument relies on a premise that is not likely to be accepted by your target audience, then your premise will be controversial and will need to be supported by its own argument. Likewise, if your sub-argument (for the controversial premise of the main argument) relies on premises that are not likely to be accepted by your audience, then you should support those premises with still further arguments, and so on, until your arguments ultimately rest on premises that are likely to be accepted by your audience.

The Difference Between Arguments and Explanations

- Arguments give reasons for believing *that* something is true.
 - An example of an argument: “He’ll be late for class because the trains are delayed.” (That the trains are delayed is put forward as a reason *for believing that* he’ll be late.)
- Explanations attempt to show *how* or *why* something is true.
 - An example of an explanation: “He’ll be late for class—the trains are delayed.” (The fact that he’s late is already taken for granted, and the fact that the trains are delayed is offered as the reason *why* he is late.)

Ask yourself if the author/writer is trying to convince you of something by offering a reason or reasons for believing it. That’s a good strategy for determining whether an argument or an explanation is being put forward.

Assessing the Strength of an Argument

- There are two ways in which arguments can be *objectively flawed*:
 1. One or more premises are false.
For example: “If the Mayan calendar is right that the world is about to end, you shouldn’t bother paying off your student loans. The Mayan calendar is correct. Therefore, you

shouldn't bother paying off your student loans.”

2. The premises, even if true, do not support the conclusion.

For example: “If the world comes to an end in the near future, you won’t have to pay off your student loans. For all we know, the world will end in the near future. Therefore, you won’t have to pay off your loans.”

- There are two ways in which arguments can be *subjectively unconvincing*, even if the premises are true and support the conclusion:

1. The premises are not believed by the audience.

For example: “The Bible says God exists, and the Bible is true. Therefore, God exists.”

2. The audience fails to see how the premises support the conclusion.

Note: These last two problems are especially important to avoid when formulating your own arguments. See “Choosing Premises” above.

Logic and Argumentation

- The discipline of *logic* is primarily concerned with evaluating whether (and to what degree) the premises support the conclusion.
- The *logical strength* of an argument is the degree of support that its premises give to its conclusion. It is the degree to which the premises, if true, make it likely (or give us a reason for believing) that the conclusion is true as well.
- There are two extremes of logical strength:
 1. Very strong
 - A **valid deductive argument** (or **deductively valid** argument) is one whose premises **deductively entail** the conclusion—that is, it is *impossible* for the conclusion to be false while all the premises are true.
 - For example: “I am doubting the existence of this chair in front of me. To doubt one must be alive. Therefore, I am alive.”
 2. Very weak
 - A **fallacy** (or **fallacious** inference) is an argument whose premises, even if true, do not support the conclusion at all.
 - For example: “I am doubting the existence of this chair in front of me. To doubt one must be alive. Therefore, the New York Mets are the best baseball team.”

- Many (perhaps most) arguments fall somewhere between the extremes of fallacious reasoning and deductively valid inference.
- For example: “Students who study hard usually do well on exams. You’ve studied hard for the exam, so you’ll do well.” The conclusion (“you’ll do well”) isn’t deductively entailed by the premises, but the premises still provide a reason for believing that it’s true.

Valid and Sound Arguments

- Valid and sound arguments are deductive arguments, and they assume the basic components of any argument: premise(s) and conclusion.
- An argument is **valid** when the premise supports the conclusion. A valid argument is one in which the conclusion *must* follow from the premise. But it doesn’t matter whether or not the premise is true or false. An argument could be valid, but the premise be false.
 - Examples of valid arguments:

If I go outside, I’m going to get wet.
 I’m not wet.
 I didn’t go outside.

If I call your house, your mom’s going to pick up the phone.
 If she picks up the phone, she’s going to touch it.
 If I call your mom she’s going to touch the phone.

- An argument is **sound** when the premise supports the conclusion *and* the premise is true. Unlike a valid argument, an argument cannot be sound if the premise is false.
 - Examples of sound arguments:

The Brooklyn Nets are a basketball team.
 Basketball is a sport.
 The Brooklyn Nets are a sports team.

I can swim.
 Swimmers wade through water.
 Water is a liquid.
 I can wade through a liquid.

- The goal should be a sound argument, not a valid argument. We want a true premise and a supported conclusion. Here are some basic examples of valid and sound arguments:

Necessary and Sufficient Conditions

- We cannot determine whether an argument is valid or sound without determining how well its statements cohere. So we make a distinction between **necessary** conditions and **sufficient** conditions.
- **Necessary** conditions describes the idea that one statement must be true for another to be true. *If A is true, B is true.*
 - For example, take the statement, “I am a father.” In order for me to be a father, I must (a) have children and (b) be a male. I cannot be a father without having children or being a male. Therefore, “a” and “b” are necessary for the statement “I am a father” to be true.
 - “If I am a father, I have children and I am a male.”
- **Sufficient** conditions describe the idea that one statement that is true is sufficient grounds for concluding that the other statement is true. *If A, then B.*
 - For example, take the statement, “I have children.” There is sufficient ground for concluding that if I have children, then I am a father. It is reasonable to conclude this. But it is also possible that I am not the father, but a guardian.
 - “If I have children, then I am a father.”

Tautologies and Contradictions

- A **tautology** is a compound proposition that cannot possibly be false. It is necessarily true because it affirms what is being stated.
 - The following are some basic and complex tautologies.
 - “A bachelor is an unmarried person.”
 - “Before we met, I didn’t know you.”
 - “Men are non-females.”
 - “My brother is my sibling.”
 - “Saul of Tarsus knew Paul the Apostle.”
- A **contradiction** is a compound proposition that cannot possibly be true. It is necessarily false because it simultaneously affirms and denies what is being stated.
 - The following are some basic and complex contradictions.
 - “I hailed a cab. No, I never hailed a cab.”
 - “Men are not men.”
 - “She is a married bachelorette.”
 - “My brother is the only child my parents had.”
 - “The statement I am about to say isn’t false. What I just said was false.”
 - “Saul of Tarsus was a good man. Paul the Apostle was a good man.”

Famous Fallacies

Common Informal Fallacies

- *ad hominem* (“to the man”) – attacking one’s opponent on a personal level, rather than challenging his/her claims.

“Former president George W. Bush couldn’t even pronounce the word ‘nuclear’ correctly, so his policy on nuclear energy certainly wasn’t much good.”

- *appeal to authority (ad verecundiam)* – inferring that a proposition is true from testimonial evidence when the conditions for credibility are not satisfied or the use of such evidence is inappropriate

“Alchemy isn’t unscientific. After all, Isaac Newton believed in it, and he was one of the greatest scientists of all time.”

- *appeal to ignorance (ad ignorantiam)*: arguing that a claim is true just because it has not been shown to be false, or arguing that a claim is false just because it has not been proven true

“No one has been able to disprove the existence of the Loch Ness Monster, so it’s probably real.”

- *appeal to the majority (ad populum)* – using the mere fact that many or most people believe something as sufficient evidence for its truth

“The defendant is obviously guilty, since almost all of the jurors agree with that verdict.”

- *begging the question (circular argument)* – using the conclusion as an implicit or explicit premise, or using premises that the audience would never accept if they did not already accept the conclusion

“You can count on WARP News for the facts, because they constantly say on the air that ‘we just give you the facts,’ so that must be a fact too!”

- *diversion (or “red herring”)* – introducing an irrelevant or secondary subject and thereby diverting attention from the main issue

“Bill Clinton should not have been charged with perjury, because he did such a good job with the economy.”

- *equivocation* – changing the meaning of a word partway through an argument

“Feathers are light. Light travels at 299,792,458 meters per second. Therefore, feathers travel at 299,792,458 meters per second.”

- *fallacy of composition* – inferring that a whole has a property merely because its parts have that property

“Chocolate Frosted Sugar Bombs cereal is high in fiber. Fiber is good for you, so this cereal is good for you.”

- *fallacy of division* – inferring that a part has a property merely because the whole has that property

“This is a Christian college. You’re a student here, so you must be a Christian.”

- *false alternative/false dilemma* – failure to consider all the relevant possibilities

“Since the universe couldn’t have created itself, it must have existed forever.”

- *hasty generalization* – inferring a general proposition from an inadequate sample of particular cases

“Everyone is bored in that class. I asked three of my friends, and they all agreed that it’s boring.”

- *post hoc ergo propter hoc (“after this, therefore because of it”)* – using the mere fact that one event preceded another as sufficient evidence of causality

“I walked under a ladder on my way to class, and then I flunked my logic test. See, walking under a ladder is bad luck.”

- *straw man* – misrepresenting an opponent's position and refuting the caricatured view rather than addressing the view actually held by the opponent

"Political conservatives think that cutting taxes and reducing the size of government will solve all of our country's problems. That's obviously wrong, because our country faces some problems that have nothing to do with taxes or the size of government."

Common Formal Fallacies

- *affirming the consequent* – an argument of the form:

If A then C.

C.

Therefore, A.

"You'll be late for class only if there's a fire on the subway. There is a fire on the subway. Therefore, you'll be late for class."

- *denying the antecedent* (easily confused with *modus tollens*) – an argument of the form:

If A then C.

Not A.

Therefore, not C.

"If there's a fire on the subway, you'll be late for class. There's not a fire on the subway. Therefore, you won't be late for class."

Philosophy Dictionary

- *A posteriori* (epistemology): reasoning that proceeds from observation or experience rather than deduction.
- *A priori* (epistemology): reasoning that proceeds from deduction rather than observation or experience.
- Aesthetics: the study of beauty and human appreciation of it.
- Agnosticism (philosophy of religion): the view that god cannot be known and so people should suspend judgment on his existence.
- Atheism (philosophy of religion): the view that god does not exist.
- Axiology: the study of value, typically aesthetic value or moral value.
- Categorical imperative (ethics): the fundamental moral principle of Immanuel Kant. Kant states it in two ways: 1. Always act in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law; 2. Always act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or that of any other, in every case as an end in itself and never as a means only. Cp. Deontologism.
- Compatibilism (metaphysics): the view that free will and external causes are compatible, and that it is possible to believe in both without logical inconsistency.
- Consequentialism (ethics): a moral theory in which the rightness of actions depends solely on consequences or results.
- Cynicism (epistemology): one believes that everyone is motivated by self-interest and (as a result) one's truth claims are tainted by an agenda.
- Deduction (logic): reasoning from a general law or principle to particular instances. Contrast with Induction.
- Deism (philosophy of religion): god exists, but he doesn't intervene or meddle in the natural order of the universe.
- Dogmatism (epistemology): one holds a view as undeniably true without the consideration of counter-evidence or the arguments of others.

- Deontologism (ethics): a moral theory in which the rightness of an action is determined by its intrinsic nature and is done in adherence to rules, duties, or obligations and not consequences. Proponents: Immanuel Kant. Contrast with Utilitarianism and Virtue Ethics.
- Determinism (metaphysics): the view that all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by antecedent causes external to human agency. Contrast with Libertarianism and Compatibilism.
- Dualism (metaphysics): the view that the mind or soul and the body are disparate things and often in conflict when it comes to understanding, willing, and acting.
- Dualism ((philosophy of religion) (a variation on polytheism): the view that two god exists and are opposed to each other.
- Empiricism (epistemology): the view that our knowledge of the world comes solely from sense experience. Modern proponents: Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, John Locke.
- Epistemology: the philosophical study of knowledge.
- Ethics: the study of morality and moral theory.
- Fatalism (metaphysics): the view that human agents are powerless to do anything other than what they actually do. Contrast with Determinism.
- Fideism (philosophy of religion): The view that we need faith in order to initially understand god.
- Free will (metaphysics): the view that rational agents have the capacity to choose a course of action from among various alternatives.
- Gnosticism (philosophy of religion): god is known through inaccessible, secretive knowledge or practice.
- Hedonism (ethics): the view that pleasure is the ultimate good.
- Henotheism (philosophy of religion): the view that a plurality of personal gods exist, but one god is superior to the others or specific to a tribe or people group.
- Idealism (epistemology): the view that objects of knowledge are held to be dependent on the activity of the mind. Contrast with Realism and Nominalism.

- Immutable (philosophy of religion): god is absolutely unchangeable (because he is perfect) (although god is able to modify his responses and actions).
- Induction (logic): reasoning from particular instances or examples to a general law or principle. Contrast with Deduction.
- Logic: the study of correct reasoning.
- Materialism (metaphysics): the view that nothing exists except matter.
- Metaphysics: the study of reality and its structures.
- Monism (metaphysics): the view that there is no distinction between matter and mind, and that all is one.
- Monism (philosophy of religion) (a variation on pantheism or panentheism): god is an absolute unity manifested in this world of apparent plurality.
- Monotheism (also known as “theism”) (philosophy of religion): the view that only one god exists.
- Naturalism (metaphysics): the view that everything arises from natural properties and causes, including ethical values and supernatural or spiritual beliefs.
- Nihilism (ethics): the view that life is meaningless.
- Nominalism (metaphysics): the view that universal ideas or abstract concepts are merely names for particular objects without any corresponding reality.
- Objectivism (epistemology): the view that things, including moral truths, exist independently of human knowledge and perception.
- Omnipotent (philosophy of religion): god has all the power a being could have.
- Omnipresent (philosophy of religion): god is present everywhere by virtue of his activity and knowledge.
- Omniscient (philosophy of religion): god knows everything that is possible for a being to know.
- Pantheism (philosophy of religion): the view that god is not a personal being or being of any kind, but is identical with nature or the universe.

- Panentheism (philosophy of religion): the view that god is not identical with nature or the universe, but nature or the universe is in some sense part of God.
- Polytheism (philosophy of religion): the view that a plurality of personal gods exist.
- Rationalism (epistemology): the view that we come to truly know the world through unaided reason. Modern proponents: Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza. Contrast with Empiricism.
- Realism (metaphysics): the view that universal ideas or abstract concepts have an objective or absolute existence apart from a subject and independent of a perceiving agent. Contrast with Nominalism and Idealism.
- Relativism (epistemology): the view that the truth depends on one's culture and historical situation. Contrast with Perspectivalism.
- Skepticism (epistemology): one doubts the truth or our ability to know the truth.
- Subjectivism (epistemology): the view that knowledge is merely subjective and that there is no external or objective truth.
- Utilitarianism (ethics): A variation of consequentialism that argues that an action is right insofar as it promotes happiness, and that the greatest happiness of the greatest number should be the guiding principle of conduct. Proponents: Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Contrast with Deontologism.