

PHIL103 INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY I

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FA114C



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Course Particulars

Course details:

This class will meet for one hour on Wednesday 9.40 and two hours on Fridays 10.40 and 11.40. The remaining hour on Wednesday 8.40 will be used for make up classes, in case I have to miss a class during the semester.

Before coming to class you will need to read the required texts, as specified in the readings section of the syllabus. You will also need to prepare the relevant homework for that week, i.e. answer the questions (in note form) that are included in this pack. This will count towards your participation grade.

I will be available for consultation regarding any aspect of this course during my office hours Wednesday 10:40 Friday 9:40 in my office FA114C . If you cannot see me at these times you can either write me an email (berges@bilkent.edu.tr) or ask for an appointment during our spare hour, Wednesday 8:40.

If too many people have classes during my proposed office hours, I will consider changing them. Please make sure you tell me *in the first two weeks of the semester* if you have classes during these times.

Course objectives

The main emphasis of this course will be on the transmission of philosophical skills and methods. You will learn how to read and write philosophy, how to argue philosophically and engage in philosophical dialogue. In order to acquire these skills, you must be willing to practice them even if that means getting it wrong a lot in the beginning!

The skills you will learn, both in this course and its successor, Introduction to Philosophy II, are meant to be the foundation of what you will learn in philosophy. They are absolutely rock-bottom techniques for both philosophical thinking and philosophical/academic writing. As such, we will focus quite heavily on developing them in this course and, moreover, expect your facility with these skills to be carried over to the rest of the courses you will take during your philosophy degree. So learn them! Burn them into your brain. When you are writing your thesis or a difficult paper on the doctrine of the transcendental ideality of space and time, you do not want to have to go back and look up how to formulate a citation in ### format or how, exactly, to understand the point of a particular argumentative technique.

A well-known trick for success in physical activity is to develop "muscle memory" with regard to certain skills. Think of the last time you thought about how to tie your shoes (i.e. when you were 3.) A similar, but less well-known trick for academic success is to develop "muscle memory" with regard to certain reading, writing, and interpretational skills. After sufficient training, you will have honed your abilities to detect important features of a philosophical view. The more honed this skill, the easier you find it to discover the important bits of a piece of philosophical prose. [*Caveat emptor*: as Austin said once of ordinary language philosophy, this feeling can be the first step in finding interesting parts of a philosophical text, but it certainly shouldn't be the last step. You need to go on and justify your feelings.]

Assessment

Test	Due date	Specifications	%
Short piece of writing	10 October in class	300-500 words long	10
Broken down question	04 November in class	500-750 words long	10
3 questions essay	25 November in class	750 -1000 words long	15
Step by step essay	16 December	1000 -1500 words	15
Final essay	submit during exams.	1500-2000 words	25
Participation	From week 1 to 15	Includes evidence of reading, homework, and attendance	25

Submission policy:

All material submitted must be typed and word-processed. Late submissions will only be considered if an extension has been agreed on *before* the deadline.

You must submit a copy of your work electronically on Turnitin via Moodle.

Plagiarism

For the university's plagiarism policy which will be strictly observed, see:

<http://www.provost.bilkent.edu.tr/procedures/AcademicHonesty.htm>

Grading criteria

I will make an overall judgment of the quality of your work, but in forming my judgment I will pay particular attention to the following criteria:

Content: Knowledge and understanding of the relevant texts, facts, philosophical concepts and theories.

Argument: Quantity and quality of reasoning used in support of, or criticism of the positions discussed; consistency and coherence; depth of analysis.

Clarity: Clarity of essay structure and verbal expression; succinctness; use of language; and quality of presentation.

Independence: The extent to which you think for yourself, rather than regurgitating what you have read or heard; imaginative use of examples.

Relevance: Have you answered the question as set? Is everything you have written relevant to the conclusion you wish to establish (whether in support of it, or as an objection to be answered)?

Weekly Syllabus

Week	Date (W, F)	Texts	topic
1	Friday 23/09	Introduction	
2	28/09 30/09	Coursepack Warren, 76-66.	'What do philosophers do?' How to read a philosophical text
3	05/10 07/10	Warren, ch.1 Plato and Diotima	Using the text
4	12/10 14/10	Warren ch.2 Aristotle and late Pythagoreans	Identifying a thesis Short due Friday in class.
5	19/10 21/10	Warren ch.3 Augustine and Hildegard	Identifying an argument
6	26/10	Warren ch.4 Abelard and Heloise	Answering the Question no class Friday
7	02/11	Warren ch.5 Descartes and Elizabeth	Using Examples No class Friday
8	09/11 11/11	No new text	Examples continued Broken down question due Friday
9	16/11 18/11	Warren ch. 6 Hobbes and Macaulay	Constructing and argument.
10	23/11 25/11	Warren ch.7 Locke and Masham	Constructing a thesis statement 3 questions essay due Friday
11	30/11 02/12	Warren ch. 8 Leibniz and Conway	Writing an introduction
12	07/12 09/12	Warren ch. 9 Rousseau and Wollstonecraft	Objections: counterarguments
13	14/12 16/12	Warren ch. 11 Mill and Taylor	Objections: counterexamples Step by step essay due Friday
14	21/12 23/12	Work on Final Essay	
15	28/12 30/12	Revisions	Final Essay due exam week

How to interpret a philosophical text

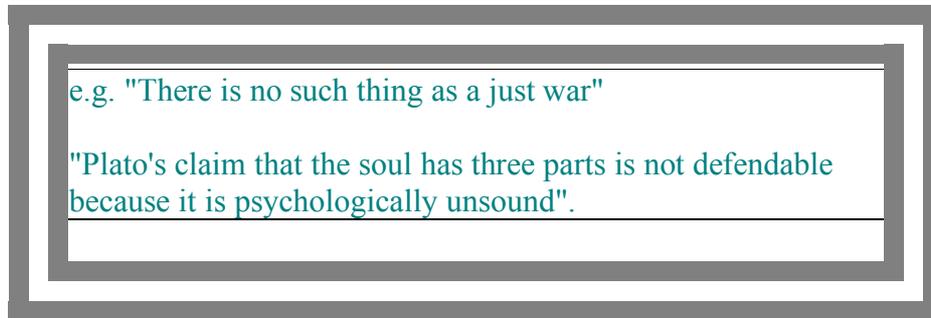
When you present a piece of philosophical work, you will need to *evaluate* the material you have been reading. However, you can only evaluate something if you understand it.

In order to understand a philosophical text, you need to be able to answer two questions:

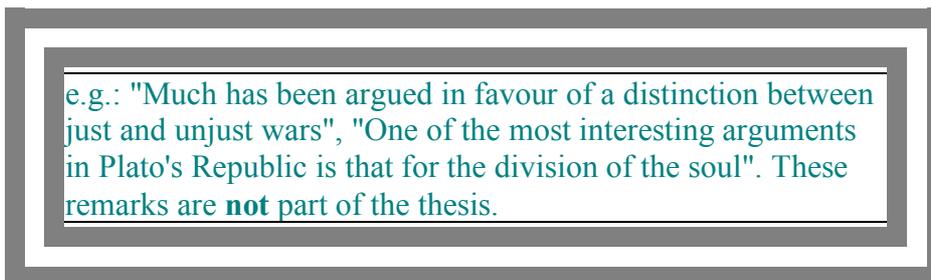
1. What is the author saying, i.e. what does he/she want you to believe?
2. How is the author defending his/her view? What reasons does he/she give you to believe that this view is right?

To answer question 1 you need to identify the author's *thesis* (there might be more than one in the text, but always work on one at a time).

A thesis is a statement of what the author wants the reader to believe is the case.



When you state a thesis, whether your own or your interpretation of someone else's, must always be stated clearly and succinctly, i.e. one sentence long rather than one paragraph. Try to distinguish the actual thesis statement from contextual information the author gives.



You should also try to find a quotation from the text in which the author states the thesis. However, this may be difficult if the author does not write in a clear and succinct manner. The thesis may be broken down and spread over several sentences. In this case you may quote parts from each of the sentences and link them this way:

"part 1 [...] part 2 [...] part 3 [...]."

The thesis statement may also be ambiguous. This means that the sentence which expresses the thesis may have several distinct meanings. The author may only intend to mean one thing, or he/she may intend to mean more.

For example Plato says in the Republic that it is always in one's interest to be just. However, if one reads the entire text, it appears that being just means either of two things. The first is the conventional meaning, i.e. to treat others fairly. The second is a Platonic meaning, i.e. achieving harmony of the soul. One could argue that it is possible to achieve harmony without treating others fairly. By disambiguating Plato's thesis, we find that there is a need for further argument. Is Plato right to believe that conventional justice and psychic harmony always go together? If so does he give reasons?

This is how you can end up 'doing philosophy' by identifying a thesis.

When you state the thesis in your own words (which you must always do), you must do so clearly even if the author doesn't

To answer question 2 you need to identify the author's **argument**.

An **argument**, in the critical thinking sense, is a set of statements which together provide good reasons for believing something. The reasons are called **premises**, and what you give reasons for is called the **conclusion**.

Hence, when asked to identify an argument in a text, you should identify a set of statements some of which you will call premises and one of which you will call the conclusion.

Your answer to the question 'what is the argument presented?' should look like this:

Premise 1:
Premise 2:
(Premise 3, 4, etc:.....)
Conclusion:.....

Each statement, premise or conclusion, should be **no longer than one short sentence**.

There are ways to recognise which part of a text constitutes premises and which part is a conclusion: look for **argument indicating expressions**.

There are two kinds:

Conclusion Indicating Expressions - CIE

Premise Indicating Expressions - PIE

When you see a CIE, it probably means that a premise comes before it, and a conclusion follows:

Premise 1 (and 2 and 3) CIE Conclusion

When you see a PIE, it probably means that a conclusion comes before it, and a premise follows:

Conclusion PIE Premise 1 (and 2 and 3).

Here are some CIE:

Premise	CIE	Conclusion
The little cat is dead	Therefore Hence So Thus It follows that	I am sad

Here are some PIE:

Conclusion	PIE	Premise
I am sad	Because As Since For Follows from	The little cat is dead

Note:

Not all written or spoken arguments contain argument indicating expressions. Sometimes you just need to look at the meaning and context of a set of statements to realise that it is an argument.

The expressions listed above do not always indicate arguments.

E.g. the word 'so' in the sentence 'this is so boring' does not indicate an argument.

Again, you need to look at the meaning, context, and **use your common sense**.

Some Useful Terminology for arguments:

'argument': a proposition along with some reasons for accepting that proposition.

'conclusion': the proposition for which reasons are offered.

'premise': reasons given for a conclusion.

'valid': an argument is valid when it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false.

'sound': and argument is sound when it is valid and has true premises.

An example of a valid but unsound argument:

If I roll a double six then Elvis is alive.
I rolled a double six
Therefore Elvis is alive.

The form is fine but the premises are false.

An example of a sound argument:

P1 If you miss class a lot you will get a low attendance grade
P2 You've missed class a lot
C Therefore you will get a low attendance grade.

It is valid (same form as the one above) and the premises are true.

Bad arguments are also called fallacies and they fall in roughly three categories:

- 1) the invalid (formal fallacies)
- 2) the unconvincing
- 3) the rhetorical.

Here are a few examples of fallacies in each of these categories.

- 1) Formal Fallacies.

Affirming the consequent:

If P then Q	If you cross the bridge to Rumeli Hr you will be in Europe
Q	You are in Europe
Therefore P	You must have crossed the bridge to Rumeli Hr.

Denying the antecedent:

If P then Q If you cross the bridge to Rumeli Hr you will be in Europe
Not P You did not cross the bridge to Rumeli Hr
Therefore not Q Therefore you are not in Europe.

The examples demonstrates that the forms are invalid. Clearly one could be in Europe without crossing that bridge. (e.g. one could be born in Europe, or fly to Europe bypassing Istanbul altogether.)

Closely related are cases of the undistributed middle. Can you think of examples for these?

All Fs are G
n is G
Therefore n is F

All Fs are G
n is not F
Therefore n is not G.

2) The unconvincing

The best example of an argument that is valid but unconvincing is circularity or begging the question. This means that the conclusion is presupposed, or 'smuggled' in the premises.

A circular argument looks like this.

P
Therefore P.

Or like this

If Q then R
Not R
P
If S then T
S
Therefore P.

Example:

The minister is not guilty of taking bribes, for no honest man would do so and he is perfectly honest.

What is presupposed here?

3) Rhetorical devices.

Ad hominem arguments:

An important person says P
Therefore P.

e.g. The pope says euthanasia is wrong
Therefore euthanasia is wrong.

Weekly homework

The following pages give you the weekly readings and homework. The texts are all in Karen Warren (ed) *An Unconventional History of Western Philosophy*. Please make sure you bring the text book to every class, as we will be working on the texts in class.

You should read the specified texts before coming to class and also try and prepare answers to the questions in the spaces provided on this coursepack. You should bring the coursepack (with your answers) to class every week.

Your answers to the coursepack questions should be in (short) note form. You will be asked to discuss them in class in small groups and in short, individual presentations. Not doing the homework will lower your participation grade significantly.

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TEXTS WITH YOU IN CLASS. YOU SHOULD HAVE READ AT LEAST SOME OF THE TEXTS BEFORE YOUR WEDNESDAY MORNING CLASS.

WEEK 2

What do Philosophers do?

Reading: Theano's Letter to Nikostrate, 76-77.

AIM: By the end of the week, we want to have as clear as possible a statement of the nature and purpose of philosophical inquiry, as well as some idea of its scope.

Read the text, discuss and write down:

What are the main points the author makes?

How does the author make those points?

In philosophical terms, you are asking yourself what thesis the philosopher is trying to defend and argument they are using to do so.

Process review:

How did we use the texts in our discussion?

When philosophers write they usually state a **thesis**, i.e. what they believe is the right answer to a philosophical question.

Then they argue for that thesis, offering the reader a set of premises, which taken together lead to a conclusion.

These arguments can be **sound** or **unsound**, that is, they can be **valid**, and their premises be true (sound), or they can be valid and their premises false, or **invalid** and their premises true (unsound in both cases).

Philosophers also often anticipate possible **objections** to their arguments and attempt to **reply** to them.

When you write a philosophical essay, you should try to do the same.

When you read a philosophical text, you should try to think of further objections and ask yourself whether they are answerable from the point of view of the author.

What did you find particularly problematic or difficult? Write it down here and look again in a month's time to see if you still have the same problems.

WEEK 3

Reading: Warren, ch.1
Plato and Diotima

AIM:

Learn to use passages from the text to support your points in writing.

Read the texts and the introduction, and listen to a short lecture paying particular attention to the following points and taking notes on them:

- Plato's theory of the forms and of knowledge
- the historicity of Diotima
- Love and Philosophy in the symposium
- The place of the immortal soul and love in the Pheadrus

Read the questions for reflection on p.60 of your book and discuss them in small groups.

Make sure you identify all the relevant passages in the text for answering the questions.

Short piece of writing (due Friday 14/10 in class)

Is the love referred to by Diotima in the *Symposium* and Socrates in the *Phaedrus* the same kind of thing as what we normally call love? If so why, if not why not? Use passages from both texts to support your answer.):

WEEK 4

Reading: Warren ch.2
Aristotle and late Pythagoreans

AIM:

Learn to identify a thesis in a text.

The thesis of a text is the main claim the author is making, that which they want you to believe and that which they attempt to argue for.

Read the texts, including the introduction and commentary, and listen to the short lecture, paying particular attention to the notions of virtue, context, and character development.

Read *Nicomachean Ethics*, excerpt 1.

What is the main claim Aristotle makes in that passage?

Find the relevant text and state the thesis in your own words.

Read *Nicomachean Ethics*, excerpts 5 and 6:

What are the virtues? Identify the relevant passages of the text for your answer.

How does Aristotle's answer to that question support his thesis in excerpt 1?

Read Theano's *Letter to Nikostrate* and Periktione's text:

What are the main claims of each text? How do they fit with Aristotle's ethics? Do you see any relevant differences?

WEEK 5

Reading: Warren ch.3
Augustine and Hildegard

AIM:

Learn to identify and argument and it's parts.

Read the texts, including the introduction and commentary, and listen to the short lecture, paying particular attention to the use of argument related terminology.

Read Augustine xii (18) and note the conclusion he draws: "Therefore as long as they exist, they are good."

Reconstruct the argument, looking for premises in the text that lead to this conclusion. What makes this argument either good or bad?

Bonus question (if you finish early):

In Excerpts from Augustine's *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, look for an argument, including premises and a conclusion.

Philosophical texts also contain non-arguments. Here are some examples:

1. Reports, advice, warnings can all be used in examples of as rhetorical devices.
2. Statements of belief or opinion can be used to introduce an argument, or to state the reason why an argument is needed.
3. Explanations (because...) are not arguments, but statements of (sometimes scientific) facts to answer a why question. A philosophical explanation may involve analyzing a concept.
4. Expository passages define a topic or area in sufficient detail so that we may construct arguments about it. Sometimes we may expose a philosophical system (e.g. Kant or Hegel).
5. Allegories and metaphors can do the same work as exposition or explanations but indirectly and with more subtlety (eg. Plato in the *Phaedrus*).

Read Hildegard, book I, Vision 4.

What philosophical methods does the author use in this passage?

Distinguish each one and explain.

Are there any arguments? Are there any arguments suggested by non argumentative forms?

Work on the questions for reflection p. 125 in small groups.

WEEK 6

Reading: Warren ch.4

Abelard and Heloise, Letter 5 (below)

AIM:

Learn to answer a question.

Read the texts, including the passages cited in the lecture and the added text below.

On the nature of philosophical questions:

There is no simple answer, and formulating the question is itself a philosophical exercise (see Heloise's letter 5, below). It requires some handle on the problem, knowledge of the literature and analytical skills to help you formulate the right question.

A good philosophical question leads to a good discussion – not to a simple answer.

Letter 5 is a good philosophical question. It uses the literature (Jerome, Benedict) and relevant examples.

Like a normal question, a philosophical question requires a pertinent answer.

E.g. "It's raining" is not a pertinent answer to the question "What time is it?"

Broken Down Question (due Friday 11 November)

Answer the question below, going through all the sub questions, and note how the question is divided up.

Question:

Do either Abelard's or Heloise's ethical outlook allow for individual variations in the way they achieve the good life?

Questions you need to answer to tackle the main question:

- 1) What do the texts tell us about Abelard's ethical outlook?
- 2) What do the texts tell us about Heloise's ethical outlook?
- 3) What would it mean for an ethical theory to allow for individual variations in achieving the good life? List a few of the possibilities and explain them.
- 4) Among the possibilities listed in 3, can any be found in the texts you examined?
- 5) Formulate your answer to the question in one short paragraph. This will be your answer to the main question, and would be the thesis if you were to write an essay.

FIFTH LETTER

HELOISE TO ABELARD

*To him who is hers in species
From her who is his as particular.¹*

Since there must never be the slightest cause
for you to find fault with my obedience,
a bridle has been set upon my words,
although my grief itself is still untamed.
Your order now is that I moderate myself
and refrain at least from writing
what is not difficult but impossible
to guard against in speech.
Nothing is less in our power than the heart,
which is more apt to command us than to obey.
And so when the heart's passions rouse us,
no one can contain their sudden surge of pressure
and keep them then from having their effects.

¹ *Suo specialiter, sua singulariter*. Heloise is using the terminology of formal dialectic, perhaps responding to Abelard's formal language in the Fourth Letter. The phrase presents difficulties not only because of its clipped form. The word *specialiter*, "in species," may have a limiting sense when the reference point is the larger category of *genus*—compare English "especially" or "specifically" to "generally" or "generically." Here, however, it is opposed to the more limiting *singulariter*, "as particular," "as individual," "singularly," or "uniquely," and therefore points to *species* as the universal that applies to particulars or individuals. A single manuscript presents the variant reading *Domino specialiter*, which should be understood as "To her lord in species."

In Abelard's metaphysics there is no thing except for particulars, which are unique and distinct from all else, and Heloise's use of the terms of dialectic here may be an apt way of indicating that, even if Abelard should insist on maintaining an abstract or generic posture toward her, her stance toward him would remain concrete and personal.

No, they will easily burst out
 and still more easily spill over into words,
 which are the ready symbols of the motions of the heart:²
 as it is written,
 "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth doth speak."³
 I therefore will restrain my hand from writing
 what I cannot keep my tongue from saying aloud.
 If only the heart that grieves
 were as ready to obey as the hand that writes.

And yet you have it in your power
 to palliate my grief to some extent,
 even if you cannot remove it all.
 For as one nail drives out another,⁴
 so a new thought drives out an old,
 and the heart, which had been set in one direction,
 is forced to lay aside or to abandon
 its memories of what once was.
 And the more this thought—of anything at all—
 occupies the heart and distracts it from other things,
 the more we think it an honorable thought,
 and the new direction in which we turn our hearts
 then seems more necessary and compelling.

So then—

All of us, the handmaidens of Christ and your daughters in Christ,
 now approach you as our father with two requests.⁵ We see them

² An understanding of words that is common in Latin treatises on dialectic, deriving ultimately from Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* 1. Cf. Heloise's description of her involuntary utterances in the Third Letter, p. 80.

³ Matt. 12:34.

⁴ Cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.35.75, and Jerome, *Epistulae* 125.14.

⁵ The inclusive plural "all of us" should be taken seriously. What follows from this point in the letter seems an orchestrated fugue of different voices developing a set of different themes connected to the central question of women's religious life: the inapplicability of the Benedictine Rule to women; the historical contingency of the Benedictine and similar Rules; the distinction between formal compliance and the inward disposition seen as proper to a Christian; the general importance of moderation and discretion in the Rule, and some specific areas in which accommodation for women's nature should be made; the need for better instruction in whatever Rule may be

both as necessary to us. One is that you teach us how the order of nuns began and tell us of the origin and foundation of our calling. The other is that you institute a rule for us to follow, a written directive suitable for women, detailing in full the condition and habit of our own way of life. This has not been done by any of the Fathers, and because of this failure, it now is the case that both men and women are received into monasteries to profess the same rule, and the same yoke of monastic regulation is laid upon the stronger and the weaker sex alike.

At present, throughout the Latin Church women profess the Rule of Saint Benedict on the same basis as men. But as this rule was written only for men, its instructions can be followed only by men, whether they apply to subordinates or superiors in our orders. For example, the regulations about cowls, scapulars, and breeches—what can they have to do with women?⁶ Or the ones about wearing tunics and woolen clothing next to the skin, when the monthly purgation of excess humors makes this something women must avoid? Then, what does it imply for a convent of women that the abbot himself is required to read the lesson from the Gospel before proceeding to the hymn?⁷ And what about the abbot's table, where he is required to dine with pilgrims and guests?⁸ Will *either* be suitable for our religious practice—that an abbess never offer hospitality to men, or that she sit and take her meals with her male guests? On the one hand, the situation of women and men interacting in easy proximity is hazardous for the soul, but certainly most so at table, where gluttony and drunkenness are the rule and wine is consumed for

adopted; and the need for a convent's material support. Some of the voices appear to have been introduced at a later date, as certain comments and sections seem to derive from Abelard's reply in the Seventh Letter and from other subsequent texts. In all, the main part of the letter, like *The Questions of Heloise*, has the air of a collective research project, which Heloise could be imagined to have set for the nuns of the Paraclete to help educate them more fully in the principles and particulars of their religious practice and which may well have continued for some time. The translation makes no attempt to distinguish the separate voices; however, passages that appear most plainly to have been composed at a later date are enclosed in brackets.

⁶ Cf. *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 55.

⁷ Cf. *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 11. As indicated at the end of the letter when the issue briefly returns, the difficulty is that the Gospel readings should be conducted by a priest or a deacon and are scheduled for the Night Office, a time when inviting a man into the convent is especially unsuitable.

⁸ Cf. *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 56.

pleasure [“wherein is lechery”].⁹ “It is hard to preserve your modesty at a feast,” Saint Jerome warned a mother and her daughter,¹⁰ and Ovid, the learned poet of seduction, described exactly the kind of opportunities a banquet affords, in the book he entitled *The Art of Love*:

When wine soaks Cupid’s wings, he cannot fly
But sits there sluggish, rooted to the spot. . . .
A time for laughter, when even a poor man
Unpuckers his brow, all care and sorrow gone. . . .
That’s when girls make off with young men’s souls;
Mixing love and wine adds fuel to the fire.¹¹

But on the other hand, if only the women guests are invited to table, is there not some risk in that, too? There is nothing that so leads a woman astray as feminine finery, and a woman will spread her corruption of mind most easily to another woman—which is why Jerome so vigorously urged women in religious orders to avoid contact with women of the world.¹² Also, if we do invite only women and exclude all men from our hospitality, will that not seriously offend the men on whose kind services all women’s convents must depend, especially if we seem to give so little, or nothing at all, to the men from whom we receive so much? If in the end, however, it turns out to be impossible for us to observe the tenor of the Rule in full, then, I’m afraid, we risk the condemnation of the apostle James: “Whoever shall keep the whole law but offend in one point is become guilty of all.”¹³ [That is to say, if someone fulfills many parts of the law but does not fulfill them all, he still is guilty in the one part he has left unfulfilled: unless he has fulfilled all parts, because of this one part he becomes a transgressor of the whole. As James goes on to say:

For he that said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” also said,
“Thou shalt not kill. Now if thou do not commit adultery, but thou
shalt kill, thou art a transgressor of the law.

⁹ A tag from Eph. 5:18, most likely an interpolation imported from Abelard’s reply in the Seventh Letter, where it is also cited.

¹⁰ *Epistulae* 117.6.

¹¹ *Ars Amatoria* 1.233–34, 239–40, 243–44.

¹² Cf. *Epistulae* 22.16.

¹³ Jas. 2:10.

In other words, someone becomes guilty by transgressing any one precept of the law, because the Lord who set one precept also set the other, and whatever precept of the law is violated will show disdain for God, who made the law not in one but in all of its requirements.]¹⁴

But I do not want to dwell on those parts of the Rule which we cannot observe in full, or cannot without some risk; instead, here are some other points. Where in the world has it ever been the practice for a convent of nuns to work the harvest?¹⁵ Or to test the constancy of the women we accept through the probation of just a single year? Or to instruct them with just three readings of the Rule, as the Rule itself prescribes?¹⁶ What can be more foolish than entering on a path that is both unknown and as yet unexplained? Is there any more presumptuous act than committing yourself to a way of life you do not know or taking vows you have no capacity to fulfill? If discretion is the mother of all virtues and reason the mediator of all good, can something be a virtue or a good which seems so at odds with discretion and with reason? Virtues that exceed the mean and measure should be counted among the vices, Jerome says.¹⁷ Where, then, is the discretion or the reason in loading burdens on the backs of those whose strength has not first been tested to make sure that the tasks assigned to human beings are in line with their natural constitutions? Would anyone give a donkey the same load as an elephant? Or the young or very old the same loads as full adults? Can the frail bear as much as the hardy, or the sickly as much as the well? Can women, who are the weaker sex, bear as much as men, who are the stronger? [Saint Gregory addressed this issue in Chapter 24 of his *Pastoral*, where he distinguished between women and men regarding both admonition and instruction:

Men should be admonished in one way and women in another, in that heavy burdens should be placed on men and lighter ones on women. Let men take up the greater tasks, but let women be corrected gently with the light ones.]¹⁸

¹⁴ This redundant section is a close paraphrase of Abelard's answer to the second of Heloise's *Questions*, which postdates this letter. Evidently, it is a later interpolation, imported from that source.

¹⁵ Cf. *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 48.

¹⁶ Cf. *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 58.

¹⁷ Cf. *Epistulae* 130.11.

¹⁸ *Regulae Pastoralis Liber* 3.1. The comment apparently derives from Abelard's reply in the Seventh Letter.

The men who wrote the rules for monks were entirely silent about women, but they also laid down regulations which they knew did not suit women in the slightest. Bull and heifer were *not* to fit their necks to the same yoke of the Rule: those whom nature had *not* created equal must *not* have equal work. Saint Benedict himself was consistently aware of the importance of careful distinctions, steeped as he was in the spirit of all things just. In fact, he tempered everything in the Rule to suit the character of the person involved and the season of the year, and in one passage concluded, "Let all things be done in moderation."¹⁹ Beginning with the abbot himself, he instructed him to preside over his subordinates "according to the character and understanding of each, adjusting and adapting himself to all in such a way that he may not only suffer no loss in his flock, but may even rejoice in its increase,"²⁰ and later continued:

Let him always keep his own frailty before his eyes and remember not to "break the bruised reed. . . ." Let him be discreet and moderate, bearing in mind the discretion of Jacob, who said, "If I should cause my flocks to be overdriven, in one day they all will die." Following this and other examples of discretion, the mother of virtues, he should temper all things in a way that the strong may have something to strive for and the weak may not be discouraged.²¹

All of the allowances he made—for the young, the old, and the infirm in general; for feeding the lector and the weekly kitchen workers before the other monks; and for the provision of different kinds and amounts of food to meet the different needs of different men—were based on moderation, and all of them were carefully written down.²² He even relaxed the statutory periods of fast in accord with the season of the year and the amount of labor to be done, as natural weakness would require.²³

¹⁹ *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 48.

²⁰ *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 2.

²¹ *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 64. Internal quotations are from Isa. 42:3 and Gen. 33:13.

²² Cf. *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapters 34–41.

²³ Cf. *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 48.

Now, if this is the case, what would he do, Saint Benedict, who tempered everything to suit the character of the person involved and the season of the year in such a way as to enable everyone to follow the regulations without complaining²⁴—what provision would he make for women if he were to institute a rule for them, as he did for men? If he found himself compelled to ease the rigor of his rule in certain parts to accommodate the weakness of the young, the old, and the infirm, how would he accommodate the fragility of our sex, whose natural lack of strength is obvious?

You will need, then, to consider how far it is from reason and discretion to insist that women follow the same rule as men, that the weak bear as much as the strong. It seems to me that we do well enough in our weakness if we equal the leaders of the Church and other clerics in Holy Orders in the virtues of abstinence and self-restraint: “Everyone shall be perfect,” the Lord has said, “if he be as his master.”²⁵ If we could equal even the most devout among the laity, I think it would be taken as no small thing, for what seems of little moment in the strong is something we all admire in the weak:²⁶ “Power is made perfect by weakness,” the Apostle says.²⁷ And of course, no one should disparage the devout among the laity, men like Abraham, David, and Job, simply because they were married. As Chrysostom reminds us:

There are many things . . . a man can do to charm that beast, things such as work, reading, and keeping vigils. “But what are they to us, who are not monks?” That is not a question for me but rather for Paul. “Keep vigil in patience and prayer,” he said, and “Make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.” He was not writing only for monks but for all men. A layman should have no more latitude than a monk—except that he may lie with his wife: he has dispensation for that, but for nothing else—and should act in every other way as a monk acts. And Christ did not address the Beatitudes only to monks. . . . For if he had and if laymen in fact cannot obey them, . . . it will mean the destruction of the world, for then Christ has confined virtue within

²⁴ Cf. *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 39.

²⁵ Luke 6:40.

²⁶ Cf. Gregory, *Regulae Pastoralis Liber* 3.1, quoted in the Seventh Letter.

²⁷ 2 Cor. 12:9.

very narrow limits. If marriage by itself so hinders us, how can it be called honorable?²⁸

The clear inference is that whoever adds the virtue of self-restraint to the precepts laid down in the Gospel will attain monastic perfection. I only wish our own religious practice reached the heights where it simply fulfilled the Gospel—no need to surpass it, nor for us to try to be anything more than Christians. So, unless I am mistaken, this is why the Fathers decided not to set down a general rule for us, as they did for men, a rule which then would be like some new law, burdening our weakness with a multitude of vows: they obeyed Saint Paul, who said, “The law worketh wrath, for where there is no law, neither is there transgression,” and “The law entered in that sin might abound.” But even he, that great preacher of self-restraint, understood our weakness and urged younger widows to remarry: “I would have it, therefore, that the younger should marry, bear children, be mistresses of families, and give no occasion to the adversary to speak evil.”²⁹ And Saint Jerome agreed, telling Eustochium about the ill-considered vows some women take:

But if, because of some other faults, even those who are virgins are not saved, what will happen to those who have prostituted the body of Christ and turned the temple of the Holy Spirit into a brothel? . . . Better for a person to have married and to have walked on level ground than to strain for the heights and plunge into the depths of hell.³⁰

Saint Augustine, too, wrote of women’s thoughtlessness in entering orders, in the book he addressed to Juliana on a widow’s self-restraint:

A woman who has not begun on this path should think again; a woman who has begun should persevere. No opening should be given to the devil, and no offering taken from Christ.³¹

²⁸ *Homiliae in Epistulam ad Hebraeos* 7.4, cited in the sixth-century Latin translation of Mutianus, not in the original Greek. Internal quotations are from Eph. 6:18 and Rom. 13:14.

²⁹ Rom. 4:15 and 5:20; 1 Tim. 5:14.

³⁰ *Epistulae* 22.6.

³¹ *De Bono Viduitatis* 9.13.

Accordingly, Church regulations do not allow women to be ordained as deaconesses before the age of forty, and then only after careful probation, while men may become deacons at age twenty—it is another recognition of our weakness.

There are also those who call themselves the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine.³² They too live in monasteries, claim to follow a rule of sorts, and consider themselves in no way inferior to monks—and yet we see they are permitted to eat meat and wear linen clothing. Now, if we in our weakness could match their virtue, no one would see that as trivial at all. But any allowance made for *us* in food or drink would only need to be minor and could be made without much risk, since we are protected by a greater natural power of sobriety. Women, it is recognized, can be maintained at less cost and with less nourishment than men, and medical science indicates that we are also less easily intoxicated. As Macrobius writes in Book 7 of the *Saturnalia*:

Aristotle says that old men are often drunk, but women very rarely. . . . The female body is extremely moist—witness the lightness and clarity of a woman's skin and, especially, the regular purgation of her excess humors. So, when wine has been swallowed and incorporated into this great general moisture, it loses its strength . . . and does not easily strike the seat of the brain, once its force has been dissipated.

And again:

The female body, designed as it is for frequent purgation, is pierced with several holes, so that channels and passageways are open for the humors to drain out. Through these holes the fumes of wine quickly evaporate. In old men, on the other hand, the body is quite dry, as is indicated by the roughness and dullness of the skin.³³

So allowances made for us in food and drink are more appropriate to our weakness and our nature and can be made without much risk, since women are less prone to gluttony and drunkenness, as we require less food and are protected by the constitution of our bodies.

³² See p. 3, n. 5.

³³ *Saturnalia* 7.6.16–17.

Now, it should be enough in our weakness—and may even be thought a great thing—if, living in poverty and self-restraint and occupied with our duties to God, we could equal the leaders of the Church or devout laymen in our own mode of life, or match the so-called canons regular, who pledge themselves to follow the apostles' way. But in the end, it shows considerable foresight if those who bind themselves to God actually vow *less* than they perform, in order that there may always be something they can add over and above what they are already bound to do, something of their own accord. The Lord said, "When you shall have done all those things that are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do'"—in other words, "We are unprofitable, unworthy, and of no account if we rest content with what we ought to do, adding nothing of our own accord"—and he promised in a parable elsewhere, "Whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I, at my return, will repay thee."³⁴

If those who rush blindly into their religious vows—and there are many of them in these times—were to watch more carefully what they were doing, consider beforehand the calling they professed, and actually study the import of the Rule, they would offend less through their ignorance and sin less through their neglect. But as it is, nearly everyone alike comes running to monastic life with little thought at all, and once received in disorder, they proceed to live in disorder, and, as easily as they profess a rule they do not know, will ignore the same rule, substituting customs they prefer for existing law. We must be careful, then, to avoid burdening woman with the load we see causing nearly every man to stagger and collapse. The world has now grown old, we see, and human beings, along with all the other creatures of the world, have lost the ancient vigor of their nature. "The love not of many but nearly of all has grown cold," to adapt a phrase of the Lord's.³⁵ In accord with people's character, then, it is necessary to change, or at least to temper, the Rule that once was written for people to follow.

Saint Benedict, in fact—consistently aware of the importance of careful distinctions—admits that he has already tempered the rigor of monastic regulations in such a way that, in comparison with

³⁴ Luke 17:10, 10:35.

³⁵ Cf. Matt. 24:12.

earlier systems, his Rule is little more than a guide to upright living and the first step in the religious life:

I have written this Rule that we may show in its observance that we have reached a degree of upright living and the rudiments of the religious life. For the one, though, who would hasten towards the perfection of this life there are the teachings of the holy Fathers, whose observance will lead him to the pinnacle of perfection. . . . And so, whoever you are who are hastening to your home in heaven, with Christ's help fulfill this minimal Rule, which is the first step, and at length you will attain the greater heights of doctrine and virtue under the protection of God.³⁶

For example, he explains, there was a time when the Fathers used to complete the entire Psalter in a single day. He adjusted the recitation of psalms, however, to the needs of the "lukewarm," spreading them over the course of a week, so that now monks are content with a smaller number of psalms, as secular clerics are.³⁷

Or another example—What is most inimical to a monastery's devotions and repose? What most foments lechery and sows the seeds of discord, or destroys reason, which is the image of God in man and our chief distinction from beasts? I mean of course *wine*, the item of food which scripture condemns beyond any other. Solomon, the wisest of the wise, writes in the Book of Proverbs: "Wine is a luxurious thing, and drunkenness riotous: whosoever is delighted therein shall not be wise."³⁸

[Who hath woe? Whose father hath woe? Who hath contentions? Who falls into pits? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? Surely they that pass their time in wine and study to drink off their cups. Look not upon the wine when it is red, when its color shineth in the glass: it goeth in pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake and will spread poison abroad like a basilisk. Thy eyes shall behold strange women and thy heart perverse things. And thou shalt be as one sleeping in the midst of the sea, and as a pilot fast asleep when the stern is lost.

³⁶ *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 73.

³⁷ Cf. *Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 18.

³⁸ Prov. 20:1.

WEEK 7

Reading: Warren ch.5
Descartes and Elizabeth

AIM:

Learn to use examples to illustrate your arguments.

Read the texts, including the introduction and commentary, and listen to the short lecture, paying particular attention to the examples that Descartes and Elizabeth use.

MIND BODY DUALISM:

In the first part of her correspondence with Descartes, Elizabeth presents what has become the most famous objection to Descartes's dualism:

Descartes believes that the soul and the body are distinct, that they are made of different stuff. Yet, he also believes that there are causal relations between mind and body.

e.g.: if I feel dehydrated (body) I decide (soul) to drink water.

If I want to go for a swim, I jump in the water.

In these examples, deciding and wanting are movements of the soul, whereas sensations and actions belong to the body.

Descartes believes that the best way to explain these mind-body interactions is to posit that the soul lives in a small gland at the back of the brain.

Elizabeth's objection is as follows:

If the soul is immaterial (occupies no physical space) and the body is material (occupies physical space) how is it possible for one to cause the other to change? Causation happens through physical contact (direct or indirect) but no such contact is possible between the material and the immaterial.

Other philosophers embracing substance dualism (the view that the mind and the body are different substances) have tried to find a way around this problem.

Malebranche – Occasionalism

God is the only agent capable of causation.

There are no direct causal relations between our bodies and our souls. God just makes

sure that the two change at the same time.

e.g. when I decide I want to swim, God plucks my body and drops it in the water.

When I feel thirsty, God puts the idea of drinking in my mind.

Not only does this solution give God a lot of work, but it doesn't work! (Work out why)

Exercise:

Read the first two letters carefully:

What is Descartes's answer to Elizabeth?

Descartes uses an example: is it relevant? Why or why not?

APPLYING THEORIES

When we give an example, we look for instances in the real or fictional world, of non-theoretical, easy to grasp, evocative facts or events which can help understand a philosophical point.

It's a lot like using apples to help a child learn to count.

But philosophy interacts with the real world both ways: it can also be applied, in the same way that maths can be used to develop economic theories.

(Note that here I am using analogies, not examples to illustrate my points).

Exercise:

The letters in section II are Descartes' attempt to apply his theory of the soul to medicine.

Read these letters. What do Descartes's attempt tell us about his views of reason, the emotions and the body?

Three Questions Essay: (due Friday 25 November in class)

Elizabeth gives several examples to illustrate the inseparability of mind and body. What are they? Are they convincing? Can you think of others?

Answer in three parts:

1) Identify the examples in the text. Cite them with page numbers, letter's date, and a description of the example and how it works.

You should select at least two examples from the text, but no more than four.

2) Explain for each example you cited why you think it works or not.

3) Give at least one example of your own and explain why it makes a compelling case for either the separability or the inseparability of mind and body.

WEEK 9

Reading: Warren ch. 6
Hobbes and Macaulay

AIM:

Learn to construct your own argument.

Read the texts, including the introduction and commentary, and listen to the short lecture, paying particular attention to the ways in which the authors defend their theses.

Themes to focus on: equality, liberty, state of nature, government, punishment, education.

How to construct an argument:

Find your conclusion – which is that which you want to argue for, i.e. your thesis, part of your thesis, or a step towards your thesis.

e.g. “We cannot be free in the state of nature”.

Next, find reasons for your conclusion. What would you have to say to persuade somebody that your conclusion is true? What would make them believe it?

Ways to do this:

- ask yourself why?
- brainstorm
- look in the texts

Study the terms (main words) of your conclusion in order to identify reasons for believing it.

In my example you will need to state reasons that define freedom and the state of nature and link the two together.

Try Hobbe’s definition of Freedom:

“Liberty is freedom from external impediments”

Then explain why we cannot have such freedom in the state of nature. Perhaps because of the absence of predictability?

Your premises (reasons) must be justified. So when you write out your arguments in an essay, you must explain what the premises mean, give examples to illustrate them, and cite the text in support.

Exercise:

Try writing an argument for the following conclusion:

C: It is the duty of the government to ensure that every child, boy or girl, is educated.

How to argue with an author in a text:

There are two questions you could be asking:

- 1) Is author A right that X? or Do you agree with A that X? (the two mean the same)
- 2) Which of the two accounts is better, A's or B's?

1) Start by identifying what the author says and state it in a premise:

P1: A says x.

You will need to find clear evidence in the text for this and cite it, explaining in your own words what it means.

Next you should evaluate x in a second premise:

P2: x is true/false

You will need to defend this premise by giving reasons why x is true or false. Sometimes this may necessitate another argument.

Last, you conclude :

C: I agree / disagree with A.

2) More or less the same but with one or more extra premises.

P1: A says x

P2: B says y or not x

P3: x and y cannot both be true

P4: x is true/ y is true / x is false/ y is false

C: therefore A/B is right.

Exercise:

Which account of punishment do you prefer: Hobbes or Macaulay's? Give an argument to support your answer.

WEEK 10

Reading: Warren ch.7

Locke and Masham

AIM:

Learn to construct a thesis statement.

Read the texts, including the introduction and commentary, and listen to the short lecture, paying particular attention to the place of reason in education.

The Rationalist/Empiricist debate:

Descartes: The only reliable truths come from reason as the senses are deceitful.

Locke: All ideas come from (sensory) experience. None are innate. The mind at birth is blank (a 'tabula rasa').

Complex disagreement about what can be known and how it can be known.

Kant's formulation of the disagreement:

There are really two distinctions of truths on the one hand and knowledge on the other.

Truths can be synthetic or analytic.

Knowledge can be a posteriori or a priori (before or after sensory experience).

Most (but not all) synthetic truths are knowledgeable a posteriori.

Most (but not all) analytic truths are knowledgeable a priori.

Read the texts again. There is plenty of material in them about reason, knowledge, faith, education, skepticism and gender. This means that there is plenty of 'food for thought'.

This is something you can use to nourish your philosophical creativity by thinking through what other philosophers have written.

Creative philosophy is not regurgitation (what birds do to feed their babies). It is the effect on your abilities of a properly digested, well balanced diet of reading philosophy. Just like digesting food, digesting philosophy is a process and takes time. And efficient digestion also requires exercise: you need to practice reading and writing often.

What this means in practice:

- you don't create something out of nothing. You need fuel to come up with interesting philosophical ideas.

- you should always acknowledge your sources so that (1) you can show that your own ideas are distinct and contribute originally to an existing debate and (2) you avoid charges of plagiarism! (3) you can give the reader the context needed to understand what you are saying.

Step by step essay: (due Friday 16 December in class)

1) Formulate a thesis inspired by your readings from this week.

Your thesis statement should be no longer than three lines.

It should state clearly something you believe to be true, and that you intend to argue for.

It should be deep and controversial.

2) Formulate the question that your thesis is an answer to.

Sometimes we come to a thesis by answering a question, and a question comes out of a problem. So: if you identify a philosophical problem you can turn it into a question, and that can lead you to a thesis. Conversely, a thesis should always be the answer to a question.

3) In one paragraph, explain how your thesis relates to the texts, i.e. link it to one particular bit of text, or to one or more argument in the texts, explain what the author does in that passage and then explain why what you are going to defend is different.

4) Outline a possible way to support your thesis, i.e. give an argument, with a conclusion (which should be a version of your thesis, or part of it) and premises (reasons for your conclusion).

Follow the steps, and make it clear that you are following them!

WEEK 11

Reading: Warren ch. 8
Leibniz and Conway

AIM:

Learn to write an introduction for a philosophy essay.

Read the texts, including the introduction and commentary, and listen to the short lecture, paying particular attention to Warren's introduction.

Writing an introduction

Reread Warren's introduction. It contains two elements:

- a biographical element
- a theoretical element summarizing the ideas that the two authors are famous for.

YOU NEVER NEED TO DO THIS!

(At least not unless you are writing an introductory textbook).

Warren is introducing authors and their texts to undergraduate students who may not have previous knowledge of them.

In an essay, you will introduce a thesis and a structured argumentation answering a question set by a teacher (me) who is more familiar with the texts you discuss than you are!

So what I am not familiar with as a reader of your essay?

Your answer to the question.

What might I need help focusing on?

The structure of your argument.

So do not assume I will read through your essay and that I will understand at once what you are saying! You need to give me **a map of your thought in the introduction.**

No hooks! I am not a fish! Nor am I an agent: I am not going to decide whether or not to read your essay depending on whether I find the first few lines catchy. What I am looking for is clarity of argument.

So think of your introduction as a **key** to the essay, rather than an interesting preamble.

Summarizing the texts:

You should not summarize the texts in your introduction. But you may need to write a sentence or two about which part/ argument of the text is relevant to your thesis. Later on in the essay, you may need to say more about the texts you engage with, to support a premise in an argument, or study an objection or example.

You already know that some of your arguments will rely on your interpretation of the text. So you need to be able to summarize philosophical texts. This often means extracting the main thesis and principal arguments. Once you have done that, you can decide what you need to say in the introduction.

Here's a model:

Question: Is there a good argument for P?

Thesis: Yes, there is a good argument for P.

Introduction:

Author A, in her work W, presents an argument for P. In this essay I will argue that although A's argument is not without objections, these objections can be addressed and we too can conclude that P. I will focus on two particularly powerful objections to A's argument, from author B, and show that they can be answered.

Note that I use a second author, here, B. I refer to secondary literature.

You can use secondary literature as some will help you focus on the relevant parts of the text. But you must exercise caution: always give a reference! And beware commentaries that are not published in reputable philosophy journals!

Exercise:

Choose one question on p.286 and

- (1) summarize the relevant text
- (2) formulate a thesis statement answering the question.
- (3) Think about how you might defend your thesis in an essay
- (4) write an introduction for this (unwritten) essay.

WEEK 12

Reading: Warren ch. 9
Rousseau and Wollstonecraft

AIM:

Learn to construct an objection as counter-argument.

Read the texts, including the introduction and commentary, and listen to the short presentation, paying particular attention to what the two authors have in common and how they differ.

Rousseau argues that women are unlike men by nature so that their happiness will depend on different things, and so that they will need to be educated differently.

Wollstonecraft objects the following:

If women are mere animals, then they are not fit to be the companions of men.

What distinguishes animals from human beings is reason.

So if women are human beings, rather than animals, then are reasonable beings.

But reason is not relative, and in particular, it needs to be nurtured in everyone in the same way.

Therefore, either women should not be men's companions, or they should be educated in the same way.

Her objection is a counter-argument.

What are objections for?

To show that a conclusion is unwarranted or false.

Why should we want to do that?

Sometimes, because as in Wollstonecraft and Rousseau's case, we think that a conclusion is harmful and needs to be shown to be false.

Sometimes, we object to an argument not because we disagree with the conclusion but because we need to make sure that it is in fact correct, and that the argument that is given for it is the strongest it can be. So you should always be prepared to respond to objections and to object to your own arguments.

Exercise:

1. Pick an argument in the text (Rousseau or Wollstonecraft)
2. Analyze the argument in terms of premises and conclusion.

3. Construct a counter-argument to the argument you chose.
4. Try to reply to your own objection (optional).

WEEK 13

Reading: Warren ch. 11
Mill and Taylor

AIM:

Learn to construct an objection as counter-example.

Read the texts, including the introduction and commentary, and listen to the short lecture, paying particular attention to the practical nature of the author's proposals.

In the "Enfranchisement of Women" the author dispels preliminary objections to giving women equal rights and status.

These objections take the form of "It has always been so" . I.e. they enjoin us to look at the evidence around us, and realize that through history and all other the world women are always subjugated, and to conclude that it is nonsensical to claim that things should be otherwise.

How does this objection work?

It's a common enough objection: "It's just the way things are", "Be a realist".

But it's based on an argument which contains a false premise:

P1: If things are like this and have always been, then it's how they ought to be.

P2: Things are like this

Therefore that's how they ought to be.

There are two ways we can refute such an argument:

1. attack the first (false) premise.
2. object to the second premise by giving counter-examples.

Can you think of counter examples to the objection Taylor considers?

Exercise:

Find the next two objections in the text. What sort of objections are they? (i.e. counter-argument or counter-example).

On p.376, Mill considers an objection to giving women equal rights “It will be said perhaps, that the greater ...”

How does this objection work?

It’s an argument supported by examples: women’s nature is X, e.g. they have hysterics.

On p.377, Mill replies to this objection: “Even if it were true...”

What sort of reply is this?

Final Essay: (due exams week)

Is it ever justifiable for the law to treat some people as inferior to others?

Follow the instructions below:

- Answer the question with a thesis statement.
- Develop an argument with reference to the texts!
- Consider two objections to your argument : one counter-argument, one counter-example.
- Reply to your objections.
- Use examples throughout to illustrate your points.
- Make sure you make one point per paragraph!
- Draft your introduction according to week 11 guidelines.
- List your references at the end.

Jack Woods' Essay Writing Techniques

1. Use clear, simple prose. There is a temptation in philosophy to try to sound deep, grand, sophisticated, or literary. Resist! These sorts of touches come later. Professional philosophers should also aim for clear, simple prose. But often they fail at this. It is partially your job to make up for their failure by explaining their point clearly and simply in your own words. For example, if their name is “the highest one”, do not write “that than which no higher can be conceived” as (a) this does not mean the same thing and (b) makes the reader do far too much work.
2. Less is more. Do not attempt to kick out the chocks from underneath, say, Rationalism or Theism in your first paper. Rather, pick a small issue which makes a major point and go after it with tweezers and a scalpel. Be clear about what the issue is, what is plausible about some solution to it, what is not and then decide on the basis of reasons whether or not this solution is tenable. I guarantee you that you will learn far more about the entire topic in this way.
3. Give examples. Philosophers love examples. A freshly thought-up accurate example of your own is incontrovertible proof that you understand something. For every claim you make, give an example to illustrate it (within reason!) This will make me happy.
4. Similarly with counterexamples. Whenever you make a claim, think about how someone might respond (again, within reason!). Then modify your position or include a pair of responses and your rebuttal.
5. Minimize long quotations---though be generous with citations to the work that you draw on, both explicitly and implicitly. It will serve you better in the long run to be able to paraphrase arguments in your own words. An eye for when to include a quote and when to paraphrase is a valuable and difficult thing to develop. Start early.
6. Be generous. Most philosophers are not left speechless at objections; try to respond on the behalf of the person or view you are raising problems for. Again, among the valuable skills you should endeavor to develop is the sense for what is appealing about a view that you find false. It is a good assumption that the people we will read are NOT STUPID. Do them the service of believing it of them.
7. Keep the structure simple. If you are arguing that Q on the basis of P, then structure your essay thus: I will argue that Q because P. Here is an argument that Q on the basis of P. I am arguing Q on the basis of P. Here are objections to Q because of P or just to Q. These objections don't work. I am rebutting criticism of my thesis: Q on the basis of P. In this essay, I have argued that Q on the basis of P and then addressed some criticisms of this claim. The end. This might sound too simple. It is not. Philosophy can be incredibly difficult; it is thus important to be as clear as possible as to what you are doing while you do it.
8. Finally, everything in your essay should be aimed at establishing your conclusion. Do not waste words. If it doesn't support your thesis, have to do with an objection to it, or serve to inform the reader where they are in the paper, delete it. Except your name. Keep this at the top left of the first page.