

What is Philosophy?

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November 8, 2020

Philosophers throughout history have been pushing limits on how we think about ourselves and the world around us. Directly translated from Greek, philosophy means love of insight (Education, 2017). “The unexamined life is not worth living,” is a familiar quote by Socrates. He sought to emphasize a distinction between truth and opinion (Archives, 2000). Socrates challenged us to look for contradictions and exceptions to things considered truth or common sense, and attempted to disprove those ideas. He aimed for us to test to see if the thoughts managing our lives are indeed sound or if there were errors, or fallacies, in our thinking.

According to the authors of our textbook, “philosophy is nothing less than the attempt to understand who we are and what we think of ourselves” (p. xiii). Stemming from the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, modern philosophy has been broken down into four main parts: articulation, argument, analysis, and synthesis (p. 5). Utilizing these primary features, one can begin to generate their own personal philosophy. Philosophical exploration challenges a person to assess their ideas, values, lifestyles, beliefs, and truths.

Early philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Epicurus, and Seneca believed that psychology could help a person overcome or even prepare for hardship. Seneca believed in meditating on all the things that could go wrong throughout the day in order to practice emotion regulation so we could best respond to adverse situations (Archives, 2000). Philosophy focused on self-information can lead to greater satisfaction in life (Education, 2017).

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