**Chapter 1**

***What Is Philosophy?***

Thinking Philosophically About Life

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Philosophy is a way of thinking that allows one to think more deeply about one’s beliefs and

about meaning in life. It is not content with simply stating what one believes, but is a

discipline that seeks to uncover the deeper principles that one’s beliefs are based upon. The

skill of critical thinking is extremely important to this endeavor. In critical thinking, we

examine various points of view and seek out the best reasons for believing in them. With

critical thinking comes the discipline of argumentation, in which one seeks to explicitly show

how one’s principles lead to certain conclusions.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

At the completion of this chapter the student will be able to

1.1 Explain why philosophy should be studied.

1.2 Define Philosophy and discuss its ultimate aims

1.3 Describe how a person can become a critical thinker.

1.4 Describe and analyze the nature and structure of arguments.

1.5 Identify and discuss the various branches of philosophy.

1.6 Demonstrate how to read critically and work with primary sources.

**DISCUSSION PROMPTS**

1. What is philosophy? Why is it worth studying?

2. What is critical thinking? How is critical thinking important to philosophy?

3. What is deficient about the “Garden of Eden” and “anything goes” stages of thinking?

Why would someone want to progress from those stages into the “critical thinking”

stage?

4. Why are generalizations often fallacious? How can one best guard against

generalizing too hastily?

5. Why are causal fallacies committed? What do they have in common with each other?

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***Multiple Choice Questions***

*Difficulty: 1 = Easy; 2 = Medium; 3 = Challenging*

Choose the best possible answer for each of the following.

TB\_01\_01\_Why Study Philosophy?, Understand, LO 1.1

Philosophy provides the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ required to craft a life inspiring in its challenges and rich in its fulfillment.

A. precepts

B. emotional currents

C. conceptual tools

D. unconscious motivations

*Answer: C*

Learning Objective: LO 1.1 Explain why philosophy should be studied.

Topic: Why Study Philosophy?

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Easy

TB\_01\_02\_Why Study Philosophy?, Understand, LO 1.1

Philosophy can, most of all, help a person to think more \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. quickly

B. narrowly

C. easily

D. critically

*Answer: D*

Learning Objective: LO 1.1 Explain why philosophy should be studied.

Topic: Why Study Philosophy?

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Easy

TB\_01\_03\_Why Study Philosophy?, Understand, LO 1.1

The ancient Greek idea of *eudaemonia* (happiness) is based on achieving \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. one’sfull potential

B. a comfortable lifestyle

C. greatness

D. what one’s parents expect

*Answer: A*

Learning Objective: LO 1.1 Explain why philosophy should be studied.

Topic: Why Study Philosophy?

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_04\_Defining Philosophy, Understand, LO 1.2

Long ago, the field of philosophy was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ than it is today.

A. better

B. more difficult

C. less difficult

D. broader

*Answer: D*

Learning Objective: LO 1.2 Define Philosophy and discuss its ultimate aim.

Topic: Defining Philosophy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Easy

TB\_01\_05\_ Defining Philosophy, Understand, LO\_1.2

The term *dialectical* means \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. controversial conversation

B. analyzing ideas in relation to their opposites

C. something that is always changing

D. creating new ideas by combining old ones

*Answer: B*

Learning Objective: LO 1.2 Define Philosophy and discuss its ultimate aim.

Topic: Defining Philosophy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_06\_Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker, Understand, LO\_1.3

The word “philosophy” comes from two Greek roots that mean \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. ”critical thinking”

B. ”love” and “wisdom”

C. ”passion” and “commitment”

D. ”dialectical certainty”

*Answer: B*

Learning Objective: LO 1.3 Describe how a person can become a critical thinker.

Topic: Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_07\_ Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker, Understand, LO\_1.3

Socrates came closest to capturing the essence of philosophy when he said, “The unexamined life \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

A. is not worth living

B. is the only life worth living

C. seems longer to the philosopher

D. is what we are born to

*Answer: A*

Learning Objective: LO 1.3 Describe how a person can become a critical thinker.

Topic: Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Easy

TB\_01\_08\_ Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker, Understand, LO\_1.3

Why is it important to identify one’s assumptions?

A. to enhance one’s moral position

B. it is the standard way to formally communicate

C. so that it is clear what principles one’s reasoning is based on

D. to demonstrate that one’s initial view is the most correct

*Answer: C*

Learning Objective: LO 1.3 Describe how a person can become a critical thinker.

Topic: Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Easy

TB\_01\_09\_ Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker, Understand, LO\_1.3

The final step in the reasoning process is to Consider the Consequences, which means \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. understanding who will be punished as a result of the conclusion

B. understanding the reason one will be punished for accepting a false conclusion

C. determining whether a conclusion is true or false by putting it into practice

D. understand what is likely to happen if the conclusion is adopted

*Answer: D*

Learning Objective: LO 1.3 Describe how a person can become a critical thinker.

Topic: Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_10\_ Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker, Understand, LO\_1.3

Why is the “Garden of Eden” stage of thinking unsustainable?

A. People eventually learn to think critically.

B. People realize that authorities may be unreliable and they often disagree with one another

C. People realize that they need to clearly state their principles.

D. People learn to argue for their point of view.

*Answer: B*

Learning Objective: LO 1.3 Describe how a person can become a critical thinker.

Topic: Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_11\_ Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker, Understand, LO\_1.3

Which of the following is only understood by a Stage 3 critical thinker?

A. Understanding the world in black and white

B. Understanding right and wrong as defined by our authorities

C. Rejection of authority

D. Understanding that viewpoints have different values based on evaluative criteria.

*Answer: D*

Learning Objective: LO 1.3 Describe how a person can become a critical thinker.

Topic: Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_12\_ Understanding Arguments, Understand, LO\_1.4

The role of premises in an argument is to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. take part in a dialogue

B. give the rules for argumentation

C. give reasons for a conclusion

D. clearly state what one believes

*Answer: C*

Learning Objective: LO 1.4 Understand the nature and structure of arguments.

Topic: Understanding Arguments

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Easy

TB\_01\_13\_ Understanding Arguments, Understand, LO\_1.4

A deductive argument’s purpose is to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. prove that a conclusion is true

B. show that a conclusion is plausible

C. indicate that a conclusion is likely

D. state a conclusion as precisely as possible

*Answer: A*

Learning Objective: LO 1.4 Understand the nature and structure of arguments.

Topic: Understanding Arguments

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Easy

TB\_01\_14\_ Understanding Arguments, Understand, LO\_1.4

Unsound arguments can be persuasive because they often appeal to our emotions and prejudices and/or support conclusions that we want to believe are accurate. These types of arguments are known as\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. causal reasoning

B. inductive arguments

C. false arguments

D. fallacies

*Answer: D*

Learning Objective: LO 1.4 Understand the nature and structure of arguments.

Topic: Understanding Arguments

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Easy

TB\_01\_15\_ Branches of Philosophy, Remember, LO\_1.5

Which branch of philosophy is defined as the study of the ultimate characteristics of reality or existence?

A. logic

B. aesthetics

C. metaphysics

D. epistemology

*Answer: C*

Learning Objective: LO 1.5 Name the various branches of philosophy.

Topic: Branches of Philosophy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Difficulty Level: Easy

***Essay Questions***

TB\_01\_16\_ Branches of Philosophy, Remember, LO\_1.5

What are the different branches of philosophy, and what are they about?

* Metaphysics: the study of the ultimate characteristics of reality or existence
* Epistemology: the study of knowledge, identifying and developing criteria and methodologies for what we know and why we know it
* Ethics: the study of moral values and principles
* Political and Social Philosophy: the study of social values and political forms of government
* Aesthetics: the study of beauty, art, and taste
* Logic: the branch of philosophy that seeks to establish the rules of correct reasoning, clear understanding and valid arguments

Learning Objective: LO 1.5 Name the various branches of philosophy.

Topic: Branches of Philosophy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_17\_ Understanding Arguments, Remember, LO\_1.4

Explain what a fallacy is. What kind of mistake is someone making when they

commit an informal fallacy in an argument?

* Arguments that contain informal fallacies may seem persuasive but in fact are based on errors in reasoning.
* Fallacious reasoning is typically used to influence others. It seeks to persuade not on the basis of sound arguments and critical thinking but rather on the basis of emotional and illogical factors.
* Categories include false generalization, causal fallacies, fallacies of relevance,

Learning Objective: LO 1.4 Understand the nature and structure of arguments.

Topic: Understanding Arguments

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_18\_Branches of Philosophy, Understand, LO\_1.5

What is the subject matter of ethics in philosophy? How are these questions

approached?

* Ethics: the study of moral values and principles
* Questions include: How should we treat other people? Is there a “good life” for humans? What is the relation between moral values and religion? How do we decide on the moral rightness of social issues?

Learning Objective: LO 1.5 Name the various branches of philosophy.

Topic: Branches of Philosophy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Easy

TB\_01\_19\_ Making Connections: The Search for a Meaningful Life, Understand, LO\_1.1

How does the study of philosophy contribute to the search for a meaningful life?

* Philosophy provides us with the motivation and the intellectual abilities required to explore life’s most challenging issues, such as:
* What is the meaning of my life?
* To what extent am I free and responsible for my choices?
* Facing moral dilemmas, what is the “right” thing to do?
* What is the relationship between my religious beliefs and other areas of my life?
* How do I gain genuine knowledge and ascertain truth?
* By learning to think philosophically, you can develop your mind into a powerful, sophisticated resource that will enrich all dimensions of your life.

Learning Objective: LO 1.1 Explain why philosophy should be studied.

Topic: Making Connections: The Search for a Meaningful Life

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_20\_ Defining Philosophy, Remember, LO\_1.2

What is the subject matter of philosophy? As an academic subject, what does it

teach?

* Philosophy’s mission is complex and has changed over time.
* Philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom.
* Philosophy covers distinct areas of study: meta-physics, epistemology, ethics, social/political philosophy, aesthetics, and logic.

Learning Objective: LO 1.2 Define Philosophy and discuss its ultimate aim.

Topic: Defining Philosophy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_21\_ Defining Philosophy, Remember, LO\_1.2

What is “wisdom,” and how does philosophy relate to it?

* The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek "philein" (love) and "sophia" (wisdom), so it means the love or pursuit of wisdom.
* Wisdom includes both knowledge and the ability to use and apply this knowledge with great intelligence.
* One purpose of epistemology is to try to increase wisdom.

Learning Objective: LO 1.2 Define Philosophy and discuss its ultimate aim.

Topic: Defining Philosophy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Difficulty Level: Easy

TB\_01\_22\_Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker, Apply, LO\_1.3

Describe the nature of critical thinking. What advantage does the critical thinker

have over someone who lacks that skill?

* The ability to reflect on one’s life and one’s self is a distinctly human ability. Philosophy provides us with the intellectual tools to reflect with clarity and discipline, to critically evaluate the choices we have made, and to use this knowledge to make more enlightened choices in the future.
* Thinking philosophically means thinking critically about your beliefs to ensure that they are the most accurate and enlightened beliefs possible.
* Critical thinkers are open-minded, knowledgeable, mentally active, curious, independent thinkers, skilled discussants, insightful, self-aware, creative, and passionate.

Learning Objective: LO 1.3 Describe how a person can become a critical thinker.

Topic: Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_23\_ Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker, Understand, LO\_1.3

Describe and explain the steps in the critical-thinking process.

* Critical thinking is approaching life in an informed and reflective way.
* To “do philosophy” effectively requires developing the attributes of critical thinking. These attributes include adopting different perspectives, making informed decisions, analyzing complex issues, establishing appropriate goals, communicating effectively, critically evaluating in-formation, asking questions, and exchanging ideas with others.
* A critical thinking approach is also appropriate in all the various academic disciplines.
* William Perry's three stages of critical thinking include The Garden of Eden, Anything Goes, and Thinking Critically

Learning Objective: LO 1.3 Describe how a person can become a critical thinker.

Topic: Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_24\_ Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker, Understand, LO\_1.3

What is wrong with “relativism” as a thought process? What does the relativist need

to understand?

* Relativism: the belief that the truth is relative to any individual or situation, and there is no objective, universal standard we can use to decide which beliefs make the most sense.
* Stage 2 of critical thinking: Anything Goes
* Although Stage 2 thinking may be appropriate in matters of taste, it is not appropriate in most areas of life where some beliefs are clearly more informed than others.

Learning Objective: LO 1.3 Describe how a person can become a critical thinker.

Topic: Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Difficulty Level: Moderate

TB\_01\_25\_ Why Study Philosophy?, Apply, LO\_1.1

What do you think you can fruitfully learn from the study of philosophy? How can you

apply philosophy to your life?

* Learning to think philosophically will inspire you to be more thoughtful, more open-minded, more attuned to the complexities and subtleties of life, more willing to think critically about yourself and all of life’s important issues, and less willing to accept superficial interpretations and simplistic answers.
* By learning to think philosophically, you can develop your mind into a powerful, sophisticated resource that will enrich all dimensions of your life.

Learning Objective: LO 1.1 Explain why philosophy should be studied.

Topic: Why Study Philosophy?

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Difficulty Level: Moderate