

We're Wireless Philosophy, a Khan Academy partner, and we make philosophy videos. We're here to talk to you about public philosophy and philosophy outreach. Ask Us Anything!

wphiadmin<sup>1</sup> and r/Science AMAs<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Affiliation not available

April 17, 2023

### Abstract

We're Wireless Philosophy! Our mission is to introduce people to the practice of philosophy by making videos that are freely available in a form that is entertaining, interesting and accessible to people with no background in the subject. Since our aim is for people to learn how to do philosophy rather than for them to simply learn what philosophers have thought, we see it as equally important to develop the critical thinking skills that are core to the methodology of philosophy. We see this as a part of a larger mission: building our collective capacity to engage in rational thought and discourse. By providing the toolkit for building better minds, we hope that Wi-Phi plays some small role in realizing that goal. We've been part of the /r/philosophy community for two years and counting (we recently had our 2nd Cake Day!), and we certainly couldn't be doing what we're doing without your support! Ask us anything! The Wi-Phi Team: Alex Chituc (Animator): Alex C studied philosophy as an undergraduate at Yale University. Currently, he is living in Belgium, and his primary interests in philosophy are ethics and epistemology. Paul Henne (Associate Director): Paul is a Philosophy PhD student at Duke University. He works at the intersection of metaphysics and moral psychology. In particular, he works on causation and causal cognition as they relate to moral responsibility. Alex Marmor (Social Media Coordinator): Alex M is a Philosophy MA student at Brandeis University. His main interests in philosophy lie at the intersection of epistemology and normative philosophy, and he's enthusiastic about philosophy education and public outreach. Geoff Pynn (Associate Director): Geoff is associate professor of philosophy at Northern Illinois University. He specializes in epistemology and philosophy of language. His current research is on social and applied epistemology. Gaurav Vazirani (Executive Director): Gaurav is a Philosophy PhD student at Yale. He works with Shelly Kagan on issues in ethics and tort law (in particular, he is interested in questions about risks and harms). Gaurav currently works as a Project Lead at HarvardX and is passionate about online education. He is also interested in making access to philosophy more broadly available. For more on our team, project, and plans for the future, check out our AMA announcement post. Proof: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nx\\_1m9bUa28](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nx_1m9bUa28) Cheers! -The WiPhi team EDIT: Gaurav and Alex M need to sign off for the next few hours (and Alex C, Geoff, and Paul will probably sign off soon), but we'll be back tonight and tomorrow to reply to your questions. Thanks for having us, and for asking such excellent questions!! This has been a really great experience for us, and we look forward to more philosophizing. And of course, a call to action! Subscribe to our YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/WirelessPhilosophy> Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/wirelessphi> Follow us on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/wiphiofficial/> Like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wirelessphilosophy>

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WIPHIADMIN [R/SCIENCE](#)

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### **The Wi-Phi Team:**

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**For more on our team, project, and plans for the future, check out our [AMA announcement post](#).**

Proof: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nx\\_1m9bJa28](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nx_1m9bJa28)

### **Cheers!**

-The WiPhi team

**EDIT:** Gaurav and Alex M need to sign off for the next few hours (and Alex C, Geoff, and Paul will probably sign off soon), but we'll be back tonight and tomorrow to reply to your questions. Thanks for having us, and for asking such excellent questions!! This has been a really great experience for us, and we look forward to more philosophizing.

And of course, a call to action!

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CORRESPONDENCE:

DATE RECEIVED:  
October 25, 2016

Do you foresee trying to get your content into the school system at some point? There has been much discussion on the value of Philosophy in early life education, but very little movement to actually apply it in practice.

[Namboman](#)

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credited.



Yes, very much so! When I was in New Haven, I partnered with another colleague to create a year long philosophy course. The experience was really valuable and the students learned an incredible amount. However, there were significant challenges in trying to get a new course into a high school. There are significant constraints on students and schools to work through a preset curriculum and focus on the kinds of outcomes that they need for colleges (e.g. SAT training, etc.). Trying to get an entirely new class into that structure is really difficult and i'm no longer convinced it's the best strategy.

A new strategy that I am interested in further pursuing is to work with teachers in augmenting their curriculum to include philosophy in as frictionless of a way as possible. One idea would be to create teacher guide's that include a video, assessments, some supplementary content and connect up with parts of the curriculum that they already teach. In this manner we will be able to introduce philosophy in a piecemeal fashion but still work within the parameters and constraints of the current structure. This is something I really want to explore in the future.

I also think our critical thinking content with the appropriate guides and assessments can easily be taught in any class that aims to teach position papers.

I also think that the Ethics Bowl that is currently being run in the US has been a huge success and another great way of getting learners exposed to some of these philosophical concepts.

-Gaurav

[/u/ignat980](#) asks:

I am constantly battling myself in my existence. I really enjoyed your video on "I think, therefore I am." But what if thought itself is a simulation? Watching "Rick and Morty", there was an episode where Morty puts on a simulator hat thing and lives an entire life of "Roy". What if this life I am living is a simulation like that? Someone else's dream? Maybe I am confused by what thought is defined as, you didn't explain that in the video. I think thought is the electrical loops that happen within my brain, because without my brain there is no thought. Something more concrete would be nice.

[wphiadmin](#)

The problem you're worrying about is one version of what's called the "problem of skepticism". We recently began producing an Intro to Theory of Knowledge mini-course, and quite a few videos in the course address this very concern. You might want to start by checking out the following videos on skepticism:

- [Part 1: Introduction to Theory of Knowledge](#)
- [Part 2: The Problem of Skepticism](#)
- [Part 3: Three Responses to Skepticism](#)
- [Part 4: New Responses to Skepticism](#)

There's a separate issue that you're raising: what is thought? Or what is the nature of thought? This is an extremely interesting question, but we don't have any videos on this topic at the moment.

Hi all - very glad to have you here at [/r/philosophy](#).

I was wondering how you go about deciding on videos to make. There's a lot of different topics you have videos on, and unlike other forms of online education (e.g. MOOCs) there isn't necessarily a unifying theme. So how do you decide what videos you're going to do next? Do you get partners first, and then have them choose topics? Or do you have a list of topics you want done and find suitable partners to do them?

Thanks again for being here!

[ADefiniteDescription](#)

Hi [/u/ADefiniteDescription](#)! Thanks for having us!!

This is an excellent question, and you've guessed the answer yourself: we typically get partners first, and have them choose the topics. Of course, we do vet the topics, and we generally have a few criteria. First and foremost, we want the video to be interesting and informative. So while we're completely on board with technical and abstract topics, we prefer topics that are clearly relevant to our audience (eg. promising) and topics that are important to the discipline of philosophy. Second, we don't want to have redundant videos. We're certainly open to multiple videos on the same topics, but there should be something that distinguishes each from the others. For example, both [Sally Haslanger \(MIT\) and Greg Ganssle \(Yale-NUS\) have done videos on the problem of evil](#), but they're different enough that each really contributes to our library.

However, we're beginning to shift toward requesting particular topics. Our goal here is to be sure to fill in any important gaps in our existing content, and cover any significant areas of philosophy that we haven't yet covered. If anyone has suggestions, we'd love to hear them!

-Alex M

Hi all - very glad to have you here at [/r/philosophy](#).

I was wondering how you go about deciding on videos to make. There's a lot of different topics you have videos on, and unlike other forms of online education (e.g. MOOCs) there isn't necessarily a unifying theme. So how do you decide what videos you're going to do next? Do you get partners first, and then have them choose topics? Or do you have a list of topics you want done and find suitable partners to do them?

Thanks again for being here!

[ADefiniteDescription](#)

Hi! Thanks for your question!

We have a few reasons for deciding to make particular videos at a particular time. Sometimes an expert on a particular topic is in town, so we take the opportunity to record her. This kind of process allows us always to have novel content. Other times we plan out series - like our epistemology series or our personal identity series. Our own interests often guide the creation of these series. Other times small grants are tied to making content on a particular topic. We also are very interested creating content that's clearly missing from other online resources. So, this drive a lot of the work that we do.

-Paul

Hi there! Thanks for doing this. I work as a community worker with youth experiencing homelessness. Particularly I work with youth facing mental health and substance use challenges. As a former student of philosophy I notice many philosophical themes coming up in the work I do with my clients but am unsure of how to discuss these things with them without leaving them with these vast unanswered questions just plopped in their lap. My question for you is do you feel there are any good foundational philosophical concepts that might be a good starting point for increasing their self-reflexivity and critical thinking? Or simply a constructive and manageable way of speaking about these themes?

[iheartmagic](#)

-This is an incredibly important question and I wish I had a better answer here. I really hope others (the Wi-Phi team and members of this community can chime in here). My first thought is that it is crucial to create an environment in which people feel comfortable in reflecting. It's something we take for granted but our ability to reflect and still pull back into the safety for our assumptions is such an important safety mechanism to keep ourselves balanced. If someone is in such stressful situations that they can't do that easily then I think the problem is very real. So my first strategy (and I don't know if it's a good one) would be to work with them on creating this space. Helping them work through the norms of the conversation and reflection that allows one to step back and forth. I'm not sure I would start by discussing the core issues until this kind of environment was formed. I don't know. I am not happy with my response but I really wanted to work through this with you. You are doing amazing work and I wish I could have helped more. I will continue thinking about this and try to come up with a better answer

over the coming weeks.

-Gaurav

Hi there! Thanks for doing this. I work as a community worker with youth experiencing homelessness. Particularly I work with youth facing mental health and substance use challenges. As a former student of philosophy I notice many philosophical themes coming up in the work I do with my clients but am unsure of how to discuss these things with them without leaving them with these vast unanswered questions just plopped in their lap. My question for you is do you feel there are any good foundational philosophical concepts that might be a good starting point for increasing their self-reflexivity and critical thinking? Or simply a constructive and manageable way of speaking about these themes?

[iheartmagic](#)

Hey [/u/iheartmagic](#)! This is an excellent and really important question. First, I want to emphasize that I am far from a qualified mental health practitioner. With that in mind, I think that the answer is "yes". When I speak with students about philosophical ideas, part of my goal is to get them used to thinking carefully, drawing distinctions, giving reasons for their views, and considering alternative views. Much of this goes on without making use of jargon and technical language; that is, without mentioning things like "implicit premises", "valid", and "ad hominem fallacy". Instead, I simply *make use* of these concepts. That is, I ask whether there are unspoken claims that play a role in supporting their views (implicit premises); whether their claims *really* follow from their reasons (validity - sort of); and whether they're criticizing the person advancing a view, rather than the view itself (ad hominem fallacy). I think that you can do this with concepts in other areas too, eg. ethics. You might talk *about* deontology and utilitarianism, without giving the person you're speaking with the burden of working with this terminology. This gets them used to thinking critically, without forcing them to learn about philosophers' distinctions.

You mention that you don't want to leave your clients with vast unanswered questions. But I think that thinking well will reveal unanswered questions, and that having unanswered questions might not be so bad. Your clients might wind up with unanswered questions, while having learned something along the way.

This is just a philosopher's 2 cents on mental health. So take this with a grain of salt. But it doesn't seem *so* different than guiding students toward clear thinking.

-Alex M

[/u/sensible\\_knave](#) asked:

First I wanna thank you folks for putting out so much fantastic content for free -- what a cool project. I have 3 questions:

- 1) You've mentioned you're always seeking volunteers to help with anything at all -- what kinds of things do you have in mind?
- 2) Other than making awesome videos, what does philosophy outreach look like? I mean, what are some other methods?
- 3) Kind of a random question -- but as educators, do you think it's possible or advisable to teach children moral philosophy incrementally throughout something like a K-12 system?

Wi-Phi rulz!

[wphiadmin](#)

- 2) Other than making awesome videos, what does philosophy outreach look like? I mean, what are some other methods?

I think that philosophical outreach is becoming more important for philosophers. Many philosophers, for instance, are doing public talks. But yes --- there are a bunch of other ways to reach out. Let me list out

a few here (I'm sure others will add to this): One really cool program is Philosophy in Prison, which is from the philosophy department at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. They have a philosophy reading group with prisoners in their area. There are also general outreach programs like Rethink at Columbia University and Outreach at UNC.

-Paul

[/u/TwoFifty-Two](#) asks:

Is Magneto a deontologist?

[wiphiaadmin](#)

This is a really difficult question. This is the only evidence I have to work with (beyond seeing a few X-Men movies years ago...), though I believe either Blackwell or Open Court has published a book called *X-Men and Philosophy*.

From Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magneto\\_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magneto_(comics))):

Magneto regards mutants as evolutionarily superior to humans and rejects the possibility of peaceful human-mutant coexistence; he aims to conquer the world to enable mutants (whom he refers to as "homo superior") to replace humans as the dominant species....

His character's early history has been compared with the civil rights leader Malcolm X and Jewish Defense League founder Meir Kahane. Magneto resents the pacifist attitude of Professor X and pushes for a more aggressive approach to achieving civil rights.

A few thoughts. I don't know much about Kantian deontology, but Kant would probably not be on board with an "aggressive approach to achieving civil rights". On Kant's view, an action is good only if its maxim (or driving principle) is universalizable. And, as I understand his view, he's not on board with violence. So, I don't think that Magneto is a deontologist (or at least not a very good one). But he probably isn't a utilitarian either. Utilitarians are concerned with producing the greatest good, and harming many humans for the sake of a few mutants probably doesn't produce the greatest good (unless they're Utility Monsters - check out [our video on that objection](#)). Magneto might be a Nietzschean, based on his interest in conquering the humans and allowing mutants (homo superior) to become the dominant species; this sounds sort of like Nietzsche's thoughts on the *uebermensch*, or super-man. We have a video on that too (see [Nietzsche's view on the good life](#))!

Hope this helps! Marvel/X-Men isn't really my forte - I'm more of a Nintendo/Harry Potter/Star Wars kind of guy (if you've been following Star Wars lately, then I *guess* that makes me somewhat of a Marvel guy...).

-Alex M

[/u/TwoFifty-Two](#) asks:

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[wiphiaadmin](#)

I assume you've seen this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xE6Pb5y9hs>

To answer your question, Magneto as a character changes a lot throughout the x-men canon, but if I had to guess, he strikes me more as a consequentialist than a deontologist, but I think you could make a compelling case either way.

-Alex C

[/u/TwoFifty-Two](#) asks:

Is Magneto a deontologist?

[wphiadmin](#)

-I don't know. I suspect not but I feel like this might be beyond my area of expertise. Maybe some of my team members can chime in! I do know that Christopher Robichaud (Harvard, Kennedy School) is currently developing a MOOC on superheroes and philosophy. I'm not sure when this comes out but you might want to keep an eye out for that!

-Gaurav

[/u/TwoFifty-Two](#) asks:

Is Magneto a deontologist?

[wphiadmin](#)

This is a question that needs to be answered, but I cannot answer it.

-Paul

(Can I ask here? I've never done an AMA before.)

- i. A lot of philosophers can be dry. Which philosophers are fun to read?
- ii. Do you assent to an unpopular or surprising philosophical position? Could you tell us what it is?
- iii. What is a 'key to success' that most graduate students overlook, or don't realize?

I love your stuff!

[throwaway\\_p\\_username](#)

- i. A lot of philosophers can be dry. Which philosophers are fun to read?

I love reading David Lewis. I think his writing is incredible and he is one of the greatest minds I have ever come across. Although, he wouldn't be where I would start my philosophical exploration? I don't think you can go wrong with Plato! That's probably where I would start.

A different approach would be to start by thinking about a problem you are already invested in understanding more about and then find thinkers who have written on that. For example, there has been a lot of discussion about the ethics of self-driving cars recently. If that problem grips you then you can start by thinking about that problem first and then start reading philosophers who have written on that or read about various ethical frameworks that can help you better make sense of that problem. I often find that the more interested I am in the problem the more interesting I think the thing I am reading is!

- ii. Do you assent to an unpopular or surprising philosophical position? Could you tell us what it is?

I am a consequentialist but one who holds a very strange and expansive view of consequentialism.

- iii. What is a 'key to success' that most graduate students overlook, or don't realize? I love your stuff!

Treat it like a job. Grad school is this incredible combination of having a lot of freedom and being around likeminded people. It's really easy to get caught up in that! If you want to be successful in graduate school (by which I mean, you want to be a professional philosopher) then treat it like a job. Set a schedule and a weekly plan and stick to it in the face of other options and your weakness of will! Also, being a professional philosopher is just one way to be successful at graduate school. If there are other things you are interested in doing (e.g. consulting, working in technology, working as a journalist, whatever) then try to explore those careers. Leverage your school's recruiting and try to get an internship. The more you start preparing early for options the better you will be at finding them later!

-Gaurav

(Can I ask here? I've never done an AMA before.)

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- ii. Do you assent to an unpopular or surprising philosophical position? Could you tell us what it is?
- iii. What is a 'key to success' that most graduate students overlook, or don't realize?

I love your stuff!

[throwaway\\_p\\_username](#)

i) I really like reading Quine. I think he is simply hilarious. I also really enjoyed reading Laurie Paul's newer book *Transformative Experience*. It's one of those books that you can't put down and that you want to talk to everyone about. I also really enjoy reading the work of Amie Thomasson.

ii) I don't think I hold any strong positions in philosophy. I guess some people would find it surprising that I'm a causal pluralist - that's the position that there is more than one concept of causation.

iii) I'm still a graduate student. So, I'm not sure what that magical key to success is yet. But I think it's important to note that philosophy graduate school requires a lot of self-motivated learning and producing.

-Paul

With all your recent videos on contrastivism, do you think it trivialises philosophy, and that it has let we flies out the fly-bottle?

[godelgod](#)

I don't think so. I think it's important to lay out all the different perspectives on a topic and give people the resources to think about issues as carefully as possible. Ultimately, if a position convinces a person after careful thought that certain kinds of philosophical questions require a particular approach which removes some of the inherent tension thought to be within them then that is fine with us! Our goal is to really offer resources and opportunities to take some time to sit back and think. I am (at least) indifferent on where they end up in their thinking!

-Gaurav

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[redditWinnower](#)

Cheers, bot!

[/u/Stzete](#) asked:

Is philosophy useful to have in the real world? While I love watching your videos, I've never encountered any problems where knowing philosophy really helps. Thanks, and keep up the good work.

[wphiadmin](#)

It depends. Unlike knowing how to code, knowing a lot about philosophy isn't likely to come in handy, unless you're teaching philosophy. Of course, this depends on which area of philosophy you have in

mind. Knowing enough about ethics and political philosophy might inform your decision-making. But knowing a lot about more speculative areas of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language) is only likely to be useful if it's somehow importantly related to your area of expertise.

Having some experience doing philosophy, however, will certainly be useful in the real world. The typical thought is that doing philosophy involves a good deal of critical thinking (making careful distinctions, avoiding fallacies, exposing assumptions and implicit premises, forming arguments). The ability to do this kind of critical thinking is very useful in the real world. In your day-to-day life and in your job, you'll likely have to come up with your own views, formulate them, and defend them. This is what we do in philosophy. Daily Nous has a great collection of articles on this topic right here.

-Alex M.

[/u/PotensDeus](#) asks:

What approaches do you take to balancing the need to create videos that are accessible while also not being reductionist when describing more academic concepts?

[wphiadmin](#)

Thanks for this question. This is something that we struggle with deeply every time we receive a script and i'm not sure if we it down yet! I can tell you a bit more about our thought process though.

First of all, a big part of my thought process in building Wi-Phi related to this question. I found that there was a significant gap in the kinds of offerings available online that allowed people to engage with difficult concepts but yet do so without having a background in philosophy. For instance, SEP which is just an incredible resource, is just too difficult for someone not already versed in philosophy to make use of. On the other hand, a lot of the videos I saw on youtube or books that were available for students and I thought the content was just too stripped down. I really wanted to build something that could occupy the space in the middle.

Secondly, in talking with people and when I started my own outreach program at Yale, I often came across a view that philosophy was just too abstract or too difficult for students to be able to engage with at the 10-12 level. To counteract this people would again strip down this content or just abandon the population entirely.

My hypothesis was that we need to counteract some of these perceptions. This is actually one of the big reasons why our videos are often animated in light-hearted ways. Our working hypothesis was that we will keep the content sophisticated (all the content are mini-lectures provided by incredible academics used to lecturing at a collegiate level) but we would create the illusion of things being light by making the animations silly. The idea being that you wouldn't get too caught up in worrying about philosophy being too difficult but instead focus on the content itself.

To keep up with this balance we try to make sure the scripts put forward a central concept, problem, or argument that you would come across in a philosophy class. The central claim needs to be substantive enough for you to stop and really think about it. You should see it as a complex issue--one that makes you take even just 5 minutes of your day to stop and think! At the same time the script needs to be light enough where the accompanying images are fun and silly so you don't get bored/or too caught up in this being "too difficult" for you to do.

It's a tough balance and I don't know if we do it well! But we do try and above is the thought process behind the decisions we make.

-Gaurav

Will you be doing videos on the more analytic philosophy? I.e. Godel, Russell, Wittgenstein?

[lons732](#)

I certainly hope so! Our approach to build videos is to partner with faculty who write mini-lectures and then do the recordings for us. We take this recording and build an animation around it. So although we

seek out content we are very much constrained by what the faculty want to make. If you have access to faculty who can help out please ask them! Otherwise, we will keep searching and trying to grow our content across all dimensions (analytic and otherwise!).

~Gaurav

So here's a practical question:

I'd like to read a lot more philosophy, but I bump into difficulties. Sometimes the texts are boring and make me sleepy. Sometimes there's just too much to read. Sometimes (really all the time) I worry that I might be missing something.

I'd like to read more, read faster, and understand better.

What tips/tricks/strategies/wizardry do you recommend towards these ends?

[throwaway\\_p\\_username](#)

It sounds like you're asking how best to read philosophy. This is a great question. I spent my entire undergrad career trying to figure it out. I can offer you the following advice:

- There are a few reasons you might find a text boring. Maybe you're just tired; get some sleep, take a walk, drink some coffee. Maybe the text *is* boring; not all writers are engaging. Or maybe you just aren't very interested in the topic; and that's just fine. But I think that a great strategy for getting over a boring text or a seemingly uninteresting topic is to read *actively*. As you read, outline the argument that's being presented. What is the author's goal? Her thesis? What arguments does she present, and what are her premises and conclusions? How do these arguments fit together? And why should anyone care? What's at stake? While a text might suffer from boring prose, it might nonetheless contain interesting ideas. By outlining, you can get these in full view, and work around the boring prose. This also helps with getting over an uninteresting topic. Most topics aren't *simply* uninteresting. Even if you aren't immediately drawn to a topic, you might find it interesting after figuring out what's at stake. By outlining, you can decipher this. (Of course, you still might not think it's very interesting! Not everything is.)
- This leads into reading *philosophy*. Reading philosophy is hard, and you can't rush it. It sounds like you want to be able to read more, faster, and better. I think the first step is to read better, and the way to do that is to read *actively*, like I described above. To read in this way, you'll have to read carefully, attentively, and slowly. The way to read better and to read more follows from doing this. If you read actively and often, you will get better (and *marginally* quicker) at reading philosophy, and will probably find that you are able to read more of it.

I hope this helps! Reading philosophy is an essential part of getting better at doing philosophy. But so is writing philosophy. As with anything else: practice, practice, practice!

-Alex M

I think it is great that you guys are doing this. My question: What else do you think people with philosophy PhDs can do in terms of pushing open access education and making academic philosophy accessible to the general public?

[peeted](#)

I think that we live at a time when we can distribute content in an incredible amount of ways. There is obviously our approach in building Wi-Phi which leverages a certain medium and platform. So you can always contribute to parts of that. There are various blogs, podcasts, etc. which are also doing incredible work. There are also venues like the Stone which you could publish in. Finally, you can also help get involved in outreach activities via your local institution, work with the people at the Ethics bowl, or do some work at prisons which is becoming a bit more formalized. I know that over at Daily Nous, there has been an attempt to gather some of these activities and maybe one of them will resonate <http://dailynous.com/category/public-philosophy-and-outreach/>! Of course, if none do you can always start your own. We need more people doing what they can to help making philosophy more broadly

available.

Hello WiPhi,

Love your work first of all. I've been studying symbolic logic for a while now, and I was wondering if you have ever done a video on it? If not do you plan to?

[Mewo47](#)

Definitely high on our list of things we are planning! In fact, have some reason to believe this will get executed in the near future. Have some faculty who have expressed interest in helping us build a series on this.

-Gaurav

How do you know you even exist?

[GRUBWORM](#)

You're asking about what's known as "external world skepticism", which is the view that we *don't* know anything about the external world. We have an entire mini-course on this topic! Check out [Intro to Theory of Knowledge](#).

-Alex M

Do you believe that a short ten minute video can capture the complexities and subtleties of philosophical writing or is it merely an entry point for further reading?

[maggit00](#)

I think it's merely an entry point for further reading. Our goal is to just get people excited about a question and get them intrigued enough to put in the hard work that really thinking through a problem requires.

~Gaurav

I think your videos are good for going over the basic conceptual issues involved in various philosophical topics.

However, if your concern is outreach, wouldn't there be more value in dealing with less "classical" problems (which tend to be quite dry and technical)?

In short, what do you think is gained or lost in choosing between the more traditional, academic questions and the "sexier" ones?

[Face Roll](#)

I think the ideal approach is to strike a balance between "sexy" and classical. Sexy appeals to viewers and shows that philosophy is still a living, breathing discipline. Classical gives people exposure to the fundamentals, which is important for understanding where philosophy is now and how it got there. But importantly, classical can *also* be sexy. What isn't sexy about knowledge, truth, beauty, and justice? They're old questions, for sure. But they're still very gripping - especially if they're presented (ie. branded) in a sexy way!

Of course, covering both sexy and classical also legitimizes our platform. It helps us appeal to viewers, future contributors, and grant makers.

-Alex M

[/u/DeusAbsconditus837](#) suggests:

Your success could be measured by how many people you hear referring to philosophy as a way of life rather than just a series of theoretical topics/questions. Fixing this misconception alone would be an unbelievable achievement, and necessary for the modern world.

[wphiadmin](#)

That would indeed be an incredible achievement. For me, I think when people think about progress they often fixate on solutions. This is not to disparage solutions! However, I think it's a mistake to think that progress can only be had this way. I think just as important, is being able to live with questions. That is, to take things as really live and an important way of how you reflect on the world. For example, a person who truly reflects on questions like, "What does it mean to be a good person in this world?" "What makes me really happy?" "What do I find value in?", etc. are really important things to reflect on and you don't need to always come to a solution with respect to them. You can treat them as things of constant inquiry as you try to go through this world. For me, this is real progress and I think philosophy can go a long way towards that.

-Gaurav

[/u/Rodarus](#) asks:

I'd like to ask you something, too:

- 1) Do you think studying philosophy made u better/worse people in terms of moral?
- 2) Also what do you think are the best jobs where you get the most out of your philosophy degree? (Many people I know don't really use philosophy at their job and work in entire different fields) Thanks for doing this AMA!

[wphiadmin](#)

Thanks for your question!

1) I don't think that philosophy changed me in terms of being morally better or morally worse. There are some fun results suggesting that Ethicists are actually worse people; for instance, ethics texts are more likely to go missing from libraries than non-ethics texts (<http://schwitzsplinters.blogspot.com/2006/12/do-ethicists-steal-more-books-more-data.html>). But these findings likely have some issues, and maybe they don't say anything about ethicists generally (as noted in the link). Moreover, there is some evidence that ethicists and philosophers generally do immoral actions at the same rate as non-philosophers. For instance, in the case of vegetarianism, ethicists might judge the act of eating meat as more wrong than a non-philosophers, but they might eat meat just as often (<http://www.faculty.ucr.edu/~eschwitz/SchwitzPapers/EthSelfRep-110316.pdf>). I'd like to see more data on the actual moral decision of ethicists. In my own case, I think I was just the kind of person who thought in a philosophical way and then I found that the tools of philosophy helped me express and develop this kind of thinking. That's why I think that it's important to get the tools of critical thinking out into the world for free - but I don't know if philosophy made me better or worse. I'm just okay, I guess. - Paul

Hey guys ! Thanks for doing this AMA, and thank you for your work.

How difficult do you find it to be to accurately portray philosophical thought in videos, when their main goal are to reach the general public ? I find that most attempts at divulgations fall victim either to necessary sacrifices or lose important nuance in unnecessary butchering, but you guys are doing a great job.

[Necroleptique](#)

Thanks for the kind words!

You're right, it's a really difficult line to balance. When reaching a general audience, there will always

be a trade off between accuracy and brevity, or even accuracy and engaging an audience. I think it's a question of medium, mostly. The type of language that is appropriate in a philosophy paper or a publication in a journal isn't appropriate for a youtube video for a general audience, the same way what you wear to a formal dinner isn't appropriate for meeting your friends at a bar. That isn't to say either is better than the other, just more appropriate for a given circumstance.

-Alex C

Hey guys ! Thanks for doing this AMA, and thank you for your work.

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[Necroleptique](#)

Excellent question!

It's extremely difficult. We spend a lot of time revising some scripts and videos to eliminate jargon. But, of course, some jargon is needed; sometimes you need to stipulate the meaning of a new term. So, it's important for us to be careful to bring our audience into these conversations. We want our videos to be accessible to people without philosophy degrees (and fun), but we also want to introduce the tools of philosophy to these people. One of the best ways to do this is, I think, to introduce the philosophical problem in ordinary terms - like with an examples that are common to everyone - and then add in the philosophical tools that help resolve or understand the problem. Kate Ritchie did this really well in her video. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong in his recent series did this super well, too.

-Paul

Hi.

Have watched your videos both on you-tube and through khanacademy.org. Curious if you going to go more in depth with logic instruction and exercises? The ones you have done are very helpful to nail down exact understanding and application of it. Looking to find more interactive exercises as well as instruction, as I am teaching myself philosophy.

I have learned a lot, thanks to your effort. Thank you!

[thepedalmasher](#)

Hey [/u/thepedalmasher](#)! It's great to hear that you've learned something from our videos! We would *love* to produce more content on logic and critical thinking. This is something we're currently exploring, but I'm afraid we don't much more to share than that. We're really excited about the prospect of creating more logic content, and see this as a core part of our mission.

I should note that we're currently working on a series on philosophical writing, which we're *really* excited about. If you're teaching yourself philosophy, I expect this will be hugely valuable to you. We're also hoping that it will serve as a useful resource for classroom who want to give their students a good resource on how to write philosophy papers. Keep an eye out!

-Alex M

Hi.

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I have learned a lot, thanks to your effort. Thank you!

[thepedalmasher](#)

Hi,

Yes, a logic series is very much in our future. We would love to provide more interactive exercises but our resources (esp. around technology) are severely limited. We will definitely leverage Khan Academy's platform as best as we can. We also have series coming up on philosophical writing and argument mapping. I think both of these will be excellent in helping you teach yourself philosophy!

~Gaurav

Hi Wi-Phi, I think this is very cool, I spend a lot of my spare time on Khan Academy and I think it is one of the best things going on in the world. I have never been a student of philosophy, and I expect my question is one that has been well considered, but here it is: given that some people see purple(?) and some see gold, given the increasingly observer-centric understanding of reality (thinking Schrodinger's thought experiment), can we say that anything outside of pure math is objectively certain? I appreciate that we often find it necessary to assume "certain truths as being self-evident", but what are those truths? Is there a study of the most fundamental knowns and unknowns?

[vampiresexpartysales](#)

There's an important distinction to be drawn here. The distinction is between *whether* we know something, and the *mode* of our knowing it. The first is a question of epistemology. The second is a question of modality. We're currently working on [an Intro to Epistemology mini-course](#), which you can check out to learn more about the nature of knowledge. We don't have much on modality, but you can check out [our video on Kant and Metaphysical Knowledge](#) for a nice introduction to its historical foundations!

Hope this helps!

-Alex M

Plato is a great springboard into critical thought but his translated work is often prohibitively academic for many. I'd love to see a modernized video retelling of some of his dialogues. Simple language, modern settings, entertaining, relatable, and well acted scenes specifically designed to plant some philosophy seeds in people who wouldn't normally go and read some on their own while also providing discussion grounds for philosophy vets.

Is something like this the sort of thing you'd guys be interested in, or do I have to learn how to make films myself ;)?

[Cagi](#)

I do love this idea, but I might need you to hop in here and learn how to make films yourself! We can then partner and distribute it. Only so much our team is capable of pulling off! Although, I have to say this is just such a lovely idea. It's quite remarkable that no one has done this (I say this without having done any research on whether or not someone has done this!).

I know you've been asked about getting philosophy in schools for children, but without the example of the school system, could you unpack why philosophy could be useful to even very young children?

Anecdotally, I discovered Marcus Aurelius when I was 25, could've used a book like that when I was a teenager, and could've used the ideas within it when I was younger yet.

[JustaPonder](#)

I think your own experience is very much a case study in this. Basically, I think it's really important to inculcate a deep sense of curiosity and couple it with really structured thinking. Children have an

incredible sense of curiosity and we often work hard to dampen that. In many cases, children are often asked to tone down the "Why" questions or to stop asking questions entirely. I think this is all a mistake. We should really nurture it and given them the tools necessary to constructively navigate the questions that have them puzzled. I'd also add to this that we get less and less open about really just admitting that we don't know something. As though it were some sort of deep failure on our parts that we lack some bit of knowledge! If we nurture people early on their lives to question and try to find answers, I think we will create better adults later. Adults who are truly open to learning rather than just being stuck in their own perspectives. I think philosophical dialogue can really help along these lines. Also, The Meditations are just incredible! That book was one of the earliest in my own journey.

~Gaurav

What's the youngest age that you think can already grasp the basics of philosophy (assuming there is)?

[Developmentalism](#)

I'm not sure. I have a very broad conception of what counts as thinking about philosophical issues. Children at a very young age seem to have a keen sense of issues around fairness so I think you can start working with them quite early. I know for the P4C they have run classes quite successfully for children around 5! You can check out some of their case studies here:

<http://www.sapere.org.uk/Default.aspx?tabid=293>.

~Gaurav

What about videos in spanish or spanish subtitles!?!?

[armona](#)

I would love to be able to do this! If you know people who can help us with this please ask them to reach out to us!

~Gaurav

Hiya, Wi-Phi! I'm currently an English Major with a specialization in Literature, with a long term goal of going to grad school for Philosophy and then either getting my doctorate in Literary Theory and Criticism or Philosophy (not quite sure which...)

Some nebulous questions, but do you have any suggestions for philosophers-in-training? A particular primary source to begin with or a good book that talks about the major areas in philosophy? And who would you say are some of the most cutting edge philosophers today?

[sirredcrosse](#)

Sounds like there's an exciting future in store for you!

I think these are great questions, and they're ones that several people have asked. Check out our thoughts at [this comment](#), [this comment](#), and [this comment](#).

-Alex M

Have you guys tried becoming the "Khan Academy of philosophy?"

From what I understand you guys have a partnership with them but that's not what I'm asking about. My issue with philosophy videos on the internet is that they're almost always ~10 minutes in length and can never go in depth about a certain philosophy. I've always wanted to be able to find a series of videos covering something like Kant's *Groundwork* that has a single video dedicated to a given section/idea in the book similar to how Khan has a video for each concept in, say, Calculus.

Do you guys plan on doing something similar?

[arimill](#)

It's very much on the longer roadmap. We just have significant resource constraints so trying to balance all of this is something we are always grappling with. Having said that, if you search on youtube for David Velleman's videos on Kant--they are excellent! If I wasn't on my cell i'd find it for you!

~Gaurav

What made you decide that showing people philosophy is more important than serving people ads on YouTube? With such a view count, I'm sure you've thought about it.

Even on this sub, I've frequently seen cheap clickbait videos that appears to me to be intended more to push people to watch ads, than to teach them about philosophical concepts. I want you to know that the very absence of ads on your videos greatly encourages me to upvote your submissions.

[hatessw](#)

That's really great to hear! And I want you to know that we *really* appreciate your upvotes - seriously. We've said it before, but our success so far is, in large part, thanks to the support of the [/r/philosophy](#) community.

Our rationale is two-fold. First, we think that many viewers, like yourself, will like that we don't have ads. Second, we are interested in both incorporating as a nonprofit and applying for grants, and each of these involve strict and complicated policies for what makes a certain revenue stream permissible. To avoid any complications, we've decided to simply abstain from ads. All the better for our viewers!

-Alex M

I like how I read this after dropping out of philosophy

[gentios](#)

Ha! Once a philosopher, always a philosopher.

-Alex M

I like how I read this after dropping out of philosophy

[gentios](#)

You're never too late to hop back in!

Ok.

What if descartes was wrong: your senses don't ever decieve you and it is your judgement that accounts for the cognitive dissonance that persists when your perception doesn't match your reality?

What does that mean for the entire enlightenment on which his philosophy is based, especially in light of the study of psychology maybe suggesting there's a thing to this (ala perception biases).

[toomine](#)

I really don't know. I've never seriously entertained the notion that our senses never deceive us. I have to think about this a bit more before I can offer any thoughts.

~Gaurav

Hello, How would you go about getting an autistic (or other special needs) kid interested in philosophy at a young age? (Under 10)

[TopsyHussle](#)

I really do not know. I really wish I did! My best bet would be to reach out to people who are connected to the P4C movement. I suspect that they have thought about this. I am not sure where you are based but I know in the US this is an excellent resource: <https://www.montclair.edu/cehs/academics/centers-and-institutes/iapc/what-is/typical-p4c/>. I suspect if you emailed them they would give you some advice on resources to work from.

Also, quickly googling along these lines I found this article about P4C and autistic children:

[https://www.pdcnet.org/scholarpdf/show?](https://www.pdcnet.org/scholarpdf/show?id=thinking_2004_0017_42006_0024_0029&pdfname=thinking_2004_0017_42006_0024_0029.pdf&file_type=pdf)

[id=thinking\\_2004\\_0017\\_42006\\_0024\\_0029&pdfname=thinking\\_2004\\_0017\\_42006\\_0024\\_0029.pdf&file\\_type=pdf](https://www.pdcnet.org/scholarpdf/show?id=thinking_2004_0017_42006_0024_0029&pdfname=thinking_2004_0017_42006_0024_0029.pdf&file_type=pdf)

wonder if it's worth checking out.

-Gaurav

Hello, How would you go about getting an autistic (or other special needs) kid interested in philosophy at a young age? (Under 10)

[TopsyHussle](#)

First off, this is well beyond the scope of my expertise. But I think that part of the answer to your question will be empirical (where is the child developmentally; how does autism affect philosophical reasoning as opposed to other kinds of reasoning, if there is such a distinction). Empirical considerations aside, I'm not sure why philosophy should be very different than anything else. Given the right materials (engaging videos, books at their reading level, or appropriate levels of conversation), I don't see why doing philosophy should be more difficult than talking about a story or learning about new ideas. But again, this is beyond my expertise, so I hesitate to recommend this as good advice from the standpoint of developmental psychology. This is just an armchair philosopher's 2 cents.

-Alex M

Thank you for doing this! I always look forward to your videos. Do you happen to have any advice for a freshman in undergrad (mid-tier state school) hoping to one day attend grad school in philosophy?

[HeckleMonster](#)

Hi, thanks for your question. I think Geoff Pynn did a great job answering this question in his AMA [here](#). So, I'd like to refer you to that if that's alright. If you have any more questions after reading that please let me know and I'll be happy to help!

I was hoping you could say something about the benefits and downsides of MOOCs versus something like your videos. There's a lot of talk about philosophy MOOCs nowadays, with prominent examples like Sandel's course on justice. And judging by some of your answers here, you all are moving towards more "series", which look a lot like MOOCs. So if you could say something about the difference between the educational model you're engaging in and the MOOC one, that would be great.

[7143231](#)

Absolutely, thanks for your question. I think of MOOC's as learning experiences that are meant to emulate courses. So, I think of these as having learning objectives that are much more ambitious in their goals (e.g. the learning objective for Sandel's Justice course might be to give you an introduction to various theories of Justice). At Wi-Phi our goal is to get people interested in thinking about philosophy. So our goals are much more modest (and perhaps also much more ambitious) in that regard. We take our primary target as people who aren't yet invested in taking a full course but are still curious about philosophy. I think our videos are very representative of that kind of approach. They are

quite short in their length, generally stand alone, and are made with the objective of having you think about the issue at hand. Series are meant to be one step beyond that but well below MOOCs. The idea behind the series is to help give you an overview of a topic. This way you can engage a bit more with a content area. For example, the Epistemology series will give you a broad overview of the area but will still be quite limited in its depth. Our introduction to contextualism will only be 5-7 mins in its length when you can easily spend a half/or a whole semester on that topic. Our "series" are meant to be similar to very short introductions into an area aimed at getting you excited about a topic rather than well-versed in it. We see our videos and our series as being built to excite you enough to go pick up a book, take a course, or a MOOC to explore that area a bit further.

-Gaurav

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[7143231](#)

I second what Gaurav said. We want to bring people into philosophy and show them what philosophy and doing philosophy is really like. The world of philosophy is finally accessible to people on the internet, yet people still have this idea that philosophy is just studying Plato and old books or something like that (it is that, too!). There is a lot going on in philosophy, and there is a lot more to philosophy than just the history of philosophy. We have the ability to bring people into the world of philosophy and give them some of the basic tools for doing philosophy. They then can go explore more on their own!

-Paul

How did you go about reaching an audience of people who are interested in philosophy? did this cost you money? what was your strategy, and lessons learned from this? thanks! :)

[ernstwhile](#)

Great question!

First, I was convinced that there is an interest in philosophical questions. I think people just deeply care about certain questions (especially questions of morality) whether or not they want to call those questions philosophical questions. So, I was convinced that if we built the content in a manner that people could engage with it easily, people would respond to it. Having this unwavering belief in the project really helped through the reality of not having enough resources!

Second, the project was very much a response to my own challenges. Even though I thought of the New Haven project as a success the challenges of scale became very clear. You needed people who were really passionate to grow that model of teaching in high schools. I knew that this kind of model wouldn't scale. So originally, the idea behind Wi-Phi (which was very much inspired by Khan Academy) was to build a set of assets which can both stand alone but also be leveraged by teachers, philosophy grad students, etc. to lower their barrier of entry to doing these in person courses. I figured that if I made it easier by providing this content for free, people would be more likely to experiment with teaching philosophy, than if they had to build out their own content.

Third, I asked for help! The people over at MIT who were working on MIT K-12 were remarkably free with their time and helped me get situated in figuring out how to go about executing this. My advisors at Yale were also solidly behind this project and gave me guidance in executing this. I assembled a great team and that went a long way towards getting this project off the ground. Finally, our model is to partner with graduate students who serve as school liaisons and reach out to their contacts to help get us content. In this matter we grow our network quickly.

Fourth, this project did require money. We needed money to get the software, get a website, help with animations etc. We won a few small grants (Squire Family Foundation, APA, a donation from the

Templeton Foundation, etc.) which helped us get started. We also partnered with Khan Academy which helped tremendously in increasing our reach and also giving us access to technological infrastructure needed to deploy assessments. Fifth, our strategy is constantly evolving. Our first goal was to grow our viewers and our assets a bit. Our next task is to start offering the necessary accompanying materials that will allow this content to be used within schools and translating all our content to other languages. We are always trying to figure out how to optimize and we plan on sticking with this approach for as long as we around!

Main lesson: I think the main lesson I learned in this was that you need to surround yourself with a great team who believes in the mission like you do. You also need to listen and constantly reflect on your strategies and improve upon what you are doing. There are too many smart people and resources in the world and too many communities like this subreddit of people willing to help to be complacent!

-Gaurav

At what point can a person be called a philosopher? Does it only apply to those with a degree? If so, is any philosopher with a degree considered equal to others, more seasoned ones?

[orsondewitt](#)

I take your question to be "When in one's philosophical career does one call oneself a philosopher?" I'm a philosophy grad student, so I only have access to the view from the bottom of the ladder. But it seems to me that, nowadays, a philosopher is someone who does philosophy - where "does philosophy" means "publishes professional articles and books in philosophy". So university professors are philosophers, as are some advanced graduate students. University professors hold an advanced degree in philosophy, and advanced graduate students are well on their way toward holding such a degree. So I think that, yes, "philosopher" applies only to those with a degree; but this is because earning a degree gets you the philosophical training that's necessary for publishing in philosophy. So I guess you're a philosopher when you've published a book or article in philosophy.

Of course, more seasoned philosophers might well be better, since they have more experience (and others might not be, despite their experience). And more seasoned philosophers might have published more than less seasoned philosophers. But I don't think that makes a less seasoned philosopher any *less* of a philosopher than one who is more seasoned.

There are, of course, independent (non-university affiliated) scholars who publish in philosophy, as well as philosophy professors who don't publish in philosophy; and I'm sure there are cases where each lacks X advanced degree in philosophy. So publishing in philosophy and holding an advanced degree in philosophy are hardly necessary and sufficient conditions for being a philosopher, but they might be good guides to discerning what makes someone a philosopher.

-Alex M

Does one really have to start with the Greeks to tackle hegel?

[smeaglelovesmaster](#)

Is there a reason why your end goal is to tackle Hegel?

What's the best way to escape an existential crisis?

[jv20three](#)

Form loving relationships.

I saw something that said you are always looking for volunteers, what sorts of things for?

[willbell](#)

I tried to respond to that question here:

[https://www.reddit.com/r/philosophy/comments/59521q/were\\_wireless\\_philosophy\\_a\\_khan\\_academy\\_partner/d95o74y/](https://www.reddit.com/r/philosophy/comments/59521q/were_wireless_philosophy_a_khan_academy_partner/d95o74y/).

~Gaurav

Who do you guys think will be the next great philosopher? Who is someone in the 21st century to look out for? Such as their works and what not. Better words, what does being a philosopher look like today in 2016?

[AlanKurt47](#)

As far as the next great philosopher goes - no idea. I think that people can seldom guess what the most influential achievements of their era will be. There are a bunch of great philosophers alive right now though. [Do a google search!](#)

Now, what does being a philosopher look like today? I say a little bit about that in [an earlier comment](#).

Hope that helps!

-Alex M

I'm a high school student of epistemology. We've recently been discussing mathematics as a way of knowing, often comparing it to art or language. As cool as those comparisons are, I'd like to go further. What are some interesting texts or articles that explore the human psyche through math?

[Zhuzh](#)

This is a live area of philosophy. I'm not sure if you're interested in the epistemology of mathematical knowledge (how we get it) or the psychology of mathematical knowledge (perhaps what makes it reliable, and questions like that). If the latter, then I recommend checking out [this article on Morality and Evolutionary Biology](#). It's on morality, but the article discusses mathematics as well. The article also touches on what have become known as "debunking arguments" about morality. Crudely put, these arguments suggest that our beliefs about morality are in large part a result of evolution, and so may not be reliable. Similar arguments have been advanced against knowledge of knowledge, mathematics, and metaphysics (and other topics, I'm sure). If you're interested in psychology and mathematics, you might find this stuff interesting!

-Alex M

What is the thinking behind climate change denial? Do you think the purveyors of fossil fuel are nihilists?

[agnesmarsala](#)

Foggy.

I don't think that most climate change disagreement is about *whether* there is climate change. Nowadays, it seems (at least from my armchair) that the disagreement is about whether climate change is *a result of human action* or not. Disagreement here might be about empirical claims - that is, about whether climate change is in fact man made, or is a natural part of the earth's cycle (...this is probably not scientifically sound language). On the other hand, I'm sure that some disagreement is a result of other factors (being in denial, have a distrust of science, perhaps holding some religious views).

As far as the purveyors of fossil fuel being nihilists, I'd say probably not. From what I can tell, people who endorse the use of fossil fuels (under certain conditions) do so because they think that doing so creates more value (for them, for the domestic economy, etc.), not because they have no values - that is, not because they are nihilists.

"But of course, they *must* be nihilists!"

-Alex M

I'm interested in understanding phenomenology, and I haven't made much progress with the literature I've found. It seems as if it's written to keep the whole enterprise mysterious! XD I would be extremely grateful if you made a video (or something) that gave curious and philosophically underpowered people like me a view into this area! I've seen it mentioned in human-computer interaction literature (I'm doing a master's in computer science now), and I'd love to know what's going on there, besides my having a crush on the difficult writings on the subject I've come across. Got. To. Be. Exciting. Cause. It's. So. Hard. To. Read!

[Line-stormSong](#)

I think this is a fantastic idea, and it's definitely something we're interested in pursuing! Phenomenology is an important area of philosophy, so it's on our radar.

Phenomenology is *hard*!

-Alex M

So glad you're doing this! Thanks!

Question: What other projects and mediums will WiPhi explore in the future?

[byrd\\_nick](#)

Thanks for having us! We're really open to all mediums. We talk about this a little bit in [this comment](#), [this comment](#), and our [AMA announcement post](#). If you have any ideas, we'd love to hear them!

-Alex M

Oh no I missed it! Just in case, I'll still ask my question.

I'm currently working on my undergraduate thesis on Personal Identity. More specifically, how our identity is shaped on social media / internet. I was wondering your thoughts on what effect social networking sites has on one's identity.

Thanks!

[yourfriendsugoi](#)

What a great topic! I don't have any offhand thoughts but really want to hear more about it from you as you seem to have already given this some thought! So, I'm going to flip this around and ask you to educate me a bit on this so I can get my bearings on the complexities here.

~Gaurav

Can I use some of your material to teach philosophy in a local cafe? How would that work?

[LandOfDreams](#)

Certainly! You could show people a short video and then run a discussion around the concepts? You could flip it around and ask people a question have them discuss it for a bit and then show a video that lays out a structured argument around the concept and then continue the discussion. You don't have to use the video at all! Perhaps you can just watch the video to get a sense of somethings that philosophers have found interesting and just use it as a starting point in your own thinking. There are also some great resources collected here by PLATO (the organization): <http://www.plato-philosophy.org/pre-college-course-material/>. Maybe we can even work together and design something in a different thread as a community and create a central resource available for everyone in the community! That could be great.

~Gaurav

How do I get into Philosophy?

[Drakonson](#)

I like all the answers offered already. I'll reiterate some thoughts that I mentioned earlier in the thread. I think it's very natural for people to find some questions interesting (e.g. Should recreational drugs be legal? What rules should govern the way self-driving cars make decision in the case of an upcoming accident (i.e. should they always protect the driver, should they minimize risk of harm where everyone is treated equally, etc. etc.)). I think there are just a ton of questions that people already think about which could benefit from more structured thinking. Once you find a question you are really curious about do some research on what philosophers have written on that topic. I think that's an excellent way to begin your philosophical journey! I mention this route because that's how I got into it. I was really interested in physics and thought I wanted to be a physicist when I first started college. I found myself asking a ton of questions which were very theoretical to my professor. He was the one who recommended I take a Philosophy of Science course and I was just blown away. Perhaps that route will be one that resonates with you as well?

~Gaurav

How do I get into Philosophy?

[Drakonson](#)

Check out some of [our videos](#)! They're designed to be accessible for people with little to no background in the subject, but they feature lectures by professors at well-established philosophy programs. It's a shameless plug, but I really do think these are a great place to start.

[/u/Agnostros](#) is right - reading is a great way to start! I don't really know many books for learning on your own (I started with college courses), but if there are any franchises you're into, Blackwell and Open Court each publish a series on popular culture and philosophy. The books are usually titled *X and Philosophy* (*Star Wars and Philosophy*, *The Legend of Zelda and Philosophy*, *The Matrix and Philosophy*, *How I Met Your Mother and Philosophy*, etc.). These are very accessible, and usually pretty interesting!

-Alex M

I'm about to begin watching the epistemology playlist so please forgive me if these questions are already answered there:

Is there a "correct" epistemology? If not, whose or what epistemology do you most agree with?

Also, same questions for ethics.

Thanks!

[GiveMeAnarchy](#)

I'll let Geoff chime in on his thoughts on epistemology. I have been most persuaded by some version of a consequentialist theory of ethics. I'm not sure if it's correct. It just happens to be the one I am currently most sympathetic too.

~Gaurav

I'm about to begin watching the epistemology playlist so please forgive me if these questions are already answered there:

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Also, same questions for ethics.

Thanks!

[GiveMeAnarchy](#)

We can certainly argue about which epistemology is correct (the phrase "correct epistemology" is perfectly meaningful), but there isn't one epistemology that is uncontroversially correct. Which view of epistemology is correct is very much a matter of debate. The same is true of ethics.

If you've started watching the epistemology series, you'll get a sampling of a bunch of epistemological views and questions, many of which are still live and undecided.

As for me, I'm afraid I don't have a view on which epistemology is correct. But Geoff might! This is his area of expertise.

-Alex M

I've read somewhere on the internet (please excuse my terrible source reference) that modern philosophy coming to a halt, that there isn't breaking new idea in philosophy anymore. How true is that sentiment?

[quangtit01](#)

It doesn't strike me as true. I think we make progress every day on a whole range of topics. So it's not a sentiment that I share at the very least.

I've read somewhere on the internet (please excuse my terrible source reference) that modern philosophy coming to a halt, that there isn't breaking new idea in philosophy anymore. How true is that sentiment?

[quangtit01](#)

Not true. But I'm still an optimistic, young grad student. So perhaps others would correct me!

-Alex M

Heya,

So I'm currently at a high school that teaches philosophy intermixed within the other books for our English class (which is discussion based). I personally find philosophy fairly boring to read and not fulfilling because you never reach a conclusion, you only really look at different possibilities and how some are false. iirc at the end of the *Meno*, Aristotle even says he cannot put forth an answer because he doesn't know. So my question is how would you approach appreciation of philosophy to get people like me to start finding it worthwhile to read and not just do it for homework because your teacher tells you to?

[lolofaf](#)

Heya [/u/lolofaf](#),

I highly recommend checking out my response to [/u/throwaway\\_p\\_username's comment](#). I talk a bit about how to read boring texts so that they seem more interesting.

But you raise a second point: why care about philosophy when it doesn't reach conclusions? It sounds like you take this to be a characteristic of philosophy: it's just not the sort of thing that reaches conclusions, so it isn't all that interesting. But I don't think that this is right. I think it's that some *concepts* are such that they don't yield simple explanations. Consider *Meno*. In this dialogue, Socrates explores the nature of knowledge. It turns out that, as you've suggested, the nature of knowledge is not at all obvious. But this doesn't seem to be because Socrates is doing philosophy. Rather, it's because

*knowledge is a complicated concept.* And we wouldn't conclude that knowledge - or justice, truth, beauty, etc. - isn't worth thinking about. But if we can't reach *firm conclusions*, then *why* is it worth thinking about? Well, it seems like *Meno* has taught us something - namely, that the nature of knowledge is not as obvious as we might otherwise assume. And that is an interesting conclusion! So maybe *Meno* doesn't tell us what knowledge *is*, but it has taught us something *about* knowledge, and certainly gives us a lot to think about! But maybe you're frustrated, because you *really want to know something about knowledge*. Well, odds are you do know something about it that many others don't - you know that the nature of knowledge isn't as clear as it might seem. You've *learned* this, and now it's something you can talk about and offer up to others. And if you find that you want to learn more about knowledge...well, then maybe you should study philosophy!

Just a note: Plato wrote *Meno*, not Aristotle ;)

-Alex M

As a Army Infantry veteran prusuing a PhD in philosophy what advice would you have to those who want to follow the path of PhD at university? Do you think having that Infantry experience could help me in a specific field of philosophy?

I'm big into helping and bring a different perspective on situations to light. I'm just starting off college so I have the world ahead of me and would LOVE advice from you guys!

[mrhighwayz](#)

Hi,

First of all thanks, that's really quite incredible. I wish you the best of luck in your journey.

I think that having different perspectives is key to being able to approach questions differently and so I think you would be a real asset in the room. Given that I don't know what your specific interests are, I am hesitant to offer any concrete examples of what you should think through. Having said that, i'd imagine the questions you have really sat with and lived through are likely to be around issues of political philosophy and ethics. By committing to serve you have a perspective on some of the topics within those areas which might be different. Perhaps you have been in a wartime situation and have had to make a very obvious moral decision. Perhaps through going through bootcamp and serving in a unit you have had to really think through the concept of "Authority". In these ways you have lived with questions different than others. Those might be areas for you to start with. I imagine questions about "authority" in particular could be quite interesting. Joseph Raz isn't the easiest person to read but it might be worth checking him out!

Can you make videos on meta-ethical theories ? Also, phenomenal conservatism, commonsense epistemology, reformed epistemology.

[clan1741](#)

I would love to. If you have faculty in mind who you think would be interested please connect us!

Hi, do you ever felt pressure to only present more philosophies which are deemed socially acceptable these days, ie have you ever had ideas so abhorrent that you didn't feel comfortable presenting or making talks about ?

[magibaconite](#)

I have not. I suppose this could be an issue but it's not one we have faced yet.

Hello WiPhi team,

Words cannot adequately express my appreciation for what you guys do. In past studies of philosophy, at times I felt texts were too verbose and vague.

The content WiPhi makes is accessible, digestible and concise enough to give viewers the important points yet still encourage exploring further details, absolutely great work.

What are your thoughts on philosophy in popular culture ?

Usually I have a good laugh when Zizek refers to a film when making a case. However, in general discussions I find it lamentable that people can be quick to dismiss popular culture examples as low brow or not-real-philosophy, as if 'real philosophy' is the reserve of stuffy old men speaking in impenetrable verses.

In my own life, referring to The Matrix has been invaluable in bringing people (in varying states of sobriety) into discussions around the Cartesian cogito ergo sum, as my own inebriated attempts to present the 'evil demon' or the modern 'brain in a jar' examples end up being too fuzzy.

[fuusen](#)

I think that the use of film as a medium for philosophical inquiry is a great idea! I see no reason to dismiss it. There are so many great films that can be used to think through philosophical questions and the Matrix is certainly one. But there are plenty more especially if you are interested in ethical inquiries. One of the latest Batman movies with the scene on the two ships is clearly presentable as a moral problem worth discussing. Deus Ex Machina was also pretty great to think through some issues and WestWorld seems to be shaping up along these lines as well. I wouldn't get caught up in the high-brow low-brow thing. I think philosophical questions are everywhere and if any medium which gets people thinking about these questions in a structured way is well worth leveraging!

Also came across these two links worth scoping:

<http://www.openculture.com/2014/10/44-essential-movies-for-the-student-of-philosophy.html>

<http://dailynous.com/2015/04/14/philosophers-pick-philosophical-movies/>

We have more than enough resources to give food and clean drinking water to anybody who needs it. And I think most people would agree that taking care of the vulnerable/sick/hungry is incredibly important and that we have a duty to do so. But the small amount of charities/government aid doesn't even come close to fixing these problems. It seems so bizarre that, right now, millions of people need help and they're not receiving any. I feel like future generations are going to look back on us and judge us for our inaction. So I guess my question is, why do you think societies have so much trouble doing the right thing? Are we all incredibly selfish for not marching in the streets and demanding a change?

[samkaylo](#)

I share your belief that future generations are going to look back on us and judge us for our inaction (or our terrible choices). I think issues on climate change in particular are going to be judged quite harshly. I'm not sure if there is a simple answer to the question (unsurprisingly). I am sure that the lack of an appropriate setup personal incentive structure is some part of the explanation. I think it's also because our society is setup in such a way that having genuine dialogues is not really a thing so we often find ways of ignoring our deepest issues. I'm sure there are a whole host of other reasons as well. I think the trap might be to think of it as a dichotomy. It might be a mistake to think that we either solved or didn't or acted all the way and didn't. Progress is more likely a continuum and anything we do (even if it's so small that get's judged harshly by our future critics) is still a valuable contribution to the world. So even if the problems seem intractable, I don't think they are and in fact I think there are just plenty of opportunities for us to all contribute.

Have you heard of the philosopher Max Stirner?

[egosphilos](#)

I have not.

-Gaurav