



*Doing*  
**Philosophy**

Sixth Edition

*An Introduction Through Thought Experiments*

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Theodore Schick, Jr.

# DOING PHILOSOPHY

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*An Introduction through Thought Experiments*  
Sixth Edition

THEODORE SCHICK, JR.  
*Muhlenberg College*





DOING PHILOSOPHY: AN INTRODUCTION THROUGH THOUGHT  
EXPERIMENTS, SIXTH EDITION

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 LCR 21 20 19

ISBN 978-0-07-811917-0 (bound edition)  
MHID 0-07-811917-0 (bound edition)  
ISBN 978-1-260-68704-0 (loose-leaf edition)  
MHID 1-260-68704-X (loose-leaf edition)

Product Developers: *Erika Lo, Elisa Odoardi*  
Marketing Manager: *Nancy Baudean*  
Content Project Managers: *Maria McGreal, Danielle Clement*  
Buyer: *Susan K. Culbertson*  
Design: *Beth Blech*  
Content Licensing Specialist: *Jacob Sullivan*  
Cover Image: *Jacob W. Frank/National Park Service*  
Compositor: *Cenveo® Publisher Services*

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Schick, Theodore, author.  
Title: Doing philosophy : an introduction through thought experiments / Theodore Schick, Jr., Muhlenberg College.  
Description: Sixth Edition. | Dubuque : McGraw-Hill Education, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.  
Identifiers: LCCN 2018040554 (print) | LCCN 2018043333 (ebook) | ISBN 9781260686425 (ebook) | ISBN 9780078119170 (alk. paper)  
Subjects: LCSH: Philosophy—Introductions.  
Classification: LCC BD21 (ebook) | LCC BD21 .S34 2019 (print) | DDC 100—dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018040554>

The Internet addresses listed in the text were accurate at the time of publication. The inclusion of a website does not indicate an endorsement by the authors or McGraw-Hill Education, and McGraw-Hill Education does not guarantee the accuracy of the information presented at these sites.

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*To my students, for all they've taught me.*



# Preface

Teaching an introductory philosophy course is one of the most difficult tasks a philosophy instructor faces. Because philosophy isn't usually taught in secondary schools, most entering college students have no idea what philosophy is or why they should be studying it. Any notions they do have about philosophy generally have little to do with the practice of professional philosophers. To help students understand the nature and purpose of philosophical inquiry, *Doing Philosophy: An Introduction through Thought Experiments* explains how philosophical problems arise and why searching for solutions is important.

It is essential for beginning students to read primary sources, but if that is all they are exposed to, the instructor must bear the burden of interpreting, explaining, and providing context for the selections. This burden can be a heavy one, for most articles in introductory anthologies were written for professional philosophers. After reading a number of these articles, students are often left with the impression that philosophy is a collection of incompatible views on a number of unrelated subjects. To pass the course, they end up memorizing who said what and do not develop the critical thinking skills often considered the most important benefit of studying philosophy. By exploring the interrelationships among philosophical problems and by providing a framework for evaluating their solutions, *Doing Philosophy* overcomes the problem of fragmentation encountered in smorgasbord approaches to philosophy.

One can know a great deal about what philosophers have said without knowing what philosophy is because philosophy is as much an activity as it is a body of knowledge. So knowing how philosophers arrive at their conclusions is at least as important as knowing what conclusions they've arrived at. This text acquaints students with both the process and the product of philosophical inquiry by focusing on one of the most widely used philosophical techniques: the method of thought experiment or counterexample. Thought experiments test philosophical theories by determining whether they hold in all possible situations. They make the abstract concrete and highlight important issues in a way that no amount of exegesis can. By encouraging students to evaluate and perform thought experiments, *Doing Philosophy* fosters active learning and creative thinking.

Good critical thinkers are adept at testing claims by asking the question "What if . . . ?" and following the answer through to its logical conclusion. Thought experiments are particularly useful in testing philosophical theories because they often reveal hidden assumptions and unexpected conceptual complications. Given the central role that thought experiments have played in philosophical inquiry, there is reason to believe that knowing classic thought experiments is as important to understanding philosophy as knowing classic



physical experiments is to understanding science. By tracing the historical and logical development of thinking on a number of classic philosophical problems, we hope to provide students with a solid grounding in the discipline and prepare them for more advanced study.

Students sometimes express surprise that philosophy is still being done. They have the idea that it's merely a historical curiosity, of no contemporary relevance. Purely historical survey courses often perpetuate that idea. *Doing Philosophy* attempts to show that philosophy is a vibrant, thriving discipline actively engaged in some of the most important intellectual inquiries being conducted today.

To give instructors maximum flexibility in designing their course, the text is divided into self-contained chapters, each of which explores a philosophical problem. The introduction to each chapter explains the problem, defines some key concepts, and identifies the intellectual objectives students should try to achieve as they read the chapter. Classic arguments and thought experiments are highlighted in the text, and numerous "thought probes" or leading questions are placed throughout to encourage students to think more deeply about the material covered. Various boxes and quotations are also included that relate the material to recent discoveries or broader cultural issues. Each section concludes with study and discussion questions. Classic and contemporary readings are included at the end of each chapter so that students can see some of the more important theories and thought experiments in context. Some sets of readings contain a piece of fiction—an extended thought experiment—that raises many of the questions dealt with in the chapter. The goal throughout is not only to present students with the best philosophical thinking on each topic but also to challenge them to examine their own philosophical beliefs. Only through active engagement with the issues can real philosophical understanding arise.

The sixth edition of *Doing Philosophy* features new readings by Ernest Sosa, Mark Balaguer, Eddy Nahmias, John Stuart Mill, and Hans Moravec and new material on Stoicism, alternatives to theism, the argument from nonbelief, the actual infinite, the Libet experiment, the integrated information theory of mind, the simulation hypothesis, nonhuman persons, and transhumanism. There are also a number of new boxes, thought probes, and discussion questions to stimulate more in-depth thinking on the issues. Important continuing features include a coherent theoretical framework that helps students understand both the historical and the logical development of philosophical thinking; more than seventy-five thought experiments that test the adequacy of various philosophical theories; classic and contemporary readings that acquaint students with the original writings from which the theories and thought experiments are drawn; probing questions throughout each chapter that foster active learning and creative thinking; boxed features and quotes that relate philosophical issues to current events and classic writers; Internet Inquiries at the end of each chapter that suggest Internet searches students can perform to learn more about the issues raised in the chapter; biographical boxes that provide background information on important philosophers covered in the text; chapter introductions that explain the philosophical problem being explored, define key concepts, and identify chapter objectives; and

chapter summaries, study questions, and discussion questions that encourage students to think more deeply about the subject matter.

## *Acknowledgments*

Special thanks to Lewis Vaughn for all his help on previous editions. Many people have offered their wisdom and insight on this project. Although I have not always heeded it, I would especially like to thank Wayne Alt, Community College of Baltimore County; Gordon Barnes, SUNY Brockport; Jack DeBellis, Lehigh University; Nori Geary, New York Hospital–Cornell Medical Center; Stuart Goldberg; James Hall, Kutztown University; Dale Jacquette, Pennsylvania State University; Robert Charles Jones, Stanford University; Jonathan Levinson; Jeffrey Nicholas, Bridgewater State College; Nick Oweyssi, North Harris College; Abram Samuels; Ludwig Schlecht, Muhlenberg College; Thomas Theis, Thomas J. Watson Research Center; Vivian Walsh, Muhlenberg College; Robert Wind, Muhlenberg College; and James Yerkes, Moravian College. We would also like to thank the following reviewers for their suggestions: Julius Bailey, Wittenburg University; David Chalmers, University of Arizona, Tucson; Alfred A. Decker, Bowling Green State University; Rev. Ronald DesRosiers, SM, Madonna University; Stephen Russell Dickerson, South Puget Sound Community College; Kevin E. Dodson, Lamar University; Jeremiah Hackett, University of South Carolina; David L. Haugen, Western Illinois University; Douglas E. Henslee, San Jose State University; Charles Hinkley, Texas State University, San Marcos; Karen L. Hornsby, North Carolina A&T State University; Margaret C. Huff, Northeastern University; David Kyle Johnson, King’s College; John Knight, University of Wisconsin Centers–Waukesha; Richard Lee, University of Arkansas; Chris Lubbers, Muskegon Community College; Thomas F. MacMillan, Mendocino College; Mark A. Michael, Austin Peay State University; Dr. Luisa Moon, Mira Costa College; Augustine Minh Thong Nguyen, Eastern Kentucky University; David M. Parry, Penn State Altoona; Jerrod Scott, Brookhaven College; Leonard Shulte, North West Arkansas Community College; Robert T. Sweet, Clark State Community College; Joseph Vitti, Central Maine Community College; Ron Wilburn, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and David Wisdo, Columbus State University. I also wish to thank Muhlenberg College and the staff of the Trexler Library for their unflagging support.



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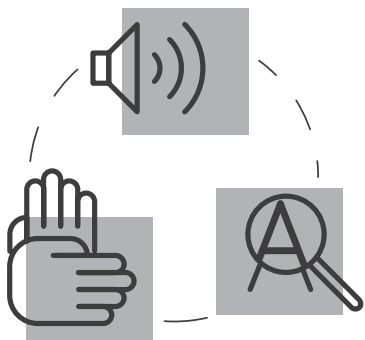
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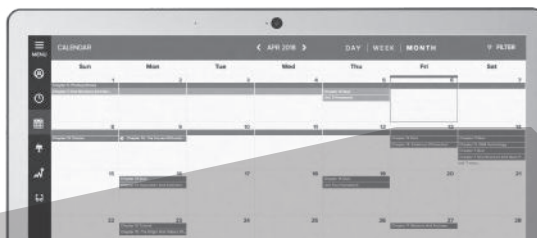
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