

BACK TO PHILOSOPHY

At this time what I would like to do is to get you to gather some idea of what you think Philosophy is. So I have an assignment for you. Think about philosophy and about what questions you have about life. It is very easy really. I don't want you to do any research or to read anything before you answer the questions I just want you to think about these things. So, do so , and write your answers or responses down in some way and keep them somewhere and then review it when you have completed your reading of this work. See if your thoughts and views have changed any by that time.

- A. List the five or so most important questions or problems you think about.
- B. If you had virtually unlimited financial resources at your disposal what would you begin doing with your life?
- C. What is Philosophy?
- D. How do you use the term "philosophy"?
- E. How do others use the term "philosophy"? Give examples.
- F. What good is philosophy?
- G. What importance might philosophy have in your future?

Here are some key questions in the history of Philosophy by which Philosophy is identified. They are Perennial Questions and Defining questions.

What is the world about?

What is the world made up of? pre-Socratics

What are human beings to do?

How are Humans to live?

How are humans to live the GOOD life? (Socrates)

What is the GOOD? (Plato)

What is it to know? (Aristotle)

What is it to exist?

Is there a meaning to existence? (Judaism)

Is there a meaning to human life, history, suffering???

Is the world all there is? (Christianity)

What is REAL ?

Is the world REAL? or illusion??? (Hinduism)

Is suffering what it is all about?

Is suffering real?

Can suffering be overcome? ended? (Buddhism)

Is life without meaning? (Existentialism)

Is life absurd? (Camus)

Are humans free?

Are humans free to shape their own existence and destiny? (Sartre)

How are humans to live in an honorable way?

How are humans to live with their families in an honorable way? (Confucius)

How can we be certain of anything? (Descartes)

How are humans to live in a world with science? (Dewey)

How are humans to live in a technological society?

How are humans to live in a society with constant change and problems?

Aristotle<< Philosopher



**Senator Marco Rubio<< Politician
(~ Sophist)**



In Iowa on Monday, Senator Marco Rubio (at left, with Aristotle at right), a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, spoke about his vision for reforming higher education, and encouraged more people

to enter vocationally oriented programs. Rubio said it was important for students to know their chances at good jobs after finishing various programs.

"So you can decide if it's worth borrowing \$50,000 to major in Greek philosophy," *The Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier* reported Rubio as saying. "Because after all, the market for Greek philosophers has been very tight for 2,000 years." Greek philosophy seems to be Rubio's go-to example -- see [this article](#) from June. Or [this one](#) from March. Or [this one](#) from February.

Inside Higher Ed wondered what philosophers might make of all of these comments. Amy E. Ferrer, executive director of the American Philosophical Association, responded via email. "Rubio's refrain about the value of philosophy is unfortunate -- and misinformed," she said. "Philosophy teaches many of the skills most valued in today's economy: critical thinking, analysis, effective written and verbal communication, problem solving, and more. And philosophy majors' success is borne out in both data -- which show that philosophy majors consistently outperform nearly all other majors on graduate entrance exams such as the [GRE](#) and [LSAT](#), and that philosophy ties with mathematics for the [highest percentage increase](#) from starting to midcareer salary -- and anecdotal evidence indicating that philosophy and other humanities majors are increasingly [successful and sought after](#) in the [business and technology sectors](#)."

"Examples of [philosophy majors' success](#) in the business world include [Overstock.com](#) CEO Patrick Byrne, Flickr co-founder Stewart Butterfield and Carly Fiorina, former Hewlett-Packard CEO and one of Rubio's rivals for the Republican presidential nomination."

Santa Claus

Now, despite the fact that people know that the story is not true many people go on telling the story to children. They act as if it were true in the presence of small children. They tease small children with warnings about being good or else they won't get their gifts or asking children what did Santa bring you? Why do people go on telling a story that they know isn't true? In this case the answer lies in what it is of value that people derive from the telling of the tale. People who tell the tale to small children and bring them gifts in the name of Santa do so because it is fun. They enjoy doing so. They enjoy making small children happy. And so the tale goes on because people experience values in doing so. The telling of the tale assists children to learn the lesson that there is joy in giving, for Santa is joyful. The moral: it is better to give than to receive.

The telling of a tale that isn't true and the desire to promulgate it is part of what is known as a **broken myth**: a story we know is not true but we repeat anyway because of the values derived from doing so.

In this course you will be challenged to consider many questions, many issues. Some of the issues deal with matters concerning which you share in a belief system with many other people. You will be challenged to consider the possibility that the ideas you take as given truths may not be true at all. You will be challenged to consider looking at matters from another point of view. It could just be that some of the ideas you have are stories, which may not be true. Perhaps, people believe in some of these stories because, as with the Santa story, they receive gifts for believing. They receive the gift of an order for their lives and they avoid chaos. People cannot live with chaos and so they may on believing in a story that provides order in their lives even if it, like the Santa tale, has a lot of holes in it. They may believe even if the stories have contradictions or are filled with many mysteries.

Now we learn from our culture a number of things and a way to look at all things. We inherit through our culture a worldview. Now what philosophers

do is examine with a critical eye all things. It may just be that elements of that worldview are not correct or true. It could just be that some of our most cherished beliefs have flaws in them, such as in the Santa story, and we just don't see them as yet.

Philosophy examines the most basic ideas with which humans think. It takes as little for granted as is possible. In fact it aims at taking nothing for granted and subjecting all ideas and beliefs to the examination of reason. Here is the best definition of Philosophy that I have ever come across:

Philosophy is the most critical and comprehensive thought process devised by humans.

Philosophy is not the means by which humans have erected systems of beliefs to help them answer the most perplexing and important issues but it is the means by which those answers are evaluated, examined and found to be acceptable or else rejected.