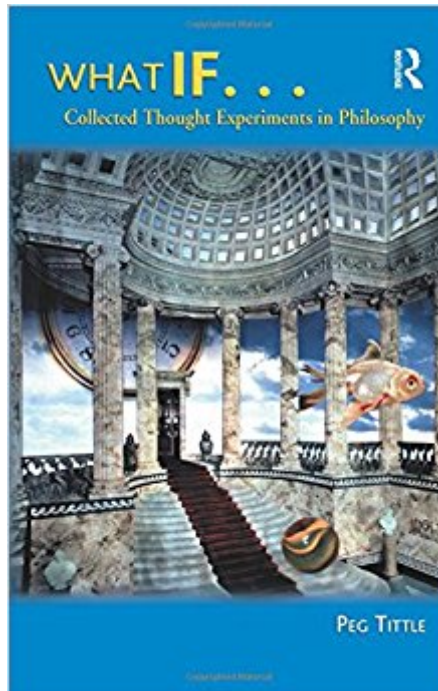




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What If...: Collected Thought Experiments In Philosophy



Synopsis

What If. . . Collected Thought Experiments in Philosophy is a brief collection of over 100 classic and contemporary "thought experiments," each exploring an important philosophical argument. These thought experiments introduce students to the kind of disciplined thought required in philosophy, and awaken their intellectual curiosity. Featuring a clear and conversational writing style that doesn't dilute the ideas, the value of the book is in its simplicity—in both format and tone. Each thought experiment is accompanied by commentary from the author that explains its importance and provides thought-provoking questions, all encapsulated on two pages.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I purchased this for my Intro to Philosophy class. Even though I only used it for the class itself, the material that is in the book is quite interesting & the prompts provided really make you think. I've actually read through some of the prompts that we didn't have to work in class, just because the questions & information in the text is so interesting.

This book greatly assists you in "doing philosophy" instead of simply reading it. It helped me prepare for class discussion by presenting me with many of the questions the professor was going to ask ahead of time. Several of the thought experiments showed up on quizzes and tests. You'd do well to get this or Ultimate Questions: Thinking About Philosophy to help you "do" philosophy.

good

I've used many anthologies for my philosophy courses, but none ever seemed to have all the thought experiments I wanted. In addition, like many other philosophy professors, I'd repeated some of the same imaginative scenarios so many times that I couldn't remember their origin or even if I'd invented them. Tittle's book addressed both those problems for me. She did all the hard work when she tracked down these passages. That alone would have been enough for me to adopt the text for my classes, but she didn't stop there. She added short commentaries for each scenario; better, her commentaries are not explications but distillations that underscore for the reader exactly why these mental morsels are so philosophically intriguing and thereby so durable. The whole range of philosophy is covered--logic, epistemology, philosophy of mind, ethics, political philosophy--all the stuff that a good course should cover. If you know little about philosophy but want an accessible introduction, or if you are a philosophy professor and want a guaranteed stimulant for class discussion, this is the book for you.

1 This is a great book with lots of interesting cases and examples from famous philosophical passages to discuss. Here's the Table of Contents: Preface. Introduction. 1. Metaphysics. Space, Time, and Reality. Zeno's Achilles. Lucretius's Spear. Berkeley's Impossibility of Conceiving the Unconceived. Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence. Strawson's No-Space World. Quinton's Two-Space Myth. Shoemaker's Time-Freezing World. Free Will and Determinism. Locke's Voluntary Prisoner. James's Way Home. Lyon's Card Predictor. Goldman's Book of Life. Frankfurt's Willing Addict. Taylor's Ingenious Physiologist. Philosophy of Religion. Gaunilo's Lost Island. Pascal's Wager. Hume's Infant, Inferior, or Superannuated Deity. Paley's Watch. Wisdom's Long-Neglected Garden. Hick's Resurrected People. Hick's World with Flexible Laws of Nature. Plantinga's Curley Smith and Transworld Depravity. Rowe's Fawn. 2. Philosophy of Mind. Locke's Inverted Spectrum. Leibniz's Machine. Turing's Imitation Game. Kirk and Squire's Zombies. Nagel's Bat. Block's Chinese Nation. Rorty's Antipodeans. Searle's Chinese Room. Putnam's Brain in a Vat. Jackson's Mary, the Brilliant Color Scientist. Searle's Brain Replacement. 3. Personal Identity. Hobbes's Ship of Theseus. Locke's Prince and Cobbler. Reid's Brave Officer. Leibniz's King of China. William's Charles and Guy Fawkes-and Robert. Shoemaker's Brownson. William's Body Exchange/Mind Swap. Perry's Divided Self. Price's E. coli John. Parfit's Fission. Parfit's Teletransporter. 4. Philosophy of Language. James' Squirrel. Wittgenstein's Games. Wittgenstein's $\neg A \rightarrow A$. S. $\neg A \rightarrow A$. Ayer's Robinson Crusoe. Quine's Gavagai. Putnam's Twin Earth. 5. Epistemology. The Possibility of Knowledge. Descartes's Evil Demon. Russell's Five- Minute

Hypothesis. The Sources of Knowledge. Plato's Equal Portions of Wood and Stone. Descartes's Wax. Molyneux's Blind Man. Hume's Missing Shade of Blue. Hume's Constant Conjunction. Kant's A Priori Space. Mill's Chaotic World. The Conditions of Knowledge. Gettier's Smith and Jones (and Brown in Barcelona). Skyrms's Pyromaniac. Harman's False Report. Goldman's Fake Barns. Bonjour's Clairvoyants. Plantinga's Epistemically Inflexible Climber. Lehrer's Mr. Truetemp. 6. Logic. The Liar Paradox. The Barber Paradox. Frege's Other-Thinking Beings. The Surprise Quiz. Black's Two Spheres. Goodman's Grue. 7. Ethics. Ethical Theory. Plato's Ring of Gyges. Godwin's Fenelon. Moore's Two Worlds. Smart's Deluded Sadist. Foot's Gas. Brandt's Spelunkers. Williams's Jim in South America. Nozick's Experience Machine. Feinberg's Egoist. Jamieson and Regan's Chainsaw. Jamieson and Regan's Terrorist Tank. Thompson's Trolley Problem. Thompson's Transplant Problem. Donaldson's Equim. Applied Ethics. Thompson's Violinist. Thompson's Growing Child in a Tiny House. Thompson's People-seeds. Tooley's Kitten. Warren's Space Traveler. Warren's Space Explorer. Sylvan's Last People. Rachel's Smith and Jones at the Bathtub. Harris's Survival Lottery. The Routley's Nuclear Train. Regan's Lifeboat. Caste's Hedonine and Pononine. Battin's Automatic Reversible Contraception. 8. Social and Political Philosophy. Locke's Acorns and Apples. The Prisoner's Dilemma. Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons. Rawls' Veil of Ignorance. Nozick's Wilt Chamberlain. Hardin's Lifeboat. O'Neill's Lifeboat. Alexander's Doomsday Machine. Marty's Two Shipwrecked Islanders. Parfit's Nobelist. Mills' Mr. Ore. 9. Aesthetics. Dewey's Finely Wrought Object. Ziff's Eccentric and Peculiar Objects. Danto's Randomly Generated Work of Art. Moore's Glass Flowers. Carroll's Loathe Letter. 10. Just on more... Patton's Can Bad Men Make Good Brains Do Bad Things? Index by Author. Index by Date of Publication. Index by Keyword.

The somewhat deceptive title aside (the thought experiments are much more substantive than silly "what if..." scenarios), this collection of (mostly) bite-sized bits of philosophy, nicely organized into categories like metaphysics, knowledge, or ethics, has its place on my shelf. It's not only a good reference for finding famous thought experiments or puzzlements, it's also a nice way to get a taste of a variety of periods and ideas.

stupid book

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