

## Pensamiento en la Cultura Anglófona Curso 2014-2015

**Material Docente**  
preparado por el profesor Pablo Rychter

**Nota del autor:** este material está pensado para ser usado por profesor y estudiantes en las clases de esta asignatura. No es material de estudio autónomo por parte de el estudiante. Puede contener pequeños errores (que espero corregir en versiones futuras) e inexactitudes (que en muchos casos resultan de simplificaciones deliberadas i pedagógicamente convenientes). Recomiendo a otros /-as profesores/-es interesados/-as en utilizar este material en sus clases que lo sometan a una revisión personal y lo adapten a sus necesidades docentes particulares.

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# Syllabus

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This document completes the information about the course that you will find in the General Teaching Guide of the course. The present syllabus concerns the groups A and B of the academic year 2014-15.

## 1. Summary

This course belongs to the module *Formació General Humanística* of the English Studies program. In this course, you will be introduced to some major philosophical problems that have been object of reflection in the English-speaking countries at different historical periods. You will learn about the major answers that these problems were given, and will be encouraged to develop your own thinking about the subjects.

## 2. Learning outcomes

In addition to acquiring the competences specified in the General Teaching Guide of the course, by the end of the course you are expected to:

- Have acquired an idea of what philosophy is and how it may be relevant and useful for the professions that you will pursue after graduation.
- Understand some central concepts and issues in the philosophical traditions of the English-speaking countries.
- Be able to apply those concepts and issues to concrete situations that are present in your own social context.
- Be able to develop your own arguments and views about the topics studied.
- Have acquired the ability to identify, reconstruct and evaluate the central argument in a philosophical text.
- Have improved your mastery of English.

## 3. Description of contents

We will address five topics. Prof. Rychter will be mostly in charge of topics 1, 2, 3 and 5. Prof. Compte will be mostly in charge of topic 4.

**1. Language and thought.** What is knowledge? What can we know? Arguments for skepticism.

The nature of linguistic meaning. Theories of reference.

**2. Personal identity.** What is a person? How can a person change so much through time and still be the same person? What kind of changes can a person survive? Locke's theory of personal identity and contemporary views.

**3. Freedom and determinism.** Am I free to choose what I will have for dinner tomorrow? How is freedom compatible with determinism? The different arguments for determinism. The compatibilist solution.

**4. Cultural conflicts.** How should we deal with ethical confrontations where people involved do not share the same value system? Is the current philosophical understanding of this kind of situations of any help? Two positions: universalism and relativism.

**5. Feminism: issues and arguments.** Gender roles. Sexual harassment. Abortion. Feminine appearance. Language change. Implicit bias.

## 4. Methodology

**1. Classes:** we will have two weekly sessions, on Mondays and Thursdays. In general, Monday classes will be mostly expository, although student participation is expected and highly encouraged. On Thursdays students are expected to assume a much more active role, either in **student presentations** or **discussion sessions** (more on these two activities below).

**2. Exams:** we hope there will not be any. If you work fine during the course and do the tasks described below, you will not need to take any exam. But if you are fond of exams, you will still be able to take one (more on this below).

**3. Short essays:** during the course, you are expected to write **three short essays**. These essays will be **no longer than 650 words** (about one page and a half) and will be submitted through Aula Virtual, following very precise guidelines that we will provide in advance. One of these three essays will be on topic 4, and the other two will be on topics 1, 2 or 3 (you will choose two between these three options). There will be very strict **deadlines** for submission of these assignments, **after which they will not be accepted**. We recommend not to wait until the last minute to upload your essay: bear in mind that technical problems may always arise. We will mark these short essays using the table that you can find as appendix 3 of this document. It is essential that you understand the **feedback** that we will provide you with this table, and that you apply it to the following essays. Positive progress on the basis of the feedback provided will be taken into account for your final mark.

**4. Final short assignment:** at the end of the course, you are expected to write a last short assignment, also of no more than 650 words. In this final short assignment you will be asked to summarily explain what you have learnt from the course and how this may be useful for your future professional endeavors. Precise guidelines for this task will be provided in advance. The deadline for submitting this assignment will be June 5th.

**5. Student presentations:** at some point during the course you are expected to do, together with two or three classmates, a short presentation (about 20 minutes long) for the rest of the class. These presentations will take place on Thursdays and will be connected to topic 5. Precise guidelines will be provided in advance. After the presentation, the rest of the class (also working in groups of three people) will answer a short query about the presentation you made. In the first two weeks of the course we will close a schedule for these presentations. Please have a look at appendix 6.

**6. Discussion Sessions:** this is an activity that may take place some Thursdays sessions. Working in groups of three people, students will read a short text and answer a short query directed to identify and assess the main thesis and argument in the text. After the exercise is done, the answers will be discussed among all the participants in the class.

**7. Tutorial hours:** professor Rychter will be available on Tuesdays from 16 to 17:30 and Wednesdays from 10:30 to 12 at office 506 of the Facultat de Filosofia (notice: not Filologia), except for the three weeks in which professor Compte will be in charge of the course. During these three weeks Professor Compte will be available on Mondays from 16 to 18 and Thursdays from 12 to 14 at office 601 of the Facultat de Filosofia.

**8. Getting in touch:** out of class-time or tutorial hours, our preferred contact method is regular email (pablo.rychter@uv.es, claudia.compte@uv.es). Please use this method rather than the messenger in Aula Virtual. We will use the e-mail for important announcements about the course. **It is part of your duty as a student to check your email regularly.**

**9. Plagiarism:** according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary to plagiarize is ‘to use the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own words or ideas’. If we find out that you have committed plagiarism in one of your essays, you will get a 0 in that essay and a 0 as the final grade of the course. If you have doubts about what plagiarism is, please check the document called *A note about plagiarism*, available in the Resources section of Aula Virtual.

**10. Good Manners:** we follow the *Rules of Good Manners* elaborated by the professors of our department, available in Aula Virtual. Please have a look at it.

## 5. Workload

Class attendance	60 hours (four hours a week)
Mandatory readings	60 hours (four hours a week)
Writing short essays	12 hours (four hours for essay)
Preparation of presentation	10 hours
Final assignment	8 hours

## 6. Evaluation Methods.

1. There are three methods of evaluation you can choose from: final exam, two partial exams, or evaluation by portfolio. However, **we strongly recommend the third method: evaluation through portfolio**. This year the syllabus and class methodology is aligned with this method of evaluation, and so we expect **better learning outcomes (and higher grades)** among students opting for it. For this reason, we will assume that you opt for this method, unless you explicitly tell us otherwise by e-mail **before February 16**. If you do not pass the course with the evaluation by portfolio, you can try the exam in the second official exam date (July 6). In the evaluation by portfolio, your final grade will be determined as follows:

TWO SHORT ESSAYS ON TOPICS 1, 2 OR 3	40%
SHORT ESSAY ON TOPIC 4	20%
PRESENTATION ON TOPIC 5	20%
PARTICIPATION IN THURSDAY SESSIONS	10%
FINAL SHORT ASSIGNMENT	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

**2. Evaluation by exams:** this method of evaluation may be preferable for those students that for special reasons (travel, work, etc) cannot commit themselves to a regular work during the course. If this is not your case, we strongly recommend that you opt for evaluation by portfolio (see above). If you opt for evaluation through exams, you still have the following two options:

**(a)** A final exam covering all the topics in the course. You can take this exam at any of the two official exam dates (June 5 and July 6). The grade of this exam will be the final grade of the course

**(b)** Two partial exams: the first one will be on March 30 and will cover the topics presented in class until that date. The second will be on any of the official exam dates (June 5 or July 6) and will cover all the remaining topics. The first partial exam will be worth 40% of the final grade and the second will be worth the remaining 60%.

If you opt for evaluation by exams, **you have to tell us so by e-mail before February 16.** Otherwise, we will understand that you opted for evaluation by portfolio.

**3. Grades:** grades should be interpreted according to appendix 5 of this document.

## 7. Schedule (subject to change)

Mo 2/2	INTRODUCTION	-PRESENTATION OF SYLLABUS -WHY PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH STUDIES
Th 5/2	LECTURE ON TOPIC I	-THE NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY: ARGUMENTATION
Mo 9/2	LECTURE ON CLASS METHODOLOGY	-WRITING SHORT ESSAYS -PREPARING PRESENTATIONS
Th 12/2	LECTURE ON TOPIC I	-THE NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY: CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS
Mo 16/2	LECTURE ON TOPIC I	-SKEPTICISM AND LANGUAGE
Th 19/2	LECTURE ON TOPICS I AND V	- SKEPTICISM AND LANGUAGE / FEMINISM
Mo 23/2	LECTURE ON TOPIC TOPIC I <b>HAND IN SHORT ESSAY 1</b>	-PUTNAM: BRAINS IN A VAT
Th 26/2	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON TOPIC V	-GROUPS G1,G2, G3, G25, G26, G27

Mo 2/3	LECTURE ON TOPIC II	-PERSONAL IDENTITY
Th 5/3	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON TOPIC V	-GROUPS G4, G5, G6, G28, G29, G30
Mo 9/3	LECTURE ON TOPIC II	-PERSONAL IDENTITY
Th 12/3	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON TOPIC V	-GROUPS G7, G8, G9, G31, G32, G33
Mo 16/3	NO CLASS - FALLAS	-----
Th 19/3	NO CLASS - FALLAS	-----
Mo 23/3	LECTURE ON TOPIC II <b>HAND IN SHORT ESSAY 2</b>	-PERRY ON PERSONAL IDENTITY
Th 26/3	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON TOPIC V	-GROUPS G10, G11, G12, G34, G35, G36
Mo 30/3	LECTURE ON TOPIC III	-FREE WILL
Th 2/4	NO CLASS - EASTERN	-----
Mo 6/4	NO CLASS - EASTERN	-----
Th 9/4	NO CLASS - EASTERN	-----
Mo 13/4	NO CLASS - EASTERN	-----
Th 16/4	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON TOPIC V	-GROUPS G13, G14, G15, G22, G37, G38
Mo 20/4	LECTURE ON TOPIC III	-FREE WILL
Th 23/4	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON TOPIC V	-GROUPS G16, G17, G18, G23, G39, G40
Mo 27/4	LECTURE ON TOPIC III <b>HAND IN SHORT ESSAY 3</b>	-FRANKFURT ON FREE WILL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY
Th 30/4	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON TOPIC V	-GROUPS G19, G20, G21, G24, G41, G42
Mo 4/5	LECTURE ON TOPIC IV	BERLIN: THE PURSUIT OF THE IDEAL
Th 7/5	-DISCUSSION SESSION ON TOPIC IV	BERLIN: THE PURSUIT OF THE IDEAL
Mo 11/5	LECTURE ON TOPIC IV	WILLIAMS ON RELATIVISM
Th 14/5	-DISCUSSION SESSION ON TOPIC IV	WILLIAMS ON RELATIVISM
Mo 18/5	LECTURE ON TOPIC IV <b>HAND IN SHORT ESSAY 4</b>	NUSSBAUM ON UNIVERSAL VIRTUES
Th 21/5	-DISCUSSION SESSION ON TOPIC IV	NUSSBAUM ON UNIVERSAL VIRTUES

## 8. Mandatory Readings

### Topic 1

1. Bratman, M. & Perry, J. "On the Study of Philosophy". *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, 3a edició, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999
2. Jackson, Frank, "Epiphenomenal qualia". *Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1982): 127-136.
3. Descartes, R. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1. Multiple editions available.
4. Putnam, Hilary "Brains in a Vat" in *Reason, Truth and History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 1–21.

### Topic 2

1. Locke, J. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, (ed.) by P. Nidditch, Oxford UP, 1975. Book II, ch. 27.
2. Perry, J. *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, Hackett Pub Co, 1978.

### Topic 3

1. Theodore Sider & Earl Conee (2005). *Riddles of Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics*. Oxford. Cap. 6.
2. Frankfurt, Harry. "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Philosophy*, 66: 829-39, 1969.

### Topic 4

1. Berlin, I.; "The Pursuit of the Ideal", in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*, Henry Hardy (ed.), London: John Murray Publishers Ltd, 1990, pp. 1-19
2. Williams, B.; "The Truth in Relativism", in *Moral Luck*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp. 132-143
3. Nussbaum, M.; "Non-relative Virtues: an Aristotelian Approach" in *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*, Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007, pp. 685-700

### Topic 5

1. Saul, Jennifer M. *Feminism: Issues & Arguments*, Oxford UP, 2003.

### General resources

1. Stanford: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

## Appendix 1: Example of instructions for short essays

**Exercise:** **Reconstruct** and **assess** the central argument of the author X in the paper Y. If you find that the paper contains more than one argument, focus on the one that you take to be the central one.

### Other instructions:

- The essay should be written in English.
  - Maximum length: 650 words. Please write the word-counter result in the heading of your essay.
  - Deadline for submission: Monday X before noon. Please submit your essay through Aula Virtual as an answer to the corresponding task. The application will not allow submissions after the deadline.
  - The essay should be headed by the following information: your name, the word-counter result, and the following phrase: ‘Philosophical thought in the English speaking countries, academic year 2014-15’.
  - Please re-read and follow the *Guidelines for writing short essays* available in Aula Virtual.
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## Appendix 2: Example of instructions for presentations

**Exercise:** Working together with your group-mates, prepare a presentation directed to **reconstruct** and **assess** the central argument of text that was assigned to your group. If you find that the text contains more than one argument, focus on the one that you take to be the central one.

### Other instructions:

- Your presentation should be in English.
  - Prepare a *draft* of your presentation (max. 650 words), and a short *report* of your work as a group (max. 400 words). Follow the *Guidelines for preparing presentations* available in Aula Virtual.
  - Submit your draft and report 24hs before your presentation through Aula Virtual.
  - Your draft and report should be headed by the names of the group members, and the following phrase: ‘Philosophical thought in the English speaking countries, academic year 2014-15’.
  - Please re-read and follow the *Guidelines for preparing presentations* available in Aula Virtual.
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## Appendix 3: Evaluation grill for short essays

	no				yes
<b>General</b>					
The essay satisfies the formal requirements (length, word count, etc.)					
The essay is focused on the topic					
The essay has two clearly distinguished parts, each one dedicated to one of the requested tasks					
The length of each part is appropriate					
Overall quality of the descriptive part					
Overall quality of the evaluative part					
<b>Expression</b>					
The essay's structure is explicit enough					
The register of language is adequate					
The text has internal cohesion and coherence. Enough connective expressions used					
For the reader, it is clear at which points the student describes an author's point of view, and at which points the student is presenting her own point of view					
Key words are defined					
The ideas are stated with precision. The appropriate words are selected and the student says exactly what she intends to say					
Grammatical and orthographic accuracy					
<b>Contents</b>					
The descriptive part starts with a correct identification of the central thesis in the text					
In the descriptive part, there is a good selection of the information that is relevant for the argument. No irrelevant information is provided					
The descriptive part offers an accurate and complete description of the argument					
The author's points of view are presented with the student's own words, and not by literal quotations or mechanical paraphrases					
The two parts of the essay are in function of each other					
The evaluative part makes reference to the argument and not only to the thesis or to other aspects of the author's philosophy					
The essay contains an noticeable attempt at offering a personal argument					
The character of the evaluative part is more argumentative than declamatory					
The original arguments are developed enough rather than merely suggested					
The essay offers evidence of a good understanding of the text					
The essay offers evidence of a serious work with the text					

## Appendix 4: Evaluation grill for presentations

	no				yes
<b>General</b>					
The presentation draft and report were submitted on time					
The presentation was focused on the topic					
The presentation had two clearly distinguished parts, each one dedicated to one of the requested tasks					
The length of each part is appropriate					
Overall quality of the descriptive part					
Overall quality of the evaluative part					
<b>Expression</b>					
The structure of the presentation is clear for the audience					
Good time management during the presentation					
The AV material is helpful					
The AV material is appropriate for the duration of the presentation					
Grammatical and orthographic accuracy of the The AV material					
<b>Contents</b>					
The presentation starts with a correct identification of the central thesis in the text					
In the descriptive part, there is a good selection of the information that is relevant for the argument. No irrelevant information is provided					
The descriptive part offers an accurate and complete description of the argument					
The author's points of view are presented with the student's own words and examples, and not by literal quotations or mechanical paraphrases					
The two parts of the essay are in function of each other					
The evaluative part makes reference to the argument and not only to the thesis or to other aspects of the author's philosophy					
The presentation contains an noticeable attempt at offering a personal argument					
The character of the evaluative part is more argumentative than declamatory					
The original arguments are developed enough rather than merely suggested					
The presentation and draft offer evidence of a good understanding of the text					
The presentation and draft offer evidence of a serious work with the text					
The presentation and draft offer evidence of a good team work					

## Appendix 5: The meaning of grades

**1-2:** your essay does not meet the lowest expectations and/or does not offer evidence of a serious work.

**3-4:** your essay offers evidence of a serious work, but does not meet our expectations. The essay does not do what the exercise requires to do, perhaps as a result of a poor understanding of the exercise instructions, or of an ineffective studying technique.

**5-6:** your essay meets our expectations. Perhaps it does not do all that is required to do, but there is a clear attempt in the right direction. However, it can be improved in many or almost every respect.

**7-8:** your essay meets our expectations, does what it is supposed to do, and out-stands in some respects.

**9:** your essay is very good and out-stands in many respects, although it could be improved in some others.

**10:** your essay meets all our expectations. There may be space for improvement, but the essay is good enough to deserve the highest grade.

**– In deciding your final grade, we will take into account your ability to improve on the basis of our feedback. Do not worry too much if the first grades you get are not so good. Lower grades at the beginning are compatible with getting the highest final grade.**

## Appendix 6: Arrangements for presentations

In order to arrange for the short presentations on Thursdays, we have to divide the class in groups of three (or in some cases four) people each, assign a text to present to each group, and schedule a day for the presentation. This is a difficult business in such a large class as yours, so we beg you patience and ask for your collaboration. A special effort is requested from some students enrolled in the morning course, who will be asked to come **one** Thursday in the afternoon hours (3 to 5 pm) to make their presentations there. We very much appreciate your collaboration on this, and take it into account.

We intend to proceed as follows:

-In the evening of Monday 2 (first day of class) we will publish an **initial proposal** in Aula Virtual. In this proposal, you will find yourself in a randomly created group of three or four people. The groups will be identified by the acronyms G1, G2, G3, etc.... Each group will be assigned a text and a date to make their presentation.

-From the evening of February 2 until midnight February 9 (i.e, during the first week of the course), we will consider all your **petitions for changes** to the initial the proposal. The following two types of change to the initial proposal are possible:

- *Individual member exchange between groups*: a member of a group may switch her place with a member of another group if the two persons agree with it. For instance, if in the initial proposal Tom is in group G1 and Sally is in group G6, Tom and Sally may change their places in their respective groups: Sally may become a member of G1 and Tom a member of G6. Of course, Sally and Tom should mutually agree on this.

- *Switching dates between groups*: a group as a whole may switch the date of presentation with another group, if all six people involved agree on it. For instance, in the initial proposal Sally, Molly and Dolly are the members of group G1 and thus have their presentation scheduled for Feb. 26, whereas Tom, Tim and Ted are the members of group G6 and thus have their presentation scheduled for April 23. In that case, if the six of them agree with it, Sally, Molly and Dolly may become members of G6 (and thus make their presentation on April 23) and Tom, Tim and Ted may become members of G1 (and thus make their presentation on Feb. 26).

-If you want to suggest one of these changes, you should **first agree on it with the classmates that would be affected by the change**. If everyone concerned agrees with the proposed change, the second step is letting us know **before midnight of Feb 9**. For this, please proceed as follows:

-Just one of the people concerned should write an **e-mail** to [pablo.rychter@uv.es](mailto:pablo.rychter@uv.es) explaining the proposed change.

-Please include in the cc field the addresses of the all the other people involved in the proposed change.

-Before asking for a change consider this: it is generally a good idea that your group-mates are not also your best friends in class. Experience shows that groups randomly created work better than groups created on the basis of friendship and personal affinity.

-After Feb 9 and during the second week of the course, we will publish the **final distribution** that results from these changes. After that, no changes will be allowed, unless there are very strong and justified reasons for that.

-Bear in mind that the initial schedule of the course may (and surely will) be modified as we go. As a result of this sort of modifications, your presentation may end up being at a **later** date than scheduled in the final distribution.

-Bear also in mind that it is not necessary that all members of the group talk or even be present the day of the presentation. What matter is that everyone contributes their share to the final result.

## Why Philosophy in English Studies?

Pablo Rychter – [pablo.rychter@uv.es](mailto:pablo.rychter@uv.es)

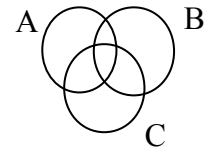
1. From time to time some students ask me why they have a mandatory course in philosophy in the English Studies program. Here you have an attempt to answer this question.

2. If you are here, that is probably because you are at least in one of the sets below:

**A:** people who want to be English language teachers or translators.

**B:** people who want to be become philologists, literary critics, scholars of English.

**C:** people who want to be good citizens (or good parents, friends, workmates, etc...).



I think taking an this introductory course in philosophy is good for each sort of people here.

3. **If you who are in set A:**

**A1:** one of the central tasks are doing in this course consists in **reading and trying to understand difficult texts in English**. These texts are difficult because of the topics they address, but also because their writers come from different backgrounds and historic periods. *These tasks help you improve mastery of English.*

**A2:** in order to teach or translate, you have to **understand how people think**. If you are translating what an English speaker says, what you are doing implies finding out what *thoughts* the speaker is putting into words, and how those thoughts are organized. If you are teaching English, you are to some extent teaching how to *think* in that language. But understanding the different ways people think and how thought is related to language is part of the business of philosophy. A good training in philosophy will help you being good translators and language teachers.

**A3:** see also **C1**, **C2** and **C3**.

4. **If you are in set B:**

**B1:** you will find it by yourself.

5. **If you are in set C:** philosophy provides you with skills that are relevant to many areas of life:

**C1:** Central to philosophy are the skills relevant to **argumentation**: arguing, identifying an argument, evaluating it, counter-arguing. This skills related to argumentations are used in almost every field of knowledge, and in our interaction with people in many areas of life. This is probably one reason why in some good universities (like Oxford) an introductory philosophy course is mandatory for any degree.

**C2:** philosophers are famous for their ability to **look at things from different perspectives**, some of which are perhaps difficult to attain without philosophical training. This ability is central for understanding reality and taking action on it. This is probably one reason why some companies hire philosophers for positions that involve management and problem solving.

**C3:** philosophers are famous for questioning what most people (including themselves) usually take for granted. This **ability to scrutinize and self-scrutinize common presuppositions** is necessary for personal and social change. This is probably one reason why some governments want to take philosophy out of the high school curricula.

## The nature of philosophy

Pablo Rychter – pablo.rychter@uv.es

**1. What is philosophy?** I propose to change this question for these others: what issues do philosophers deal with? How they do it?

**2. What issues do philosophers deal with?** On the one side, we have the ‘big philosophical issues’: the problem of knowledge and skepticism, the nature of mind-body interaction, the problem of personal identity, the problem of freedom and determinism, the problem of the existence of God, the nature of moral goodness, the nature of justice, etc. But there are many other less traditional problems that are also object of philosophical reflection: same sex marriage, the permissibility of abortion and euthanasia, the prohibition of bullfighting, vegetarianism, the division of labour in the family, the nature of scientific method, the nature of linguistic meaning, the nature of sexual orientation.

**3. How they do it?** By offering **reasons** for thinking that their views are correct, and by considering the reasons for alternative views. Philosophy is thus an **argumentative discipline**. Philosophers do not limit themselves to merely *state* their views or theories. They also try to *prove* that these views and theories are true. They offer **arguments** intended to convince their reader (specially those who initially disagree with them) that their views are true (or at least plausible, or reasonable). Thus, philosophers do not typically just say things like *my view is such and such*, but rather things like *my view is such and such because this and that*. Or else: *my view is that such and such, and these are the reasons for it: this and that*.

**4.** The typical way of showing that a view is true is by offering an **argument**. An argument is not just a single thesis or claim (neither is it a feeling, an intuition or a story), but rather a set of premises and conclusion. Consider the following example:

**(Introduce here the original text from Anselm, so that it is clear that the following is a reconstruction)**

**The ontological argument<sup>1</sup>** (Anselm of Canterbury, Descartes):  
 P1. We have an idea of God.  
 P2. The idea of God is the idea of a being such that nothing greater than it can be conceived.  
 P3. God either exists in the understanding alone or exists both in the understanding and in reality.  
 P4. If God existed in the understanding alone, a greater being could be conceived, namely, a being with all God’s qualities who exists both in the understanding and in reality.  
 P5. So God can’t exist in the understanding alone. (Per P2 i P4).  
 P6. So God exists in the understanding and in reality. (Per P3 i P5).  
 -----  
 C. God exists in reality (Per P6).

**5.** There are **two basic ways of in which an argument may fail to be good**: because at least one of its premises is not true (content), or because its logical structure is not truth preserving (form). Consider the following examples:

P1. Every Spanish citizen is a European citizen P2. Mariano Rajoy is European citizen ----- C. Mariano Rajoy is a Spanish citizen	P1. Every Spanish citizen is a European citizen P2. Barack Obama is not a Spanish citizen ----- C. Barack Obama is not a European citizen	P1. Every European citizen is a Spanish citizen P2. Barack Obama is a European citizen ----- C. Barack Obama is a Spanish citizen
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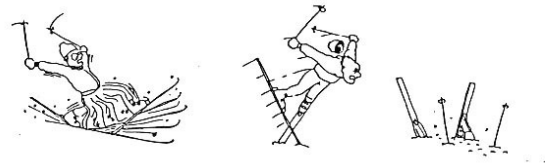
<sup>1</sup> Originally presented by Anselm of Canterbury, Descartes. This reconstruction of the argument is close to the one offered by B. Garrett in *What is that thing called Metaphysics* (Routledge, 2006), p. 4.

6. **Three questions** to do oneself when in front of a philosophy text (and many others sorts of texts): (i) What is the central claim (=thesis) of the text? That is to say, what is the claim that the author is trying to make us accept as true? (ii) What is the central argument offered for that claim? (iii) Is this argument good? That is to say: am I convinced? Why? Why not? Answering questions (i) i (ii) amounts to **reconstructing** the argument. Answering question (iii) amounts to offering an **assessment of it**.

7. Back to the initial question: **what is philosophy?** So far, it is clear that philosophy is an argumentative discipline. Is that enough as a **definition** of philosophy?

8. Another feature of philosophy is that it *seems* as if there are **no unanimously accepted theories** about many central issues. This does not seem to happen in science. What can we conclude from this?

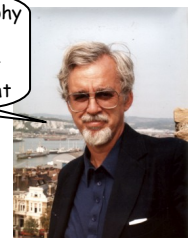
9. In fact, about many philosophical issues we do not even have something that could be called a *theory*. **Socrates** is famously said that the only thing he knew is that he knew nothing. **Saul Kripke**, a leading contemporary philosopher, says the following after refuting a well-know theory about language: “It really is a nice theory.



The only defect I think it has is probably common to all philosophical theories. It’s wrong. You may suspect me of proposing another theory in its place; but I hope not, because I’m sure it’s wrong too, if it’s a theory”. (*Naming and Necessity*, p. 64) What can we conclude from this?

10. Introductions to philosophy often start with (or consist in) a **history of philosophy**. In contrast, introductions to chemistry or maths seldom include a history of chemistry or maths. Why is this so?

Being part of the philosophy tradition doesn't just mean reading about what others have thought



11. In this course we are going to read some **old classic texts**. This is not something that people in science do. Why is this so?

12. In philosophy departments there are no labs. That must be because philosophers unlike scientists do not do **experiments**. Can we draw any conclusion from that?

THE ARMCHAIR PHARMACOLOGIST SPEAKS...  
I'm working on some conjectural neurotransmitters and hypothetical drug interactions in the treatment of a theoretical disease.



13. Philosophical problems does not seem to have **any practical consequences**. Why care about such abstract issues and extravagant possibilities, if life goes on unaffected by such issues?



14. What is a **philosopher**? How does a philosopher t **look like**? See: <http://looksphilosophical.tumblr.com>

## Guidelines for writing the short assignments<sup>1</sup>

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- 1. What do we expect you to do in these assignments?** (i) That you read a relatively demanding paper and ask yourself the following three questions: what is the thesis that the author intends to defend? What argument does she offer for this thesis? Do I find this argument convincing? (ii) That you write a short essay (about 650 words) on the basis of your answers to those questions. The question of the assignment will have the following form: *Reconstruct and assess the argument of author X in text Y.*
- 2. Why do we insist in this single type of exercise? Why is the format so rigid?** Like in other activities, having rigid norms allow us to develop specific abilities. The abilities that we expect you to develop in these assignments (to reconstruct and evaluate arguments) are central to philosophy and other disciplines (and useful in life in general).
- 3. Make sure that the essay is focused in answering the question you are being asked.** Avoid describing aspects of the paper (or of the author's general views) that are not *clearly relevant* for the argument that you have to reconstruct and assess. Feel free to **go straight to the point**. In this sort of essays, you are not expected to offer a general introduction to the author, the topic or historical context.
- 4. Make sure that the essay has two clearly distinguished parts:** a descriptive one, devoted to reconstructing the argument, and an evaluative one, devoted to offering your reasoned opinion about it. Ideally, these two parts should have approximately the same length, or the second be a bit longer than the first. A common mistake consists in occupying too much space with the reconstruction of the argument, leaving too little for the evaluation. The two parts should be **in function of each other**: what you reconstruct in the first part is what you will evaluate later on, and what you evaluate is what you have reconstructed before (and nothing other than that). When writing each part you have to keep an eye on the other.
- 5. In the descriptive part:** (a) make clear to the reader **what the author's central thesis is and what the central argument for it**. Do not just attribute a bunch of claims to the author. Make clear what their logical relation is. Remember: a thesis is a **concrete claim** (not a topic, or an argument, or something else). (b) Remember that this first part of the essay is about explaining what the author says. Keep your own views for the second part. (c) Present the thesis and argument of the author **in the most favorable way possible**: perhaps you can do even a better job than the author does in presenting them. The result will be more interesting and useful. (d) **Do not try to make a summary of the paper, or to explain its whole content**. You should instead focus only in the central thesis and briefly explain the central argument for it. The paper may contain lots of other ideas that you need not even mention.
- 6. In the evaluative part:** (a) you have to provide your assessment (=reasoned opinion) about the thesis that the author defends **but also, and specially, about her argument**. Needless to say, you do not have to give your opinion about the whole philosophy of the author, or about aspects of it that are not directly relevant to the argument under consideration. (b) Your opinion must be backed by **reasons**: you cannot just state your agreement or disagreement with the author, or just oppose your views to hers. If you disagree, you must counter-argue: you have to explain what's wrong with the argument described and why. If you agree, you may try to reinforce the argument by

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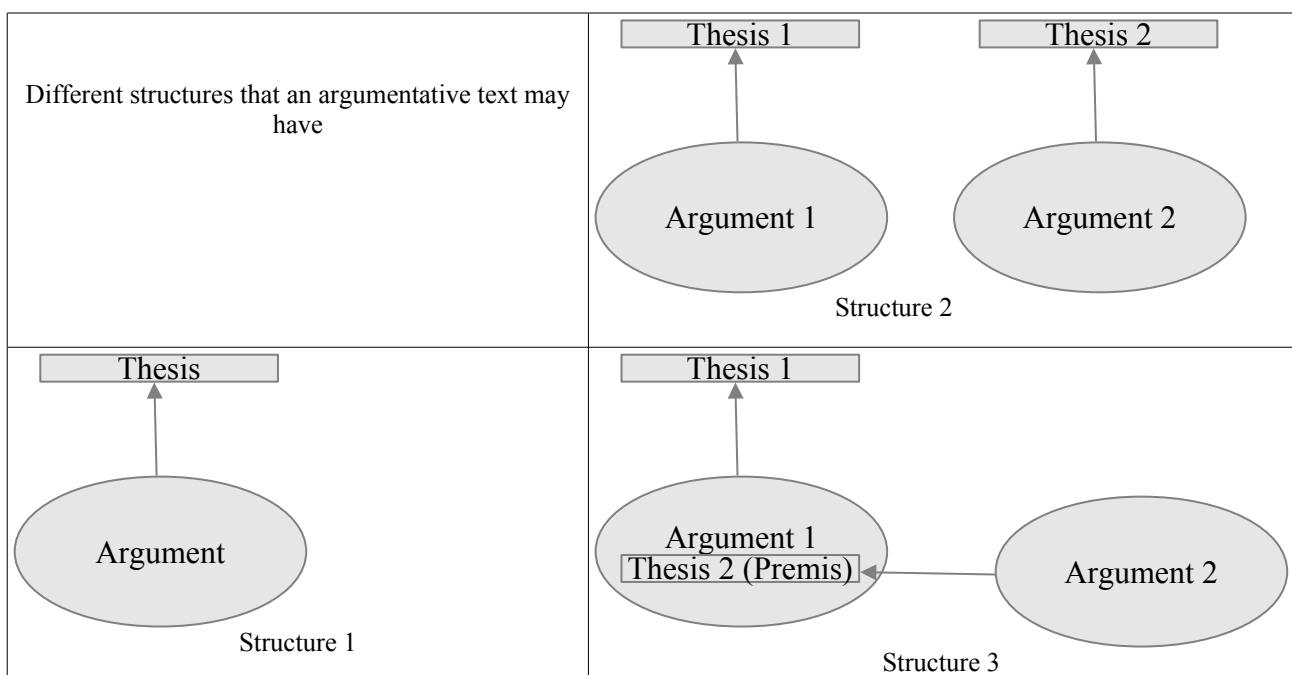
<sup>1</sup> Some of the ideas in this document are taken from Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper", available at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>. I strongly recommend reading Pryor's guidelines, taking into account that his advice is about writing philosophy papers *in general*, rather than on writing the specific sort of paper that we ask you to write in this course.



considering what someone else could object, and how you could answer. In short, this part of the essay must have an argumentative character and not a declamatory character. **(c) Focus your argument in just one critical point**, so that you can develop it as much as possible in the limited space you have. A common mistake here consists in dispersing efforts going in different directions. **Develop your argument as much as you can.** Do not assume that author will give up at your first criticism. Try to think how she would reply to you. It is a common mistake to merely suggest a criticism without really developing it.

**7. In both parts:** **(a) Avoid literal quotations.** If you think that a literal quotation is necessary, try to offer a paraphrase: a recount of what the author says using your own words. **(b) Try that your paraphrases are not too close to the original:** your explanation of what the author says should make evident that you understand it. Use your **own examples words**, rather than those of the author. Using the jargon of an author, period or tradition does not show understanding. It is not necessary to become Descartes or start talking like him in order to explain what Descartes says. **(c) Distinguish your own voice from the voice of the author you are discussing.** It must be absolutely clear to the reader when you are presenting your own views and when you are presenting the views of someone else. Do not relinquish the use of the first person when it is appropriate: 'I think that', 'in my opinion', 'if my argument is right...', etc. **(d) Give your readers a lot of explanations and guidance.** Make as if your readers were **stupid, lazy and mean (Pryor)**. It is necessary to explain them everything with a lot of detail, instead of just suggesting them the ideas. You can't presuppose that they know the topic you are discussing, nor that they will grasp your thoughts immediately. In particular, you must give them a lot of cues about the general **structure of your essay**, and about the relationship between the different paragraphs and sentences. Use plenty of **connecting expressions**: 'therefore', 'for this reason', 'for instance', 'however', 'I turn now to such and such', 'now that we have seen such and such..', etc. Try that every claim and every paragraph be properly connected. **(e) Define key terms:** if a philosophical term is central to the argument, you must briefly explain its meaning to your readers. Do not assume that they already know it. **(f) Use a formal but plain language**, avoiding very unusual or fancy words. And do not abuse using adjectives and adverbs!). **(g) Check grammar and spelling.**

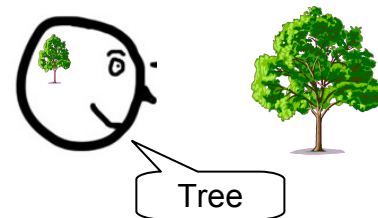
**8. Formal issues:** **(a)** the essays should be headed with your name, the phrase 'Pensamiento en la cultura anglófona, curs0 2014-15', and the result of the word counter. **(b)** Submit your essay at Campus Virtual, in the 'task' created for that purpose, before the corresponding deadline. No essay will be accepted after that. **(c)** Submit your essay in one of the following formats: pdf, doc, docx, txt. Please do not use the odt format.



Avoid doing “research” in the web: you would be failing to do the job, and risking to commit plagiarism.

## Skepticism and language: introduction

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### 1. The main questions.

- What is the **relation between mind, language and reality**?
- What is **knowledge**? Knowledge = Belief + Truth + Justification
- Do we have any knowledge? Most people say: of course we do. **Skeptics** say: no!

#### Some science fiction:

It all began that cold Wednesday night. I was sitting alone in my office watching the rain come down on the deserted streets outside, when the phone rang. It was Harry's wife, and she sounded terrified. They had been having a late supper alone in their apartment when suddenly the front door came crashing in and six hooded men burst into the room. The men were armed and they made Harry and Anne lay face down on the floor while they went through Harry's pockets. When they found his driver's license one of them carefully scrutinized Harry's face, comparing it with the official photograph and then muttered, "It's him all right." The leader of the intruders produced a hypodermic needle and injected Harry with something that made him lose consciousness almost immediately. For some reason they only tied and gagged Anne. Two of the men left the room and returned with a stretcher and white coats. They put Harry on the stretcher, donned the white coats, and trundled him out of the apartment, leaving Anne lying on the floor. She managed to squirm to the window in time to see them put Harry in an ambulance and drive away.

By the time she called me, Anne was coming apart at the seams. It had taken her several hours to get out of her bonds, and then she called the police. To her consternation, instead of uniformed officers, two plain clothed officials arrived and, without even looking over the scene, they proceeded to tell her that there was nothing they could do and if she knew what was good for her she would keep her mouth shut. If she raised a fuss they would put out the word that she was a psycho and she would never see her husband again.

Not knowing what else to do, Anne called me. She had had the presence of mind to note down the number of the ambulance, and I had no great difficulty tracing it to a private clinic at the outskirts of town. When I arrived at the clinic I was surprised to find it locked up like a fortress. There were guards at the gate and it was surrounded by a massive wall. My commando training stood me in good stead as I negotiated the 20 foot wall, avoided the barbed wire, and silenced the guard dogs on the other side. The ground floor windows were all barred, but I managed to wriggle up a drainpipe and get in through a second-story window that someone had left ajar. I found myself in a laboratory. Hearing muffled sounds next door I peeked through the keyhole and saw what appeared to be a complete operating room and a surgical team laboring over Harry. He was covered with a sheet from the neck down and they seemed to be connecting tubes and wires to him. I stifled a gasp when I realized that they had removed the top of Harry's skull. To my horror one of the surgeons reached into the open top of Harry's head and eased his brain out, placing it in a stainless steel bowl. The tubes and wires I had noted earlier were connected to the now disembodied brain. The surgeons carried the bloody mass carefully to some kind of tank and lowered it in. My first thought was that I had stumbled on a covey of futuristic Satanists who got their kicks from vivisection. (...)

My speculations were interrupted when the lights suddenly came on in my darkened hidey hole and I found myself looking up at the scariest group of medical men I had ever seen. They manhandled me into the next room and strapped me down on an operating table. I thought, "Uh, oh, I'm in for it now!" The doctors huddled at the other end of the room, but I couldn't turn my head far enough to see what they were doing. They were mumbling among themselves, probably deciding my fate. A door opened and I heard a woman's voice. The deferential manner assumed by the medical malpractitioners made it obvious who was boss. I strained to see this mysterious woman but she hovered just out of my view. Then, to my astonishment, she walked up and stood over me and I realized it was my secretary, Margot. (...)

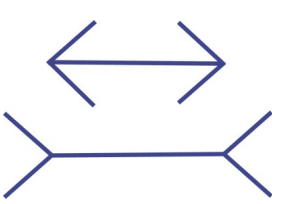

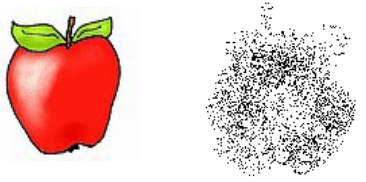


It was Margot, but it was a different Margot than I had ever seen. She was wallowing in the heady wine of authority as she bent over me. "Well Mike, you thought you were so smart, tracking Harry here to the clinic," she said. (...) She went on, "It was all a trick just to get you here. You saw what happened to Harry. He's not really dead, you know. These gentlemen are the premier neuroscientists in the world today. They have developed a surgical procedure whereby they remove the brain from the body but keep it alive in a vat of nutrient. The Food and Drug Administration wouldn't approve the procedure, but we'll show them. You see all the wires going to Harry's brain? They connect him up with a powerful computer. The computer monitors the output of his motor cortex and provides input to the sensory cortex in such a way that everything appears perfectly normal to Harry. It produces a fictitious mental life that merges perfectly into his past life so that he is unaware that anything has happened to him. He thinks he is shaving right now and getting ready to go to the office (...). But actually, he's just a brain in a vat."

"Once we have our procedure perfected we're going after the head of the Food and Drug Administration, but we needed some experimental subjects first. Harry was easy. In order to really test our computer program we need someone who leads a more interesting and varied life —someone like you!" I was starting to squirm. The

surgeons had drawn around me and were looking on with malevolent gleams in their eyes. The biggest brute, a man with a pockmarked face and one beady eye staring out from under his stringy black hair, was fondling a razor sharp scalpel in his still-bloody hands and looking like he could barely restrain his excitement. But Margot gazed down at me and murmured in that incredible voice, "I'll bet you think we're going to operate on you and remove your brain just like we removed Harry's, don't you? But you have nothing to worry about. We're not going to remove your brain. We already did—three months ago!"

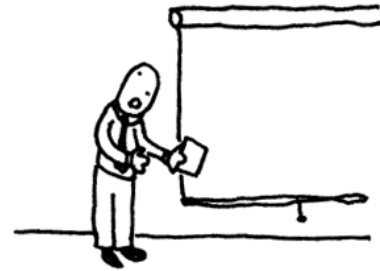
With that they let me go. I found my way back to my office in a daze. For some reason, I haven't told anybody about this. I can't make up my mind. I am racked by the suspicion that I am really a brain in a vat and all this I see around me is just a figment of the computer. After all, how could I tell? If the computer program really works, no matter what I do, everything will seem normal. Maybe nothing I see is real. It's driving me crazy. I've considered checking into that clinic voluntarily and asking them to remove my brain just so that I can be sure. Frankly, I don't know if even that would put my worries to rest. (J. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, second edition, p. 4)

## 2. What are the reasons for thinking that there might be a gap between representation and reality?

<p><b>Illusions</b></p> 	<p><b>Other sensory systems</b></p>  <p>?</p>	<p><b>New scientific picture</b></p> 
<p><b>Brains in a Vat</b></p> 	<p><b>Similar stories:</b>  <b>Descartes' Evil Daemon and The Matrix</b></p> 	
<p><b>Descartes Evil Deaemon (<i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>, I):</b></p> <p>I will suppose, then, not that there is a supremely good God who is the source of all truth, but that there is an evil demon, supremely powerful and cunning, who works as hard as he can to deceive me. I will say that sky, air, earth, color, shape, sound, and other external things are just dreamed illusions which the demon uses to ensnare my judgment. I will regard myself as not having hands, eyes, flesh, blood, and senses—but as having the false belief that I have all these things. I will obstinately concentrate on this</p>	<p><b>3. An argument for <u>skepticism</u> (the view that nobody knows anything)</b></p> <p>P1: I do not know that I am not a brain in a vat  P2: If I do not know that I am not a brain in a vat, then I do not know that I have a hand.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>C: I do not know that I have a hand  ...But there is nothing special about my hand.... So I do not know anything!!</p>	

## Guidelines for preparing the short presentations

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**I. What are you, as a group, expected to do in these presentations?** In order to answer this question, let's focus on **what your audience should learn** from the presentation. Your audience should learn what the main argument in the text your group was assigned is, and what your group thinks about this argument. The group should therefore show the audience their particular **reconstruction** of the argument, and their particular **assessment** of it.

and now, let's dim the lights, so i can show you computer slides and read the exact text of the slides to you

### II. Steps leading to a good presentation:

- (1) **Read** the text assigned to your group, trying to identify the main argument in it. (You already know what an argument is –if not, revise the materials discussed at class). In order to really understand this text it highly advisable to read the whole chapter from which the text is taken.
- (2) **Get in touch** with your group-mates. You have their e-mail address in the list I made available, and in Aula Virtual. Arrange for an initial meeting.
- (3) **Discuss** the argument with your group-mates. This discussion should be aimed at **reconstructing** and **assessing** the main argument in the text. (You already know what it takes to reconstruct and assess an argument –if not, revise the materials discussed at class). **A good discussion within the group is essential for a good presentation. You are expected to present the views that you hold as a group (even if there are disagreements among the group). The presentation should not be the sum of three/four individual and independent presentations.**
- (4) Once the group agrees on how to reconstruct and assess the argument, they should put all that in writing. That is to say, the group should **write a draft** on which the presentation will be based. This draft should have exactly the same characteristics than the short essays you will submit individually for other topics in the course. The only difference is that this draft is co-authored, and that it will be the base of an oral presentation. In order to write a good draft, follow the instructions in the *Guidelines for writing short essays* available in Aula Virtual. Submit this draft in Aula Virtual at least 24 hs before your presentation. **Important: the presentation should be based in the draft. This means that the central ideas in the presentation should be in the draft, but the presentation can contain more material (explanations, examples, etc) not mentioned in the draft.**
- (5) Decide, as a group, how you will convey the ideas in the draft to your audience in 20 minutes. An easy solution would be to read your draft aloud. Easy, but ineffective. Your audience will probably lose track soon, and become bored. Many other options are available: you can try to explain the ideas without reading, use the blackboard, bring a handout, use a power point presentation, etc. Think about which of these methods will be more effective to keep the attention of your audience, and to make them really understand the argument and your evaluation of it. **Try to be creative, original, and entertaining (it is unlikely that your audience will understand the topic if they get bored).**
- (6) **Rehearse** the presentation at least once, in order to be sure that you can do it in 20 minutes.
- (7) **As a group (???)**, write a **short report** (400 words maximum) explaining how you worked as a

group. You can explain here how you divided the work, whether and when you met, etc. You can also report any discrepancies, arguments, good and bad experiences that in your view affected the results positively or negatively. You can submit this report either before or in the next two days after the presentation.

### **III. The day of the presentation**

-The presentation will take only 20 minutes, after which we will open a short period (10 minutes) for questions from the audience. The group should decide who will be in charge of presenting and who will be in charge of answering the questions. Many different choices about this are equally legitimate. You should try to exploit each one's abilities in the benefit of the group.

-Each Thursday three different groups will make their presentations. This will take one hour and a half. In the remaining 30 minutes of class, everyone will be invited to answer a short query about the presentations they have attended.

### **IV. Evaluation**

-I will evaluate your work using the grill that is available as appendix 4 of the syllabus, and give it a grade that should be interpreted according to explanations available as appendix 5 of the syllabus.

-For the purposes of the evaluation, I will consider the presentation itself (which is the final result of your work), but also your draft and your report.

-In general, I will give all the members of the group the same grade, unless the report, presentation and draft offer clear evidence of an uneven division of labour within the group.

### **V. Important tips**

-One of my criteria of evaluation is that "the author's points of view are presented with the student's own words and examples". This is specially important for this topic 5. I will give special positive consideration to any effort to relate the arguments discussed to real-life examples taken from your own social context. Discussing such examples may be useful both for reconstructing and evaluating the author's argument.

-The text assigned to each group will be very short. You have to focus your presentation on the main argument in *that* text. But in order to get that right, it may be necessary in some cases to have a look at the larger context: the whole chapter, or other parts of the book. In some cases, it may also be a good idea to have a look at some of the texts cited or discussed by the author. Take advantage of the fact that you are a group: perhaps these sort of tasks, if necessary, can be delegated in some and not all members.

-In some cases, it may be hard to decide what the central argument of the text is. In many of these texts, what J. Saul (the author) does is to *reconstruct* and *assess* an argument herself. That is to say, in many cases she is reconstructing argument *X* from author *Y*, in order to offer her own assessment *Z* of *X*. In these cases, the main argument of the text could be taken to be something like "argument *X* is unsound, because *Z*". Your job would then be to reconstruct and evaluate this last argument of Saul. But you may also choose to take *X* as the central argument, and offer a reconstruction and evaluation of it different from Saul's own. Although, I recommend to choose always the first option, the second option is also available. It is your choice as a group.

-Of course, everything (draft, report, and presentation) should be in English.

### **VI. Instructions for the submission of drafts and reports.**

-Submit your draft at least 24 hours before the presentation, and the report no later than Sunday after your presentation.

-Submissions should be done through Aula Virtual as an answer to the corresponding 'tasks'. Just ONE member of each group should make the submission on behalf of the group.

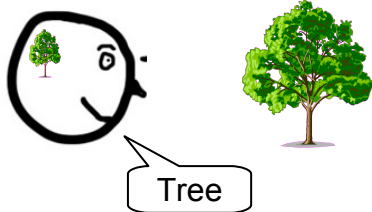
-The first page of each document should contain the following information: complete names of each member of the group, word-count result and the phrase “Philosophical thought in the English speaking countries, academic year 2014-15”.

-Please submit your materials in one of the following formats: .doc, .docx, .txt, .pdf. Please do not use .odt.

**Focus in the topic!!!**

## Language and Thought

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### 1. The general context of the problem

- Three elements in play: mind, language, and reality.
- Naïve realism vs. idea that there is a gap between representation and reality.
- Reasons for thinking that there might be such a gap: (a) illusions, (b) scientific developments, (c) different perspectives on reality, (d) the dream argument and the evil daemon argument.

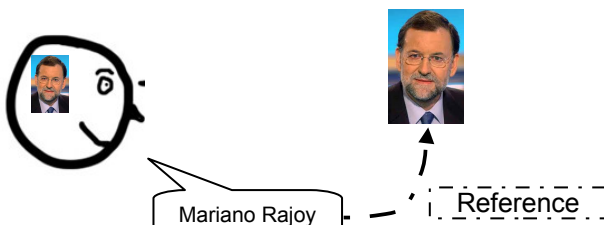
### 2. The skeptical problem

(P1) I do not know that I am not a brain in a vat.

(P2) If I do not know that I am not a brain in a vat, I do not know that I have a hand.

Therefore, (C) I do not know that I have a hand.

### 3. The notion of reference in the philosophy of language

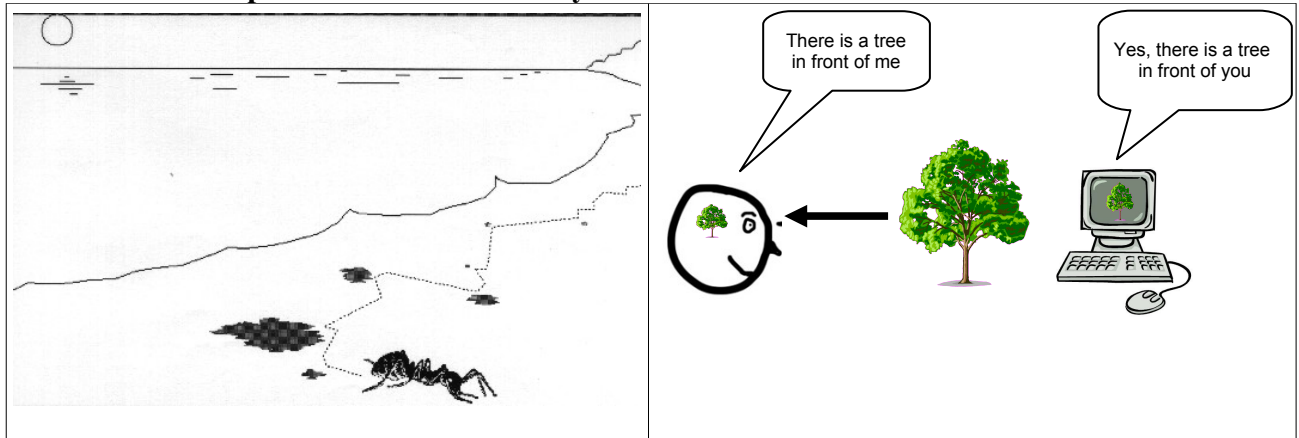


*What makes a word have reference?* In other words: in virtue of which facts does a word represent and object? This is the **problem of intentionality** as it arises for *linguistic* representation. The problem arises also, and more directly, for mental representation (cf. Putnam, p. 16)

-**Causal theory causal of reference:** the word ‘Rajoy’ refers to Rajoy in virtue of a long and complex causal chain that ends up in an initial baptism.

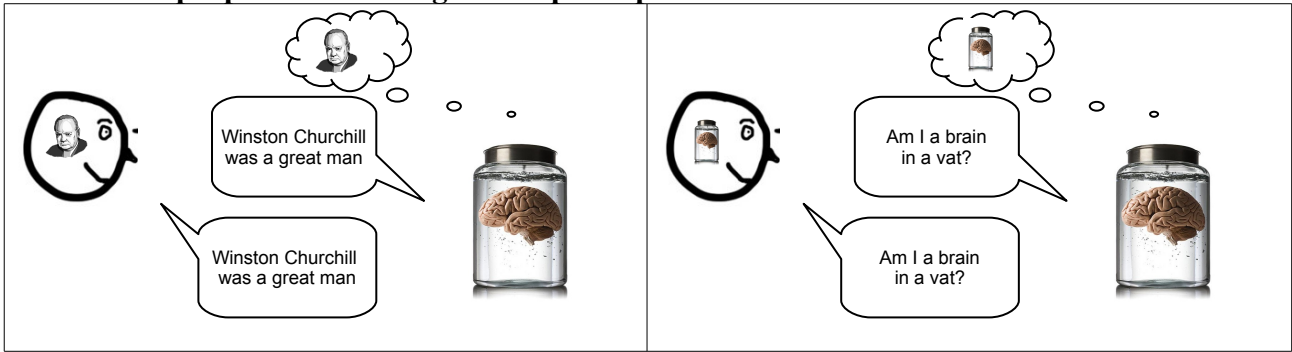
-**“Magical” theories of reference:** the word ‘Rajoy’ refers to Rajoy because it is associated to an idea which represents Rajoy in virtue of its intrinsic features (*resemblance*).

### 4. Putnam on the problem of intentionality





## 5. Putnam's proposal for solving the skeptical problem



-Putnam (as I understand him): the description of the skeptical scenario is coherent (it is logically possible that we are brains in a vat, and it also seems physically possible). What is not coherent is that we are brains in a vat and we think or say we are brains in a vat (or that we deny it, doubt it, etc.). ***If we were brains in a vat, we could not say or think we are brains in a vat.***

-**Argument:** (P1) in order to say or think that we are brains in a vat, it is necessary to have an appropriate causal connection with brains and vats. But (P2) brains in a vat do not have such causal connection. Therefore, (C) brains in a vat cannot say or think they are brains in a vat.


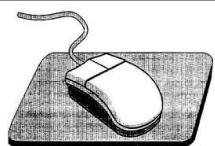
-**In favor of (P1):** examples intending to show that magical theories of reference are false (the ant, the planet of molds, the hypnotized person who seems to speak Japanese, the intelligent computers, etc): two qualitative identical representations may fail to represent the same. In order for a representation to represent, an appropriate causal chain is needed. This causal chain may involve other subjects but must end up in the represented thing. In order for the representation 'vat' to represent a vat, there must be an appropriate causal connection with a vat – which does not obtain in the case of the brains in a vat.

## 6. A different way of understanding Putnam's argument:

- P1: Either I am a brain in a vat, or I am not a brain in a vat
- P2: If I am not a brain in a vat, then my claim 'I am a brain in a vat' is false
- P3: If I am a brain in a vat, then my claim 'I am a brain in a vat' is false (from Causal Theory of Reference)
- P4: My claim 'I am a brain in a vat' is false (from P1, P2, P3)
- P5: My claim 'I am not a brain in a vat' is false (from P4)
- ...
- C: I am not a brain in a vat (from P5)

According to this interpretation, Putnam's intended conclusion is 'we are not brains in a vat' and not only 'if we were brains in a vat, we could not say it or think it'. This interpretation suits well many of the things that Putnam says in the text. But compare:

- P1: Either we are in A or in B
- P2: If we are in A, then 'there is no mouse' is false
- P3: If we are in B, then 'there is no mouse' is false
- P4: 'There is no mouse' is false (from P1, P2 and P3)
- P5: 'There is a mouse' is true (from P4)
- ...
- C: There is a small rodent (from P5)

A	B
	

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**1. Some questions:** What is a person? Persons change through time. What sort of changes can they survive? How come that, in spite all changes that I suffered, I am the same person as the one that used to play in the kindergarden many years ago? "I am not the same person I used to be" Can this claim be literally true, and not just loose talk? What is involved in our **concept** of a person?

**2. Relevance of the problem:** in addition of its intrinsic interests, the problem is connected to issues of *moral responsibility*. It is also related with issues like the permissibility of abortion and euthanasia. Consider the following dialogue:

ANTI: -Every person has an absolute right to life. A person comes to existence when human egg and a sperm come together. So abortion is not permissible, since it violates an absolute right of persons.

PRO: -I disagree. What comes to existence when human sperm and egg get together is perhaps a *human being*, but not a *person*. So even if every person has an absolute right to life, it does not follow that abortion is impermissible.

Independently of what we think about the issue at stake, it is clear that it bears a lot on the question of what a person is.

**3. What is a criterion of personal identity?** (a) It involves de notion of **numerical identity**, not qualitative identity; (b) It has the following form: necessarily, a person A at time  $t_1$  is identical with person B at time  $t_2$  if and only if *blah blah*. (c) it is a **metaphysical** criterion, not an epistemological one.



**4. The ship of Theseus:** a puzzle case that shows how we could have two different rival criteria for the identity of *artifacts* through time, i.e. two rival conceptions about what it is to be a ship (or bike, or watch,...)

**5. Three initial views about personal identity:** (1) **Organicism:** person A in  $t_1$  = person B in  $t_2$  if and only if A and B have the same body. A person is fundamentally a *living organism* of a particular kind; (2) **Animism:** person A in  $t_1$  = person B in  $t_2$  if and only if A and B have the same immaterial soul (or "immaterial substance", or "finite intelligence"). A person is fundamentally an *immaterial soul*; (3) **The Lockean view:** person A in  $t_1$  = person B in  $t_2$  if and only if B is able to remember the experiences of A. A person is fundamentally a *course of consciousness*. On this view, the key to personal identity is memory and consciousness. I am the same person as the little baby because there is a continued course of consciousness that goes from one to the other. My person reaches as far as my capacity to remember, as far as I am conscious of. **Arguments for or against these views?**

**6. Initial objection to Locke's theory. Two lines of reply:** (i) that of Locke himself; (ii) that of contemporary philosophers who follow the spirit of Locke's theory: **Theory of psychological continuity:** necessarily, person A in  $t_1$  = person B in  $t_2$  if and only if B is **psychologically continuous** with A. (B is psychologically continuous with A if and only if the mental states of A are suitably *caused* by those of B).

**7. Classical problems for Locke's theory:** problems with transitivity (Reid), "identity" is ambiguous (Butler), problems of circularity (Butler, Shoemaker), the branching (or reduplication) problem.

**8. The brave officer case** (Thomas Reid): "Suppose a brave officer to have been flogged when a boy at school for robbing an orchard, to have taken a standard from the enemy in his first campaign, and to have been made a general in advanced life; suppose, also, which must be admitted to be possible, that, when he took the standard, he was conscious of his having been flogged at school, and that, when made a general, he was conscious of his taking the standard, but had absolutely lost the consciousness of his flogging. These things being supposed, it follows, from Mr. Locke's doctrine, that he who was flogged at school is the same person who took the standard, and that he who took the standard is the same person who was made a general. Whence it follows, if there be any truth in logic, that the general is the same person with him who was flogged at school. But the general's consciousness does not reach so far back as his flogging; therefore, according to Mr. Locke's doctrine, he is not the person who was flogged. Therefore the general is, and at the same time is not, the same person with him who was flogged at school". *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785).

**9. Locke's chapter 27:** pay attention to the following points: (a) the main fragments in which Locke introduces his own view on personal identity (§9, §16); (b) his views about the identity of other kinds of objects: masses of matter, vegetables, animals, artifacts; (c) the distinction between man and persona (§6,

§7, §8, §15, §23); (d) what he says as a reply to the objection based in amnesia cases (§20); (e) the example of the little finger (§17); (f) the relations between personal identity and moral responsibility (§19, §22); (g) the rejection of the idea that personal identity is determined by immaterial substance (§10-§15, specially §14); (h) Locke's use of the technique of thought experiments (§6, §8, §14).

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10. Before addressing the issue of *personal* identity, Locke discusses the identity of other sorts of things. This is what he says about the **identity of "masses of matter"**, like a rock, or a quantity of sand, or water: "... if two or more atoms be joined together into the same mass, every one of those atoms will be the same (...) and whilst they exist united together, the mass, consisting of the same atoms, must be the same mass, or the same body, let the parts be ever so differently jumbled. But if one of these atoms be taken away, or one new one added, it is no longer the same mass or the same body". But this is not true about of **vegetables and animals**: "In the state of living creatures, their identity depends not on a mass of the same particles, but on something else. For in them the variation of great parcels of matter alters not the identity: an oak growing from a plant to a great tree, and then lopped, is still the same oak; and a colt grown up to a horse, sometimes fat, sometimes lean, is all the while the same horse: though, in both these cases, there may be a manifest change of the parts; so that truly they are not either of them the same masses of matter, though they be truly one of them the same oak, and the other the same horse (3)". But, what is the difference then?: "We must therefore consider wherein an oak differs from a mass of matter, and that seems to me to be in this, that the one is only the cohesion of particles of matter any how united, the other such a disposition of them as constitutes the parts of an oak; and such an organization of those parts as is fit to receive and distribute nourishment, so as to continue and frame the wood, bark, and leaves, &c., of an oak, in which consists the vegetable life. That being then one plant which has such an organization of parts in one coherent body, partaking of one common life, it continues to be the same plant as long as it partakes of the same life, though that life be communicated to new particles of matter vitally united to the living plant, in a like continued organization conformable to that sort of plants (4)." He gives the same sort of explanation about the **identity of artifacts**. And in section 6, he extends it also to **man** -by which he means *human animal* and not yet *person*.

11. In section 8, Locke rejects the definition of man as *rational animal*, using two interesting examples.

12. In section 9, Locke offers his view on **personal identity**: "[A person is] a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking (...) In this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being; and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done".

13. As we mentioned above, Locke is well aware that his view is initially open to objections having to do with amnesia cases: "Suppose I wholly lose the memory of some parts of my life, beyond a possibility of retrieving them, so that perhaps I shall never be conscious of them again; yet am I not the same person that did those actions, had those thoughts that I once was conscious of, though I have now forgot them? (20)". But he offers a reply to such worries: "To which I answer, that we must here take notice what the word I is applied to; which, in this case, is the man only. And the same man being presumed to be the same person, I is easily here supposed to stand also for the same person. (20)".

14. In section 15, Locke considers cases of body-swap. His example is that of the prince and the cobbler: "For should the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the prince's past life, enter and inform the body of a cobbler, as soon as deserted by his own soul, every one sees he would be the same person with the prince, accountable only for the prince's actions: but who would say it was the same man?". Section 17 contains another startling case: "Upon separation of this little finger, should this consciousness go along with the little finger, and leave the rest of the body, it is evident the little finger would be the person, the same person; and self then would have nothing to do with the rest of the body.". The two cases help us appreciate and make it clear what the content of the theory is: person is determined by continuity of consciousness, man is determined by continuity of body.

15. The issue of personal identity is related to moral responsibility. Locke is well aware of it. Suppose that John committed a crime and then had an accident that made him lost all memory of his past life. According to Locke John<sub>2</sub>, after the accident, is a different person from John<sub>1</sub>, before the accident. Is it fair to punish John<sub>2</sub> for what John<sub>1</sub> did?: "to punish Socrates waking for what sleeping Socrates thought, and waking Socrates was never conscious of, would be no more of right, than to punish one twin for what his brother-twin did, whereof he knew nothing, because their outsides were so like, that they could not be distinguished; for such twins have been seen (20)". However, sometimes we have to be unfair and punish a person for what someone else did. Why?: "But is not a man drunk and sober the same person? why else is he punished for the fact he commits when drunk, though he be never afterwards conscious of it? (...) Human laws punish both, with a justice suitable to their way of knowledge;— because, in these cases, they cannot distinguish certainly what is real, what counterfeit: and so the ignorance in drunkenness or sleep is not admitted as a plea. For, though punishment be annexed to personality, and personality to consciousness, and the drunkard perhaps be not conscious of what he did, yet human judicatures justly punish him; because the fact is proved against him, but want of consciousness cannot be proved for him. But in the Great Day, wherein the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, it may be reasonable to think, no one shall be made to answer for what he knows nothing of, but shall receive his doom, his conscience accusing or excusing him. (22)".

## The free will problem

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1. The **free will problem** is that we have good reasons for thinking that the following two theses are true, and yet they seem to be incompatible with each other:

(F) My decision to have a croissant for breakfast today free. I had a croissant because I freely decided so. I could have had something else, or nothing at all. More generally: at least sometimes, there are different courses of action available to me and I am free to choose one or the other.

(D) My act of having a croissant for breakfast today was *determined* last night. I really could not have done otherwise than I did. More generally: each of my actions is determined by factors over which I have *no control*. Even more generally: every future fact is completely determined by past and present facts.

2. The truth of (F) seems obvious. It is plain common sense, and it is how things look to us. The truth of (D) is not so obvious, but as we will see there are several arguments for it.

3. Beware: determinism is a **metaphysical** thesis, not an **epistemological** one.

**4. Freedom, moral responsibility, blame and merit.** It looks as if a person  $p$  is morally responsible for an action  $a$  **only if** she has **freely** chosen to do  $a$  (rather than  $b$ ,  $c$ ,... etc.). If  $a$  is the only thing that  $p$  could do in her circumstances (that is, if  $p$  is not free not to do  $a$ ), then we do not regard  $p$  as morally responsible for  $a$  or for the consequences of  $a$ . So we do not think  $p$  should be **punished** or **rewarded** for doing  $a$ .



5. Other attitudes and ordinary ways of looking at things that seem to presuppose the truth of (F): resentment, shame, worries about the future, expectations. If (F) were not truth, it seems that all these attitudes would be unjustified.



**6. Arguments for D:** (i) the wishful thinking “argument”; (ii) The argument from God's omniscience: God exist since the beginning of time and He is omniscient. That is to say, He knows everything. If God knows everything, He knew already yesterday (and long before that) that today I was going to have a croissant for breakfast. It follows that yesterday it was already a fact that I was having a croissant for breakfast today. (Given that if someone *knows* that  $p$ , then it is a fact that  $p$ ). So, I couldn't do otherwise than having a croissant for breakfast today. . (iii) **The logical argument:** it is a logical truth that every proposition  $p$  is either true or false that. So in particular, either it is true that I will have a croissant for breakfast tomorrow or it is false. If it is true, I cannot do otherwise than having a croissant. If it is false, I cannot do otherwise than *not* having a croissant. In any of the two cases, my decision will be already determined; (iv) **The argument from social and psychological pressures;** (v) **The argument from science:** Human beings are (very complex) material things. Material things move according to **deterministic laws of nature**. The future movements of a material thing are determined by its present states and the deterministic laws of nature. Therefore, all my future movements (like my having a croissant for breakfast) are already determined by causal factors that I cannot control.

7. Ted Sider about Hitler's decision to invade Poland (as an example about how this last argument works): Any action or decision involves the motion of sub-atomic particles in one's body and brain. These sub-atomic particles move according to the laws of physics. Physics lets us calculate the future positions of particles from information about (i) the previous states of the particles, and (ii) the forces acting on the particles. So, in principle, one could have examined the sub-atomic particles one hundred years before the invasion of Poland, calculated exactly how those particles would be moving one hundred years later, and thereby calculated that Hitler would invade Poland. Such calculations are far too difficult to ever complete in practice, but that doesn't matter. Whether or not anyone could have completed the calculations, the particles were there, before Hitler's birth, and the fact that they were there, and arranged in the way that they were, made it inevitable that Hitler would invade Poland. [...] we have found a cause for Hitler's invasion that already existed before Hitler was born. And the existence of such a cause seems to imply that Hitler's invasion of Poland was not a free action. (Excerpt from *Riddles of Existence. A guided tour of metaphysics*).

8. A game that may help us understand this sort of argument: <http://psych.hanover.edu/JavaTest/Play/Life.html>

9. What to do? There seem to be only **three options**: either reject (F), or reject (D), or prove that contrary to appearances (F) and (D) are not incompatible. **Hard determinists** say that (D) is true and contrary to appearances (F) is false -a myth like so many others we abandoned. **Libertarianists** say that (F) is true and (D) is false. All the arguments for (D) can be resisted. Finally, **compatibilists** say: both (F) and (D) are true but contrary to appearances they are not incompatible. If we think harder about what "freedom" means, we will conclude that freedom is compatible with determinism.



Men do not cry



Free actions are not causally determined

10. Here you have two **arguments in favor of incompatibilism**. In this version, the arguments take the truth of determinism as a premise and draw the conclusion that we are not free, but it is possible to build related arguments for the conclusion that determinism is false taking as a premise the thesis that we are free. The **AP argument (of alternative possibilities)**: (P1) One is free only if at least sometimes one could do otherwise (Freedom requires that we have alternative possibilities of action); (P2) If determinism is truth, nobody can ever do otherwise (P3) Determinism is true; (C) Nobody is free. The **Source argument**: (P1) One is free only if at least sometimes one is the *ultimate source* of their actions, rather than a mere means for them; (P2) If determinism is true, nobody is ever the ultimate source of their actions; (P3) If determinism is true; (C) Nobody is free.