How to start debating in the philosophy classroom

Floris Velema (ed.)  ISVW Uitgevers
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### APPENDIX II: PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE MOTIONS

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Preface
Floris Velema

In the days of the Athenian *polis*, public speaking, debate and philosophy were the cornerstones of democratic life. Philosophy had the form of a dialogue between people with contrasting views, and philosophers taught the art of persuasion to citizens attending the *ekklēsia*—the principal assembly of the democracy of ancient Athens. In contemporary secondary schools however, debate clubs and philosophy classrooms have become separate worlds that, regrettably, seldom interfere. This state of affairs leads to a waste of knowledge and skills, and lowers the potential impact that debating skills and philosophical thinking could have on strengthening democracy.

The Erasmus+ project with the title *A Debate And Philosophy Typology* (ADAPT), coordinated by Natascha Kienstra from Tilburg University, aims at overcoming the divide between debate clubs and philosophy classrooms by developing innovative educational materials and researching their effectivity.1 This book is one of the “intellectual outputs” of the ADAPT project, which is developed by a consortium of four secondary schools (Wolfert Bilingual School, Rotterdam; Gimnazija Ledina, Ljubljana; Privatna klasicna gimnazija, Zagreb; ITE Enrico Tosi, Busto Arsizio), two universities (Tilburg University and Erasmus University Rotterdam), and three associations (Za in Proti, Slovenia; Hrvatsko Debatno Drustvo, Croatia; The Noisy Classroom, UK).

In this book, we present a set of key concepts that offer philosophy teachers a clear and comprehensive approach to debating.2 These concepts are visualized with the following set of symbols:

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1  A Debate And Philosophy Typology (ADAPT). Programme: Erasmus+; Key Action: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices; Action Type: Strategic Partnerships for school education; Start: 01-09-2019; End: 31-08-2022; Project Reference: 2019-1-NL01-KA201-060287.

2  See Appendix I for a short description of each concept.
We have chosen to link debate concepts to logic symbols for three reasons. Firstly, philosophy teachers might already be familiar with these symbols, making their implementation intuitive and user-friendly. Secondly, the symbols consist of simple strokes, which lends them to be used in note-taking once they are internalized by teachers and their students. Thirdly, the original meaning of the logic symbols is often very close to their meaning in our proposed debate methodology. For example, the symbols for *definition*, *model*, and *contradiction* have the same meaning in logic as they do here. Other concepts are more loosely affiliated: the universal quantifier is used to depict *context*, in the sense it deals with “all” concrete characterizations of the subject matter of the debate motion. The vertical bar can express the
The notion “given” and is connected in that way to assumption. The double vertical bar, or disjunction, is used to for clash, as either the Proposition “or” the Opposition wins a clash. At the same time, the double bar visualizes a “stand-off” between (single bar) assumptions, which is often the underlying reason for a clash.

Other logic symbols explain the meaning of the debate concept: a remark is relevant if it is an “element” of a valid argumentation; the impact deals with the “possible” implications of the debate motion; an illustration is a description of an “existing” situation that elucidates the statement (the existential quantifier). With exclusivity one ensures that the argument cannot be put forward by both sides of the debate (an exclusive disjunction), while in rebuilding one “adds” to the debate case (a conjunction). A refutation shows how something is “not” the case, and an omission can be seen as something left empty (the empty set).

For the principled and practical argument, we have used the symbols for “therefore” and “because.” The turnstile for statement can here be interpreted as “I know to be true that.” For analysis, we have chosen the symbol for material implication while avoiding the use of the arrow, as the arrow might already be used frequently in note-taking for various, less specific, purposes.

The symbols described above have been materialized into a collection of 3D-printed stamps, which we have given the name Debaticons. The 3D models for these stamps can be downloaded from the website https://debaticons.com, along with a set of worksheets that contain debate exercises with the symbols and stamps. The 3D-printed stamps can also be used on their own while (a) brainstorming and preparing for a debate, (b) taking notes during a debate, or (c) evaluating these notes within a jury.

This book consists of seven chapters. In chapter 1, Han van Ruler describes the intimate historical relationship between debate and philosophy—from the earliest stages of Greek philosophy to the present day. In chapter 2, Tomislav Reškovac describes various approaches to teaching philosophy, based on a comparison between the curricula of Croatia, Italy, The Netherlands, and Slovenia. Floris Velema argues in chapter 3 that debate as a classroom activity is congruent with each of the approaches to teaching philosophy described in the
previous chapter. Then, Debbie Newman describes various formats and exercises to start debating in the philosophy classroom in chapter 4. In chapter 5, Gijs van Oenen elaborates on central concepts in political philosophy, in order to help students and teachers to effectively approach debate motions that address social issues. Chapter 6, written by Devin van den Berg, offers an in-depth tutorial on argumentation and engagement with the arguments of the opposing debate team. Miha Andrič wraps up our collective endeavor in chapter 7, with an explanation of how various conceptions of freedom can be implemented in a debate context.

We hope that our new methodology teaches students how to apply philosophical concepts to question the status quo, and to discuss social issues in a respectful way with their peers. As such, we hope that this book will contribute to the development of high school students into engaged, critical and active citizens, and that you, as a teacher, will find in it an effective tool to facilitate this process.
Chapter 1

Debate and Philosophy in History

Han van Ruler

Van Ruler, Han (2022). Debate and philosophy in history. In Floris Velema (ed.), *Debate / Philosophy: How to start debating in the philosophy classroom* (pp. 13-42). Leusden: ISVW Uitgevers
Chapter 1
Debate and Philosophy in History
Han van Ruler

Despite a likelihood for mutual distrust, the art of debate and the discipline of philosophy share important characteristics. Debaters and philosophers may not form a single species, but in practice they end up dealing similarly with similar hurdles. To illustrate this point, the present chapter will take the development of argumentative strategies in Western philosophy as its guiding thread, offering a chronology of the manifold ways in which philosophical and debating techniques have conflicted, as well as mutually enriched each other in the past. Yet far from simply recounting the relationship between philosophy and debate as a series of confrontations and collaborations, our aim will be to understand the links between the two practices. Indeed, on the basis of the series of historical examples that follow, I hope to indicate that philosophy and debate have much more in common than might at first be expected, and are actually closely related. On the basis of their role and function in human communication, both the practice of debate and the practice of philosophy share important points of agreement where it comes to the uncovering of truth.

What may be remarked in advance, is that both debate and philosophy link up with social questions and collective ideals. Obviously, the freedom to debate and to develop a sense of public self-awareness is very much dependent on historical circumstance and political conditions. Today, people who live in more or less “open” societies tend to regard as self-evident the notion that everyone may have his or her stake in an open discussion concerning matters of morals, politics, and even religion. At the same time, we accept that in certain debates, freedom has its limits. Specific contexts may lend themselves to the authority of specialists, for instance, so that not just anyone may contribute to the discussion of some thesis. At times, we may also become aware that rules, norms and taboos about what can or cannot be said may change, or fluctuate according to the values and vulnerabilities
of our conversation partners. The margins of open debate may then become the object of dispute and philosophical deliberation themselves.

A further thing to notice is that, in this ongoing process of developments and transformations, age-old stand-offs between debate and philosophy may suddenly resurface. In our own day and age, the emergence of social media has accustomed us to the idea that accepted norms of truth and probability may change, even to the degree that we seem to be living in an era of “post-truth”—a situation some have found reason to make instrumental use of and other people fear. Either way, the question of establishing the width and margins of our freedom to speak out may seem to be more topical than ever: new media force us to rethink the role of public debate, its function within science and politics, and its relation to human social life and individual experience. Yet these are things that were seen long before. To argue that science itself is “only a set of opinions,” may at first sight strike us as an extremist position typically represented on Twitter, but the problem itself of what may count as an opinion or a fact links up with a long history of human adaptations to new intellectual and political developments.

1 Testing the Limits of Discussion

Truth and opinion go back a long way. Indeed, to learn how to deal with what should and should not be considered as fruitful claims in a debate has been part and parcel of the development of philosophy and science themselves. The very beginnings of Western metaphysics were the outcome of an intellectual debate over the difference between fact and opinion. Driven by an interest in offering natural causes for everyday phenomena, the earliest stages of philosophy in Greece had given rise to a series of competitive opinions all aiming for acceptance on the grounds of their apparent plausibility. What was the archē, the base, or the origin of things? Thales had claimed it was water, Anaximander had said it was the apeiron, or the “boundless,” Anaximēnes claimed it was air, and Xenophanēs (c. 570-c. 470 BC), the last of the Ionic naturalist philosophers, that it was air and water
taken together. At that point, however, it seems to have dawned on Xenophanēs, the last of these “Ionic philosophers,” that the theories his predecessors and he himself had offered in natural philosophy were exactly this: theories, based on plausible hypotheses—and thus not necessarily truthful accounts of nature itself.

What is important with respect to the relationship between philosophy and debate, is that Xenophanēs drew attention to the fact that plausibility was not necessarily a mark of truth. Such an insight might well be regarded as the starting point of epistemology and philosophy of science. Historically, however, its immediate effect was the birth of metaphysics: a specifically philosophical attempt to suppress the proliferation of idle discussion. Parmenides (* c. 515 BC) and his followers tried to stifle insecurity by offering an alternative foundation for human knowledge in a purely conceptual form of understanding. Trying to distinguish between what is true and what only seems to be the case, they envisioned a system of knowledge that was enclosed on itself, and might therefore yield a cognitive experience of adequacy and completeness.

What resulted within Parmenides’ “Eleatic School” might well be seen as a deadlock between an abstract description of unworldly truth on the one hand and a paradoxically fleeting type of worldly knowledge on the other, generating pure abstractions and paradoxes at most. Yet it was precisely this contrast between the “lasting” and the “fleeting” that would inaugurate a new and very creative type of thinking in Plato on the origins and relative merits of truth and opinion. Long before our era of “fake news” and “alternative facts,” in other words, philosophy already presented itself as a battleground for demarcating the borderlines between what might be regarded as truth and what, on the other hand, should be regarded as “mere” opinion.

As an after-effect of Xenophanēs’ hunch, philosophy and debate thus soon presented themselves as enemies in Plato. Inspired by Parmenides, moreover, Plato would renew the attack on relativism and present an equally speculative and metaphysical basis on which to ground the certainty of ever-lasting truth. Yet Plato found additional motivations in the political circumstances of his day.
Plausibility distinguished from truth
Agency and impartiality
2 Classical Philosophy and the Battle for Certitude

In Plato, moral rather than naturalistic interests came to the fore. Indeed, his attention to truth and to the question of how to attain it, seems to have been driven to a large degree by a disappointment in politics and by a recognition of the fact that political interests are often indifferent to questions of justice. In fifth-century BC Athens, democratic politics had gradually allowed voting rights to growing numbers of independent male citizens, thereby granting political power to a larger group of people who did not belong to the established clans of patrician families. In the context of these developments, debate culture seems rapidly to have increased, making room for commercially active teachers of rhetorical skills. These “sophists,” as they were called, trained young men in argumentation skills as well as in debating on such fashionable topics as “Whether excellence can be taught?” or “The difference between the natural and the cultural.” More in particular, they might train male Athenian youngsters in eristic, the art, that is, of defeating an opponent by being able to defend both sides of an argument.

One such teacher or sophist seems to have been Plato’s personal tutor and intellectual mentor: Socrates (c. 470-399 BC), the man often seen as the actual founder of Western philosophical thought. Both Socrates and Plato were skilled debaters, but neither of the two were uncritical advocates of public debate. With democratic politics in Athens often presenting itself in nationalistic, popularist and xenophobic ways, both men seem to have developed an antipathy against it, ultimately leading to a death penalty being pronounced on Socrates in Athens’ public assembly. The trial itself may have been politically motivated, but Plato would frame the verdict in such a way as if Socrates had died a martyr for philosophy, suggesting that philosophy (or “truth”) always clashed with rhetoric (or “opinion”), on the basis of the sharp distinction he drew between the Sophist-movement of rhetoricians on the one hand and “Socrates-the-philosopher” on the other.

The fact that Socrates taught for free and claimed not to have any answers, may count as arguments in favor of Plato’s suggestion that Socrates did not himself practice the profession of a sophist. Plato in any case made use of Socrates’ example to argue for a sharp contrast
between sophists, lawyers, politicians and rhetoricians on the one hand, all of whom he presents as being motivated solely by winning a cause for the benefit of some individual, national, or party interest, and, on the other hand, philosophers, whom he depicts as fair-minded explorers seeking insights that are universally valid, independently of any particularist perspective. The philosopher’s stance thereby becomes a moral stance, since it aims to provide the disinterested “God’s Eye”-point of view that alone may guarantee a “rational” estimate of what is “just”—an estimate uncorrupted by any party bias. In Plato, in other words, the philosopher—like God himself—becomes the ideal of impartiality.

3 Rehabilitating Rhetoric

Philosophy, however, is not the only discipline attentive to fairness. A powerful aspect of present-day debating techniques is their effectiveness in addressing the question of “agency”—the question of “Who is talking?” If we compare philosophical skills with debating techniques, it may well be asked which of the two is ultimately the more successful in making explicit both the unjustified biases and the justified concerns of agents in a conflict. We shall have reason to come back to a variety of topics related to the age-old question of truth and perspectivism in later paragraphs. For now, let us note that even Plato came to see things as less black and white than they originally seemed.

The later Plato would grow towards a more accepting view of the art of rhetoric, and consent to oratory as long as it was imbued with philosophical content. What is especially interesting with respect to the philosophical use of the instrument of debate, is that this new position came along with a new appraisal of philosophy. The older Plato would interpret the technical aspect of philosophical expertise in terms of a finetuning of conceptual representation, rather than simply in terms of a contemplation of truth. Making it the aim of philosophical analysis to arrive at intellectual views and distinctions subtle and sophisticated enough to capture the complexities of both nature and social life, Plato’s Phaedrus would compare competence of the philosopher
to the craftsmanship of butchers, neatly cutting what should be cut out—a technique that was equally open to the (philosophical) orator.

The suggestion here, was to end the war between philosophy and rhetoric by making rhetoricians into better philosophers, but this solution would not be classical philosophy’s most influential contribution to the theory of debate. Rather, what has divided philosophers and scientists on the one hand and rhetoricians and politicians on the other up to the present day, and continues to stimulate discussions about the value of a culture of public debate, would be defined by Aristotle in response to his old mentor Plato—a debate that lies hidden in just a few lines right at the beginning of Aristotle’s book on Rhetoric.

According to Aristotle, the issue between philosophy and rhetoric was not so much a question of disinterested truth versus biased opinion, but a question of the degree of certainty that a certain subject may provide. Since it is with the same faculty that we judge “the true and the approximately true” and since we all have a “sufficient natural instinct” for deciding what is true, Aristotle argued we may equally be said to be in possession of the mental capacity for deciding on issues in which not truth, but only plausibility may be found (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355a13-18). Contrary to Parmenides and Plato, in other words, Aristotle argued that certain topics are not sensitive to certainty—and so these topics not only can, but in fact should be discussed.

Even if he was not in all aspects a scientist in the modern sense of the word, Aristotle thereby already inaugurated a division between the domain of necessary and true deductive reasoning, and the domain of what is inherently uncertain—a division that would outlive the pre-modern world and would continue to be valued in the era of modern science. And not only did Aristotle establish a division between topics that do and topics that do not lend themselves for discussion; he also argued that, with respect to the kind of topics fit to be debated, the success of persuasion is not simply dependent on logical argument. Indeed, according to Aristotle’s science of persuasion, in order to arrive at profitable forms of human communication, questions of personal credibility (ethos) and emotional touch (pathos) are equally important as good argumentation (logos).

With respect to understanding human intellectual debate, there are thus various things to be learned from ancient Athens. We may
learn, first, that it was democracy and its openness to the articulation of specific interests that added a question of justice to the question of truth. On the basis of this, Plato and Aristotle sketched new ways of understanding debate: in terms of truth and certainty as against opinion and bias in Plato’s case, and, in Aristotle’s case, in terms of accepting the need for allowing opinion where there is no absolute proof, but only probability.

Laying the groundwork for many centuries of further discussion on the method and principles of the liberal arts, Aristotle thereby also gave a foundation to the work of jurists and politicians that went beyond Plato’s exclusive concern for what is rational and philosophical.

4 Debating One’s Beliefs

Law and politics, however, are not the only domains of the debatable. Within the new, multi-ethnic situation that marked the subsequent phase of Greek and Roman cultural history, religion would add a further field of discussion and potential disagreement to that of lawyers and politicians. Whereas, in the classical period, philosophy may be said to have stood in the service of political society, a morality motivated primarily by the urge to stabilize one’s own psychological functioning would come to mark the systems of thought that developed during the Hellenistic and late-classical periods.

It is in these intellectual contexts that school-based systems of philosophy and systems of religion would come to be viewed as so many competitors for a form of spiritual life that was no longer confined to local deities and regional ritual. In fact, in this new cultural context, both philosophy and religion became involved in a fight for individual supporters and devotees. One might even say that the fight for votes that we know so well from political elections, was once preceded by a fight for adherents in the spiritual domain.

If Christianity ultimately won the day in Europe, it would do so only after having been in competition with various other forms of belief. In the first centuries AD, Gnostic, Manichean and Jewish systems of faith equally advertised themselves as universally valid expressions of the right and righteous way of life. In late antiquity, Islam
would emerge on the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean as a replacement for Christianity. Nor did these triumphant religions compete only with alternative systems of religion. In the Christian, “New Testament,” part of the Bible, the philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism are expressly addressed as pagan alternatives to a belief in “Christ crucified.” Christianity may have been of superior psychological appeal. As has been argued, it stood in opposition to the Greek moral tradition “in so far as it denies any ordinary human capacity for the sort of virtue that is demanded by the moral law” (Irwin 1989, 207). Demanding a leap of faith, in other words, and a surrender to the special grace of God, the Christian religion disputed the philosophical notion of man’s self-sufficiency—an aspect that may well have contributed in socio-psychological ways to the success of a shared religion becoming the more convincing type of belief system.

In this conquest for individual human souls, philosophy was relegated to the margins of religious life, and even new natural philosophical interests might be driven solely by a desire to fight the cause of one religious system against another. When the Catalan philosopher Ramon Llull (c. 1232—c. 1316), for instance, devised his “Lullian Art” for finding truths on whatever subject, his primary intention was to be able to strengthen the Christian position in theological debate and contribute to the conversion of Muslims.

As belief-type of controversies are controversies aspiring to win adherents, they share a democratizing aspect with political debates in addressing all and everyone. Competing to incite individuals to make a choice in their favor, every such worldview must present itself as a universalist life-guide, as a system addressing the most relevant or most common aspects of what human individuals experience. This brings with it a process of party formation that is inherent to all debating culture. Yet with respect to the history of public debate, there is also an important aspect in the late classical and early medieval examples of religious controversy that conflicts with modern-day party politics or the kind of debate practice in schools that is the subject matter of this book: debates do not necessarily demand either a universal following, nor any universalist claims. In an open debate, continued disagreement is deemed acceptable in a manner for which theological reasoning and religious dogma leave no room. The ex-
clusive character and steadfastness of religious beliefs, on the other hand, may also serve as an inspiration, especially when professions of deep conviction become a tool with which to tip the balance in the context of more worldly debates. It is unmistakably true, in any case, that universalist claims will inadvertently pop up in political, moral and social debates— with dogmas and creeds providing shortcuts for arguing points of detail.

5 The Heydays of Disputation

Disputation did not stop, however, in circumstances in which there was no religious controversy. In a sense, the philosophical method of “scholasticism” that was to define higher education in medieval and early modern Europe for many centuries, was equally apologetic in its origin. Being similarly developed in intellectual confrontation with the Islamic world, the tradition of scholasticism in the West, motivated as it was by the possibility of establishing the superiority of Christianity, would offer a model of science in which all natural (i.e., all non-revealed) types of knowledge functioned as a “handmaiden” to theology.

The scholastic tradition gave logical structure and philosophical input to the defense of a fully religious interpretation of life, but what had started out as an intellectual instrument for winning a debate, would ultimately result in an extremely theoretical type of exercise, in a bookish and almost “encyclopaedic” type of learning.

Divided in subtly argued *Quaestiones*, in which everything could be debated, though only within the strict limits set by theological dogma, this apologetic type of dialectics by means of questions and answers would nurture the use of an excessively technical terminology, as well as ever more abstract forms of thinking. Ultimately, it would alienate itself so much from the daily practice of life, that when Renaissance authors uncovered alternative forms of scholarly and philosophical expression in the literary sources of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as a more poetic form of Latin, the prosaic dogmatism of scholastic disputation was to gain a lasting reputation as the summit of tedious and unproductive learning.
Because of its image as a method that gave rise to persistent and practically pointless forms of pedantry, scholasticism still exemplifies for some what debate cultures might degenerate into, if developed within a culture of dogmatic authority. At the same time, its extremely high levels of intellectual sophistication may equally well be seen as an expression of utmost human creativity, as well as an indication of the meticulous forms of self-expression that may arise in intellectual situations in which there is no free enquiry.

6 Combining Reason and Criticism

Early modern Europe saw the evolvement of a new literary and argumentative interest in the practice of life at a time when, first in Italy and later in urban communities all over Europe, calls for a reformation of manners signaled the social autonomy of a new, urban class of people. The Renaissance culture that ensued was fiercely anti-scholastic, but not necessarily anti-philosophical. Indeed, in the heave of civilization trends, rhetoricians themselves almost inadvertently added philosophical content to their moral lectures, thereby adding to the outward reformation of manners an inner reformation of morals. In the case of an internationally renowned author as Erasmus of Rotterdam, Christian humanism would even come to identify the gist and substance of philosophy with the New Testament message, and put Plato almost next to Jesus Christ.

Of special relevance to the history of debate, is that Renaissance culture, whilst offering new standards of Classico-Christian civilization replacing the former, scholastic and Aristotelian ways of doing science, simultaneously brought with it a new appreciation for rhetoric. Associating civility with being able to convince, Renaissance orators and authors kept faithful to the Aristotelian maxims of persuasion, and held intrinsic communicative qualities such as personal credibility and emotional touch to be as crucial to oratory as providing logical arguments.

Converging with a cultural objective that went far beyond dogmatic positions in religion or particularist interests in society, Renaissance humanism aligned rhetoric with an idealist, inclusive and
universalistic ethical agenda that associated ancient types of wisdom—religious or otherwise—with philosophical ideals. In Erasmus, this was all about developing personal autonomy through education. Yet such personal autonomy should not be mistaken for its later, Romantic look-alike. A humanist education was first and foremost a form of cultural self-discipline, and the autonomy to be achieved was the autonomy to contribute in positive ways to the public order, not the autonomy to choose one’s moral goals or aims for oneself.

All this changed when, as of 1517, Martin Luther appropriated Erasmus’ criticism of Church politics and Church dogma in order to recycle this criticism for the wholly un-Erasmian purpose of developing an alternative, separatist and non-inclusive theology. The result was a bizarre combination of barbaric conflict and cultural bloom. With the success of Protestantism dividing Europe into religious clans, not only did the continent face two centuries of religious warfare, it would also witness two centuries of fierce, confessional debate.

Protestantism would paradoxically foster austere positions in sixteenth-century theology as well as radically rationalistic positions in seventeenth-century philosophy, but neither entailed that Christian humanism had died. In fact, despite all spiritual strife, the moral and mental self-discipline associated with humanistic ideals would remain influential on both the Catholic and the Protestant sides of the religious spectrum. Christian confessional education itself would have a democratizing effect, indirectly promoting revolutionary ways of thinking about society, education and the relation between the sexes. Thus, even before the rise of “modern” philosophy and science, the cause of girls and women would be put on the political agenda as a moral objective, with male and female humanists advocating the previously unheard-of possibility of women expressing their views in the public domain.

7 The New Dualism of Understanding

The seventeenth-century development of scientific method, though it has lately been represented as a source of Western bigotry with respect to gender, race and species, led to a further boost on emancipat-
tory ways of thinking. There are many different and interrelated ways in which the rise of modern science links up with a reassessment of the capacity of human beings to understand both the world and themselves, to rely on their own ideas and thus to determine the power and limitations of debate.

First, a growing interest in human physiological and psychological processes would have an immediate impact on the political theories of thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes and Benedictus de Spinoza, who emphasized the need of taking into account the forces of the imagination besides the force of reason. In political theory, even in the seventeenth-century, republican thinkers picked up these ideas in order to emphasize the need for political equilibriums rather than eternal solutions. In the work of Bernard Mandeville, moreover, the idea took shape that virtue and vice were no absolute matters in themselves, but should be considered relative to their effect on social well-being.

Secondly, although science undeniably brought with it a new authoritative image, it equally had an unpretentious side to it. On the one hand, science authenticated the old Aristotelian distinction between truths that are, and truths that are not open to discussion. Indeed, seeing the new methodology as a way to transpose the certitude of mathematics to a broader field of “sciences” that promised the discovery of new truths, and scolding the philosophical tradition for only having trained people in a never-ending dialectic of interchangeable opinions, René Descartes even strengthened the opposition between factual knowledge and putative beliefs.

At the same time, the new science and its accompanying epistemology introduced into philosophy a new interpretation of the idea that there are intrinsic limits to human understanding. This in itself is an underestimated aspect of the emancipatory power of the development of science. If science was authoritative and unreceptive to contingencies and exceptions, it was also becoming increasingly open to the fact that there were only so many kinds of truths the human intellect could handle. Scanning the domain of truth and falsity, scientists would henceforth concentrate on problem solving, on establishing the evidence of processes, regularities and relations between things, and focus less on “eternal truths,” “sufficient grounds” or “essential beings.” The latter, indeed, were slowly beginning to be seen as the
exaggerated claims of philosophers—or even as common-sense prej-
udices given a quasi-philosophical twinge.

In this way, seventeenth-century philosophical developments in
Francis Bacon, René Descartes and John Locke, along with the sci-
centific methodologies of Galileo Galilei, Blaise Pascal and Isaac Newton,
already anticipated the positivism and pragmatism of later centuries.

In Descartes’ case, moreover, the relevance of a non-metaphysical
type of philosophizing was immediately recognized for its enormous
emancipatory potential in the social and cultural spheres. Cartesian-
ism gave people good reasons no longer to look down on illiterate and
uneducated minds, and took a decidedly feminist turn in the works of
François Poulaïn de la Barre (1647-1723).

Of special importance to the scope and limits of debate, philosophy
itself now began to run the risk of acquiring the appearance of an area
of open-ended debate, or even a “personal” way of seeing things. If,
back in the sixteenth century, a stern humanist as Juan Luis
Vives (1493-1540) had already portrayed philosophers as idle characters in-
terested only in imposing their own opinions upon others, the new
phenomenon of scientific knowledge gave a reliable alternative to a
vast area of earlier philosophical speculation. At the same time, nat-
ural science left many questions open and untouched. Though it of-
fered a more reliable kind of knowledge, it also gave a more limited
interpretation to what human intelligence was aimed at, designating
as “philosophical” any questions or insights that lay beyond its bor-
ders. Some major philosophers, Benedictus de Spinoza and Gottfried
Wilhelm Leibniz in particular, consciously tried to expand the realm
of philosophy by offering new systems of metaphysics. Enabling
themselves to find answers to questions that went beyond science,
they at the same time potentially jeopardized their own intellectual
commitments by introducing non-evident forms of speculation—
assumptions that philosophers of a different schooling or a different
character might regard as no more than mutually interchangeable
“worldviews.”

Thus, with the arrival of science, the ancient distinction between
truth and opinion acquired a completely new set of dimensions, and
the realms of truth and opinion were pushed even further apart. At
the same time, its very precision was a reason for science to turn away
Redefining the scope and limitations of human understanding.
Expanding the horizon of the negotiable
from the merely universal to the particular. Methodologically strict and unbending as it ideally is, science also encompasses the exceptional and the eccentric aspects of reality, rather than just types and species, and thus has a specific interest in what is particular and peculiar.

As human beings themselves became part of scientific investigation, a fundamental change began to take shape in human intellectual concerns, a change away from a philosophical interest in the paradigmatic, into the direction of a scientific concern with describing and understanding what is unique. The arrival of science was thus also a turning point away from the Greek pursuit of absolute truth in the direction of an intellectual sensitivity to overall regularities alongside particular, but no less understandable, exceptions.

8 Morals in the Age of Reason

The Age of Enlightenment has been dubbed the Age of Reason, but it was not on that account a monolithic affair. It is certainly true that, in the context of what Paul Hazard (1878-1944) famously described as la crise de la conscience européenne, a variety of parties—radicals and orthodox alike—sought refuge in a common haven of reasoned moderation. A general fatigue with confessional strife and a growing optimism with regard to the possibility of outshining the ancients both contributed to a boost in naturalized ways of thinking that even affected theology. And yet, the Age of Reason might just as well be considered the Age of Critical—or even Subversive—Thinking, since arguing questions on the basis of rational conviction led to an enormous demand for intellectual debate that often showed itself uniquely disrespectful of political and ecclesiastical authorities.

Nor was intellectual activity during the Age of Enlightenment limited to what had traditionally been defined as ratio, or philosophical reason. Urban, mainstream thinking about morality and education indeed became more naively optimistic and even more directed towards the well-behaved and the well-mannered than ever before, but the salons of the elite were potentially open to a discussion of politically and religiously more disconcerting questions, especially meta-
physical questions associated with the rise of science, such as its alleged materialist, deterministic or atheist consequences.

The fashion of salons has been associated both with the invention of the “public sphere” and with the more conservative notion that these social gatherings functioned as small-scale imitations of court culture. There is no unequivocal answer to the question what their historical impact was, and so neither is there agreement on whether the salons had an animating or rather a dampening effect on the spread of ideas. A platform for discussing arts and literature as well as philosophy and politics, they nevertheless gave rise to yet another label for the age: the “Age of Conversation” (cf. Craveri 2005). As such, the salons may also have contributed to what, paradoxically perhaps, would be one of the most characteristic aspects of the Age of Reason: its growing interest in the sentiments rather than in reason itself, a fascination announcing the cultural turn from reason to the emotions.

For reasons still unaccounted for, the 1760s saw a sudden breakthrough of romantic feeling in Europe, causing a tidal wave of tears in the readership of sentimentalist novels, and putting into the spotlight the heart rather than the brain in the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Abrupt as the turn towards the Age of Romanticism was, it was well-prepared during the Age of Reason. Conversely, however, there was as yet no practical effect of Romanticism on Enlightenment moral or political ideals. When, towards the end of the century, the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte confronted an audience of students in Jena with their moral and social duties in life, he still described these in terms of subjecting nature to reason, all the while restricting the idea of human dignity to the sole aim of making a positive contribution to moral uprightness and cultural development. Even though it was now presented in a secularized terminology, the transformation of human mentalities in the direction of the divine, was still as valid as it had been in Renaissance times.

Likewise, late-eighteenth-century feminism was still unaffected by any philosophical interest in the sentiments, or in an anthropology influenced by science. More than anything else, Mary Wollstonecraft’s ground-breaking *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) demanded that women be given the right to civilize themselves ac-
cording to the Stoic template of the rational male. Even Jean-Jacques Rousseau himself, besides being blind to the feminist cause, neither developed any moralist position on the basis of the self-same passions that played their role on every page of his novels. Whether or not one was torn apart by emotions, moral standards were defined entirely by the ancient idea of the perfectibility of man.

In many ways, the Age of Critical Thinking left no mark on the older standards of moral philosophy. And yet, the mounting attention to the sentiments would soon foster new and critical ways of looking at the connections and correlations of reason and the passions—leading to a philosophical reassessment of debating culture that is still of relevance today.

9 The Vulnerability of Open Debate

In authors less easily to be pinned down as representatives of either Enlightenment or Romanticism, a subtle anthropology evolved that not only made political thinking become more alert to the existence of emotional life, but also had the consequence of discerning previously unappreciated aspects of human debate. If Descartes had first put an end to the moral dogma that passions were things to be overcome, Scottish Enlightenment thinkers such as David Hume and Adam Smith saw positive roles for the sentiments in natural and moral reasoning. Combining these with Rousseau's notion of man's "original virtue," the late-eighteenth-century French philosopher Germaine—aka "Madame"—De Staël was to acknowledge and make explicit the paradoxes related to the passions in moral and political theory. On the one hand, De Staël claimed that all reasoning should be guided by an original empathy, or pitié, in order to avoid the potentially manipulative aspects of hard-hearted reason. On the other hand, the passions themselves also needed to be checked, in particular where they contributed to party prejudice, love of glory, and ambition. Consciously providing an anthropological perspective with which to understand—and in future avert!—the excesses of the French Revolution, De Staël not only gave a more balanced view of the purpose and dangers of human emotions in the private and the public spheres, she...
also contributed in an innovative way to the old problem of rhetoric in democracy, by offering new moral requirements with which to escape the obvious pitfalls of open debate and the dangers of public opinion.

In the course of the next century, it would be the English philosopher John Stuart Mill who crowned this combined interest in anthropology and politics with a host of new views concerning the idiosyncratic rights of the individual. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Mill single-handedly coordinated a turning point in political philosophy. His crucial insight was that, in societies with a well-functioning constitution, the timeless need to guarantee the rights of citizens against the sovereign had changed into the need for citizens to protect their rights against each other. This included the new problem of safeguarding minority freedoms; the insight that to guarantee the rights of citizens is not fulfilled by counting votes; and, finally, the need to secure the position of individuals against the dangers of “public opinion.”

In Mill, moreover, this was more than just a question of protecting the free flow of ideas. Securing individual rights was not simply a question of securing free thought; it also involved the right of doing things in defiance of publicly accepted manners, provided one does not thereby infringe on the rights of others. In its turn, this clause of not harming others necessitated the further requirement of non-violence: freedom for all could only be achieved on the basis of the rule that one never has the right to harm someone else.

Finally, what remained almost unexpressed, but is nevertheless everywhere implicit in Mill, is that his position included a whole new view on the passions and their moral relevance. People, according to Mill, do not act in morally wrong ways because their desires are too strong, but because their conscience is too weak. Strong desires are simply a matter of energy, so to say, which may be profitably channeled in a variety of ways, offering the possibility of the development of a variety of “characters” in humans.

The great contribution of those who, like De Staël and Mill, were able to offer a balanced equilibrium of Enlightenment and Romantic insights, is that they opened up a way of combining the social demands of a comprehensive morality with a notion of justice that linked up not so much with universal norms, but with an interest in
individual rights and idiosyncrasies.

The Romantic notion of the self thus came along with some intriguing consequences for understanding the intellectual significance of debate. With De Staël’s warning that reason may take on an inhuman face and Mill’s notion that individuals differ and that general rules may not apply to all, the idea emerged that there are limits to the political efficacy of universalistic reason. Indeed, universal norms and rights might not necessarily take into account the individual needs or propensities of people. If we wish to understand the political importance of debate, it is therefore crucial to not just weigh against each other a set of alternative philosophical views or moral standards of conduct, but also to take seriously the particular interest of some specific part of the public, since individual experiences may differ and may be relevant for a balanced judgement of what is right and just.

Parallel to the notion of conflicting moral demands, Mill’s philosophy opened up a whole new sensitivity to the question of human freedom. Where Renaissance philosophers had stressed the importance of having people become autonomous moral subjects, and later thinkers such as Spinoza and Kant had opted for the freedom to be able to express morally constructive and politically beneficial views, the new Romantic notion of freedom was no longer conceptualized in the name of some moral imperative. The new type of freedom was a freedom to develop one’s personal preferences in life.

Conclusion

For a historian like myself, it is appropriate to stop here, since this is where history turns into the present. Of course, we might prolong our sketch to include such obviously significant developments as the arrival of nationalism, Marxism and modern-day democracy. The latter in particular, in so far as it presents itself as an arena for the exchange of interests rather than a breeding ground for the common good, resembles ancient Athens in important ways. Yet modern-day democracy is also something entirely new, since we now witness completely different levels of education and a more open consultation of
the views of the many than was ever the case in ancient Greece. If present-day democracies combine the republican notion of balancing interests with a particularist conception of truth that accepts the idea of perspectives rather than universal norms, we may seem to have drifted far away from where Plato once started. This is all the more so if we would continue our story right up to the present and discuss socio-political issues our societies are only beginning to become aware of, such as the pitfalls of meritocracy. But let us make no attempt to write a history of the present, nor lose ourselves in trying to decide the exact point where contemporary times began.

In order to understand the interrelated history of philosophy and debate, it may suffice to have marked out above the peculiarities that may be associated with particular stages in European intellectual history. To distinguish truth from plausibility was the major challenge for natural philosophy in ancient Greece. To think of agency and impartiality was Plato’s contribution, with Aristotle acknowledging the need for ongoing discussion whenever there is no prospect of definitive truth—and to reveal other means of persuasion besides the rules of logic. To think in terms of audiences and party formation was a special feature of Hellenistic and late classical thought. Scholastics specialized in carving out the most detailed of distinctions, whilst to aim at a form of moral edification that would be open to all was the special feature of Renaissance contributions to European culture. Presenting new methodologies and a new interpretation of the levels of insight per domain, the birth of the natural sciences refueled debates on the scope and limits of human understanding. Eighteenth-century philosophers expanded the sphere of the negotiable; a politically charged innovation that, finally, led to the effort of thinkers at once “enlightened” and “romantic” to plea for safeguarding not just the freedom, but also the safety of the individual voice.

Looking back, one may see how all of these themes have been as relevant to the cultivation of debate as they have been to the practice of philosophy, but besides this, our historical outline may also provide new tools for understanding the affiliations between philosophy and debating techniques themselves.

As we have argued, a new notion of freedom emerged in the philosophy of John Stuart Mill that has become part and parcel of West-
ern twentieth and twenty-first-century culture. It is a type of freedom reminiscent of what was seen as the “vulgar” type of freedom in classical philosophy: an attachment to one’s own particular passions and drives. Mill’s considerations imply that society needs this kind of freedom. Allowing people to develop the character that psychologically fits them best, will offer a way in which society is likely to benefit most from human genius. There is quite some common ground between this definition of individual freedom and the early-modern republican standard that society might benefit from balancing a variety of public interests—another idea that has become part of the self-image of modern democratic societies.

Again, we might be tempted to conclude that, in present-day Europe at least, a culture of debate has won the day, to the detriment of a culture of philosophy. We might even conclude that we find ourselves in the midst of a new phase of the never-ending battle between debate-culture and philosophy—or that we presently need some new philosophical impulse, for instance, to tell us that not all perspectives lead to truth, and that justice might not be served by a battle of opinions. The call could then be for a new Plato; and in as far as we find ourselves in a situation in which the public position and respect for science is in constant need of being defended, we might also assume we stand in need of a new “Aristotelian” conception of truth, using the tools of science and philosophy for establishing certainty in some domains and open debate only in cases where steady results are not to be expected.

All of such options would leave intact the traditional notion that there is some fundamental opposition between philosophy and debate. Yet this is not the most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the historical synopsis we have sketched, especially not if we focus on the intellectual techniques and skills of both debaters and philosophers. To see what may be far more relevant to the question of the relationship between philosophy and debate, let us once again return to Plato—and to his eventual acceptance of a philosophical kind of rhetoric.

In a number of ways, Plato’s commitment to the continual fine-tuning of conceptual representation is a strategy that still continues to inspire. Whether, in deconstructivist trends within philosophy, philosophers focus on the variability, the limitations or even the fal-
sifications of language, or on the fundamental contingency of any attempt to construct a symbolic representation of reality; whether, in a more constructivist mode, they might try to assess the meaning of things by focussing on conceptual analysis, on ordinary language, on the *Lebenswelt*, or on a combination of such elements in order to give expression to new, future-oriented forms of philosophical activity—they might still remain true to what Plato once suggested. In a variety of ways, intellectual efforts in philosophy today continue to pay attention to what is, as yet, unspoken, or seems even to lie beyond the limits of expression. Yet just as much as in classical times, it is the attempt to arrive at higher levels of intellectual sophistication that continues to drive philosophical innovations, combined with the aim of doing justice to processes and aspects of reality as yet uncategorized, as well as to individual experience. It was precisely for these reasons that Plato not only saw a combined philosophical and rhetorical incentive in trying to heighten conceptual accuracy, but also generally preferred the spoken word of dialogue to the written word of books.

If Plato's aim was motivated by a desire to expand our mental horizon in such a way as to be sensitive to the nuances of human experience as much as to the subtleties of reality itself, this is an aim we may still detect among philosophers. And not just philosophers: the historical sketch outlined above provides evidence that this very aim is the historical *fil rouge* uniting philosophers to rhetoricians, to scientists and to politicians as well. More than this, what we have seen is that it was in interaction with a culture of debate that philosophy continued to follow in Plato's footsteps: a culture of debate that brought to the fore the importance of extracting truth from plausibility; of weighing questions of agency and impartiality; of the effect of theory on party-formation; of the power of argumentation to avoid the deadlock of dogma; of the close links between civility, fairness and moral edification; of the need to think in terms of gradations with respect to what we might debate and what we might know; of acknowledging the political side to what is negotiable; and, finally, of setting the rules for safeguarding an inclusivist exercise of free speech.

In view of our present perspective of bringing the practice of debate to the philosophy classroom, our historical outline thus indicates the more important argument that there are philosophical reasons to
argue in favor of practicing open debate. Indeed, if it is our aim in philosophy to do justice to both human personal perspectives and to universal truths that may still be in constant need of conceptual refinement, it is only through an exchange of opinions that we may arrive at the level of conceptual finetuning that is needed for making progress in any political, philosophical, or scientific endeavor.

Both in questions of practical wisdom (phronēsis) and in questions of learning (epistēmē), debate, accordingly, comes first and last. Being a philosopher myself, this is a truth that I have learned to see more sharply whilst working with the co-authors of this book. Both in theory and in practice, my colleagues within ADAPT have pointed out to me how debating skills may inspire, sharpen, but also edify youngsters, thus making me attentive to the fact that to argue and win a debate may serve very well as a form of “philosophy at work,” or “philosophy in practice.”

Of course, the history of philosophy can itself be seen as a paradigm case of a debate without end. It has been a debate without arbitration, but it is not as if adding rules (as is done in training debating techniques), would stifle philosophy. Even in debates in which there is no genuinely philosophical issue on the table, there are still philosophical skills being developed. In any debate that is structured by formal conditions for a fair exchange of ideas, the resulting clash of arguments and concepts may help debaters (and adolescent debaters in particular) to develop a special form of expertise in digging out the preconditions of their claim, in carving out new concepts and probing the deeper aspects of a problem—skills that become a tool in themselves for forming (and possibly changing!) one’s opinion.

It was just before the Corona-crisis lockdown, that, in Ljutomer, Slovenia, I first experienced a live Debating Tournament organized by Miha Andrič and his team. I did not know what to expect, but witnessing a clash between two champion teams, I was immediately captured by the sheer pathos of the speakers, the speed of their argument and the electricity that was in the air. The enormous outpour of fast-moving, creative thinking, the subtlety of argumentation and the proficiency in reacting purposefully to what had just been said by the other party... it simply was a stunning experience. Next, I was again impressed by the jury officials, or referees, who gave feedback to both
parties with regard to their performance on stage at such a high level of analysis, that there was never any discussion about their decision as to which party had won the debate.

Most inspiring of all was to learn that what had motivated me in becoming a philosopher, was exactly what I now saw the practice of debate might foster: to take account of who is talking, to accept the fact that truth as such may not be found, but to see at the same time that the search is itself a way to learn more, as well as a training in trying to do justice to all the particulars under discussion. I was no longer surprised, therefore, when, in a discussion on the moral relevance of teaching debating techniques to high-school students, I heard my Dutch colleague Devin van den Berg argue that his long experience as a debater and a debating referee had in fact convinced him that, if anything, it had been these debating skills that had made him become a wiser and more tolerant individual. If taking classes in philosophy, as I had argued, is a form of considerate learning that helps you discover new ways of seeing things and helps you learn to deal with conceptual problems, to practice and develop debating techniques in class, as Debbie Newman added in reply, only adds to this: it is a form of gaining practical experience in philosophy, which means that to include debating techniques in the philosophy curriculum is a form of considerate teaching.
Chapter 2

Approaches to Teaching Philosophy

Tomislav Reškovac

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Chapter 2
Approaches to Teaching Philosophy
Tomislav Reškovac

1 The Status of Philosophy in Secondary Schools in Europe

There is almost no school subject that has been part of the high school curriculum for so long and whose position in that curriculum is so often called into question. This contradictory status of philosophy as a school subject seems to be largely due to the internal duality of that type of school of which philosophy is a natural part, and that is gymnasium.

The gymnasium\(^1\) is a type of secondary school whose purpose initially included two: liberal education, which aims to provide an environment for development of a cultured and autonomous person (Bildung), and general education, which aims to prepare young people for university education leading to some profession. This second aspect of the gymnasium, its general educational character, resulted traditionally in a very broad curriculum with a large number of subjects, in order for the gymnasium to prepare young people for a very wide range of possible studies.

While in certain periods of its history these two goals were perceived only as two different, but still well balanced and harmonized aspects of the same educational ideal, in the last fifty years the relationship between these two aspects has turned into a kind of troublesome internal tension. This is, of course, particularly evident in changes in the gymnasium's curriculum. As the perspective from which the gymnasium is primarily “pre-tertiary education provider”

\(^1\) In most countries of continental europe the term for this type of school is the same: gymnasium (Germany, Austria, Denmark), gymnázium (Czech Republic, Slovakia), gymnasiesskola (Sweden), gimnazija (Slovenia, Croatia), etc. In France, the name used for these schools is lycée général, while in Italy it is called liceo. The approximate equivalent in English would be grammar school. In the Netherlands, the term gymnasium has a somewhat narrower meaning, while the name of the educational program whose primary purpose is preparation for university education is VWO.
began to dominate over the humanistic (Bildung) perspective, so the subjects whose importance for continuing education was assessed as more or less negligible began to lose their significance and even to disappear from the gymnasium’s curriculum. Thus, philosophy (as well as, for example, the arts) in some countries changed its status from compulsory to an elective subject, while in some others it turned into an alternative subject to some kind of religious education.

In the Anglo-American educational tradition, there are in fact no gymnasia in the strict sense of the word. Its general education aspect is covered by general secondary schools, while the space for liberal education is provided within undergraduate studies, in the form of liberal arts study programs or even colleges. That is why philosophy in high school is relatively rare, and where it exists it is not part of the national core curriculum, but one of the electives that might be offered by some schools as part of the school curriculum.

However, in most European countries, philosophy is still present in some way in high schools. There are two dominant models and they reflect a certain understanding of the role of philosophy in education. The first of these two models includes philosophy as a compulsory subject and it is characteristic of countries where the legacy of the traditional gymnasium is very strong. This is the case with gymnasia in certain German states, Austria, Slovenia and Croatia, but also in countries such as France (in lycées généraux), Italy (in licei) or Spain (in Bachillerato). Within this model, philosophy is typically perceived as contributing to the general goals of education such as cultural literacy, contextual knowledge for better understanding of other disciplines and areas of human knowledge, or critical thinking and other academically and socially relevant skills. Besides that, it is typically assumed that philosophy could contribute to the development of an autonomous person prone to rational questioning of the world, herself and her own place in the world. Thus, for example, the Slovenian curriculum claims that philosophy helps students to develop the abilities of critical thinking and ethical reflection, making it easier for them to orient themselves in life and make independent decisions in a democratic society (Dačić et al., 2008).

2 This is the case with Ethics in Bavarian Gymnasia, which has the role of an alternative subject for students who do not choose religious education (cf. Spaenle & Huber 2010).
In the second model, philosophy is not part of the (obligatory) core curriculum, but only an elective subject offered by schools with educational programs that lead to higher education. That is the case, for example, in Netherlands (HAVO and especially VWO program\(^3\)) and Norway. The situation is somewhat specific in Sweden, as it combines some characteristics of both models. Philosophy is, on the one hand, a compulsory subject, but not in all educational programs that prepare for university. Of the six preparatory educational programs for the university, only three require philosophy as a compulsory subject: the Humanities Program, the Social Science Program and the Business Management and Economics Program.

However, in both of these cases (philosophy as an elective subject and as a compulsory subject within certain areas of specialization) it is a matter of the different view of the role of philosophy in education than in the first model. While in the first model the reason for including philosophy in the curricular core was its possible contribution to the general goals of education, here it is primarily the importance of specific content knowledge of philosophy for specific areas of university studies (humanities and social sciences). The focus here is no longer on the possible contribution of philosophy to education in general (although this is strongly implied), but on knowledge of philosophy as a prerequisite for certain types of university studies, in the same way that, for example, knowledge of biology is necessary for the study of medicine.

These two models do not seem to be entirely and necessary mutually exclusive. Thus, for example, the position of philosophy in Dutch schools suggests that its primary value lies in its potential contribution to the university study of humanities and social sciences, while within the curriculum the importance of transferable cognitive skills is strongly emphasized. In contrast, the still valid Croatian curriculum\(^4\), in which philosophy is a compulsory subject in all gymnasia,

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3 HAVO, hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs, upper general secondary education leading to higher professional education (polytechnics, universities of applied sciences); VWO, voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs, pre-university education preparing for higher education at research universities.

4 Croatian gymnasia are currently undergoing a process of curricular reform. A new philosophy curriculum has been developed but will not take effect until the autumn of 2021.
hardly mentions any connection between philosophy and the general goals of education, but is almost entirely reduced to a specific content knowledge of philosophy.

2 Philosophy Curricula: Overview of Goals and Outcomes

Even the provisional analysis\(^5\) of philosophy curricula in European countries shows that, despite a number of variations and specifics, it is possible to identify certain patterns and similarities, especially when it comes to the goals and outcomes of philosophy as a school subject. Naturally, a significant number of goals and outcomes occur in some form in almost all analyzed curricula. What makes these curricula different from each other is the importance of certain goals and outcomes in particular curricula, their mutual (often hierarchical) relationships and their place in the big picture of the meaning and purpose of education.

Thus, a possible, and also relatively provisional typology of goals and outcomes of teaching philosophy, would include three relatively distinctive focal points that form certain taxonomic clusters: specific content knowledge of philosophy, thinking in a philosophical way, and application of philosophy in a broader context.

2.1 Specific content knowledge

Specific content knowledge of philosophy, knowledge of philosophical ideas and theories, consists basically of factual and conceptual knowledge. It includes knowledge of philosophical terminology, the ability to understand and meaningfully use philosophical concepts, and to grasp their complex relations. Furthermore, students are typically expected to know the philosophical disciplines, philosophical problems and debates that have formed around them. Finally, students are required to know the teachings of important individual phi-

\(^5\) A more detailed analysis included a philosophy curricula in the Netherlands, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. I would like to thank Kiki Varekamp (The Netherlands), Corrado Soldato (Italy) and Gorazd Jurman (Slovenia) who kindly assisted me with preliminary analysis and important specific data on these curricula.
losophers or philosophical schools of thought and their place and role in the history of (in principle, Western) philosophy.

There are two major ways of organizing and articulating specific content knowledge in philosophy curricula. The first of these is exemplified by Duch and Slovenian curricula, where the content aspect of a curriculum is organized around selected philosophical problems. This approach primarily emphasizes the dimension of philosophy in which it manifests itself as the search for solutions to particular problems.

The Dutch curriculum for HAVO deals with problems within anthropology, ethics and social philosophy, while curriculum for VWO includes theory of knowledge, anthropology, ethics and philosophy of science.

The Slovenian curriculum for general gymnasium defines three compulsory topics (What is philosophy?, What can I know? What ought I do?), while the curriculum for classical gymnasium⁶ includes ancient philosophy as the additional compulsory topic. Both curricular versions envisage one elective topic from a rather extensive list (ontology and metaphysics, philosophy of religion, anthropology, aesthetics, political philosophy...), while the choice of topic depends on the teacher and students. Within the compulsory topics, several key authors are also listed (Protagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Descartes, Locke, Kant, Mill, Nietzsche and Sartre).

Students who choose philosophy as an elective subject at their final exam (matura) need to demonstrate a basic knowledge of philosophical problems related to topics such as reality, knowledge, morality, individual and community, and religion, and a good knowledge of one of the texts offered (Plato, The Republic, Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Descartes, Meditations, Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals) and one additional text of their choice.

Although the criteria for selecting specific themes and problems are not always explicit, some of them can be discerned. Thus both curricula elaborate those philosophical problems that have a significant place not only in the history of philosophy, but also in contemporary philosophical debates. Furthermore, these are mostly problems that may be relevant from the perspective of students of that age by corre-

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⁶ The specificity of the classical gymnasium curriculum is an in-depth study of ancient culture, including Latin and Greek.
sponding to the questions they ask themselves about their own lives and the world in which they live. Finally, the choice of problems seems to reflect the vision of teaching philosophy in high school, whose primary purpose is to encourage young people to engage in philosophical reflection.

Unlike the Netherlands and Slovenia, where curricular content knowledge is focused on several philosophical themes and problems, curricula in Italy and Croatia, when it comes to the content knowledge, are designed as an overview of the history of philosophy, meaning that students are expected to demonstrate a rather comprehensive knowledge of the history of Western philosophy and the teachings of most of its canonical authors.

The Italian curriculum (Ministério dell’istruzione, dell’università e della ricerca 2010) expects students to gain and demonstrate “organic knowledge” of the key points in Western philosophical thought, which should be linked with the historical-cultural context. Within this systemic framework, the students should be acquainted with philosophical ideas of presocratics and sophists, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, Greco-Roman philosophers and neoplatonists, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Pascal, Locke, Hume, Bacon, Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Vico, Diderot, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche, positivists, Husserl, Freud, Heidegger, existentialism, Italian neo-idealism, Wittgenstein and analytical philosophy, and neo-Marxism etc.

The Croatian curriculum follows the same pattern. One of the major goals of teaching philosophy is to acquaint students with the main stages in the development of philosophical thought (history of philosophy) as an essential part of the overall history of culture. The list of canonical authors whose teaching students should get to know is more or less the same as in the Italian curriculum and just as extensive.

Both of these curricula strongly emphasize the historical dimension of teaching and learning philosophy. This emphasis stems from the assumption that any philosophical investigation is essentially of

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7 Here is analyzed the still valid Croatian curriculum of philosophy from the early 1990s (cf. Blaženka 1994). The new philosophy curriculum has been developed and approved, and it will come into force in the school year 2021-22.
a philosophical-historical character and that philosophy, whatever it deals with, always does so in the medium of its own history. If this is so, then the teaching and learning of philosophy is not possible but as an immersion in its history. The “organic knowledge” of philosophy, which explicitly states the Italian curriculum as the goal of teaching, further indicates the comprehensiveness, that is, the wholeness of the acquired knowledge. This comprehensiveness refers not only to the knowledge of philosophy, but to the knowledge of the whole history of culture which philosophy is an important constitutive element. It is quite clear here that learning the history of philosophy is not just learning philosophy, but equally acquiring the cultural literacy needed to understand other aspects of Western culture as well as understanding that culture as a whole. Of course, as is well known, behind every history of philosophy (and culture) there is a certain philosophy of history, and so here.

Table 1  Organization of content knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Croatia</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic understanding of selected philosophical concepts</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic understanding of selected philosophical traditions (theories, schools of thought)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic understanding of discussions related to selected philosophical problems</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad knowledge of the history of philosophy</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Thinking in a philosophical way

The second cluster of goals and outcomes that dominate high school philosophy curricula relates to a philosophical way of thinking. Of course, the discussion of what a philosophical way of thinking might be is one of those continuous discussions that are typically connected to different understandings of what philosophy is all about. It is therefore almost self-evident that different curricula reflect different views of philosophy itself. Besides that, it should be noted that in some cases these differences seem to be more the result of the taxonomic patterns used in curriculum design than different views on the nature of philosophy.

However, despite numerous and sometimes rather important differences, it is still possible to find equally important resemblances as well, even in those curricula that differ significantly in the definition of curricular content knowledge. One of them is the assumption that cognitive skills and strategies that are in the core of a philosophical way of thinking cannot be developed in some “content-free vacuum” or “any-content carousel,” but only in the medium of certain factual and conceptual philosophical knowledge. The other one is the belief that thinking in a philosophical way necessarily includes certain specific dispositions or habits of mind, such as willingness to explore and understand different perspectives, readiness to provide and accept rational argumentation, and to critically examine ideas and positions (both one’s own and others’) with conceptual and linguistic clarity and rigor. Finally, there is a high degree of concordance also in the cognitive skills themselves that are either implied or explicitly mentioned in individual curricula.

The Croatian curriculum, when it comes to cognitive skills and dispositions, is very scarce, general and vague. In its introductory part, where the general aims of teaching philosophy are defined, a philosophical way of thinking and the ability to take a critical approach to the world are mentioned. Somewhat more specific formulations can be found in the section on preferred methods of teaching, where it is suggested that the focus of teaching should be on discovering and questioning problems, asking questions, and seeking and explaining answers.
The Italian curriculum explicitly mentions the development of the ability of personal reflection and critical judgment, the ability to argue a thesis orally and in writing, and the development of citizenship-related skills. When it comes to dispositions, it stresses the need to encourage the willingness to discuss things in a rational way.

High school philosophy in the Netherlands is strongly focused on the development of philosophical thinking or *doing philosophy* (Kienstra et al., 2015). In this context, argumentation skills play a key role, primarily understanding the philosophical argument and its critical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking</th>
<th>Croatia</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to ask relevant questions, identify and define problems</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to analyse concepts, ideas, arguments and positions (theories, possible solutions to a problem)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to compare and evaluate competing ideas, arguments and positions (theories, possible solutions of a problem)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to articulate ideas, arguments and positions</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to read and interpret (understand) texts</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to clearly express and communicate own ideas</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal reflection and self-reflection</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to discuss things in a rational way</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
analysis, but also the skill of creating one’s own arguments. Therefore, in the Dutch curriculum, students are expected to select, structure and interpret information related to a philosophical problem or issue, to explore and question the assumptions and implications of that problem, and to analyze and evaluate the philosophical arguments that are part of the discussion. Students, furthermore, should be able to formulate (orally and in writing) a correct and convincing argument, argue *pro et contra* different philosophical positions, and finally to take their own personal, reasoned and well-argued position on a problem or issue.

The Slovenian curriculum is shaped around more or less the same set of skills (to discover and investigate a problem, to shape and present well substantiated arguments, to critically approach an issue, to use the language clearly and consistently and appropriate to the problem...), but additionally emphasizes those aspects of teaching philosophy that are focused on personal development (*Bildung*) of students. In this context, autonomous and creative thinking, self-reflection, establishing a dialogue between one’s own personal experience and different philosophical traditions, ethical reflection, etc. are listed as goals or intended outcomes of teaching philosophy. Finally, when it comes to dispositions, the willingness to tolerant dialogue based on rational arguments is explicitly mentioned.

If we look at the list of skills and dispositions that are more or less explicitly stated as goals or outcomes in the analyzed curricula, it will be difficult to overlook their potentially generic character. This is especially evident in the case of abilities to read and interpret (understand) texts (reading) and to clearly express and communicate one’s own ideas (speaking and writing), which are usually included in communication skills that are transversal, ie whose development is not related to any specific discipline or area of human knowledge. But the same could be said for other skills and dispositions: the ability to ask relevant questions and define problems, for example, or the ability to formulate and analyze arguments are not only important outside of philosophy, but can be in some way developed in science or history classes as well. Two things should be kept in mind here. First, there are significant differences between asking a relevant question, defining a problem, shaping and analyzing an argument, or interpreting a
text in philosophy, on the one hand, and in science or history, on the other. And second, these differences are due to differences in the content aspects to which these skills and dispositions are related. Simply put, philosophy, science, and history, however, do not deal with the same things, nor do they do so in an identical way. These are distinctly multidimensional skills: some of these dimensions are in some ways generic, while others are specific, as are their interrelationships. In this sense, their so-called “transferability” should be understood. The fact that a skill is to some extent “transferable” from one area of human knowledge to another, does not mean that it does not matter in which area it is developed. Otherwise, it would be completely irrelevant whether students study science, history or philosophy.

2.3 Application of philosophy in a broader context

The third cluster of goals and outcomes, the use of philosophy in a broader context, has, in comparison with the previous two, a somewhat different status. Namely, this cluster is no longer about goals and outcomes that indicate the acquisition of certain knowledge and skills, as in the first two clusters, but about the ability to apply them. Therefore, we might treat them as “second-order” goals and outcomes. Besides that, the phrase “use of philosophy in a broader context” may seem confusing at first glance. What is the “broader context” here? Generally speaking, a context is what is outside the text, but also related to the text. The nature of this relationship is such that the context is the environment of the text in which the text establishes certain dimensions of its meaning. If “text” here are philosophy classes, the use of philosophy in a broader context would then represent a step by which philosophical knowledge goes beyond the space in which it was acquired and formed.

The first dimension of this context is still school, ie education in general. At this level, philosophy as contextual or background knowledge would represent an important asset in understanding and mastering other disciplines and areas of human knowledge. It has such a role, for example, in Swedish high school programs that direct students to future pursuits in the humanities and social sciences.

The second dimension of the context is noticeably broader and re-
The goal of philosophy is not, in the first instance, to understand the great works of philosophy.
but to understand how things are

Rosenthal 1989, 158
fers to what is called culture in the broad sense of the word. Philosophical concepts, ideas and theories are seen not only as an integral part of culture, but sometimes as a prerequisite for its true understanding. In this sense, the Slovenian curriculum as one of the goals of teaching philosophy states students’ “understanding of basic philosophical concepts as foundations of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, religion and art.” In other words, it is about philosophy contributing to cultural literacy which, nota bene, includes not only the ability to understand culture (receptive moment) but also to participate in it, so it is most often understood as a fundamental premise of active citizenship.

Finally, the third and broadest dimension of that context is the life of which a person is a subject. I believe that it would not be entirely wrong to say that philosophy is basically a conceptual investigation that seeks solutions to certain problems, and that “the goal of philosophy is not, in the first instance, to understand the great works of philosophy, but to understand how things are” (Rosenthal 1989, 158). If we keep in mind that the problems in question are related to the world, humans and their relationship, then teaching philosophy would be an attempt to empower young people to use philosophy or a philosophical way of thinking in their current and future personal and social lives. Throughout the history of philosophy, it has somehow been suggested that only such an examined life is truly worth living. Thus, paradoxically at first glance, since the word “use” suggests some kind of instrumentality, it turns out that what should be for philosophy in schools the broadest context of its use is, in fact, its intrinsic purpose.

3 Teaching and Learning Philosophy

One of the fundamental concepts of general curriculum theory is the concept of constructive alignment. Its fundamental function is to ensure consistency between learning outcomes, learning experiences (ways and content of learning) and evaluation. In other words, the chosen contents and forms of learning and the ways of evaluation must be harmonized with the learning outcomes, as well as, of course, with each other.
In this context, the relationship between outcomes and forms of learning is particularly important. Although different forms of learning can contribute to the achievement of one and the same outcome, their number is not unlimited. On the contrary, it could be said that some forms of learning never or very little contribute to the achievement of certain outcomes. Thus, for example, rote memorization does not by itself contribute to the ability to substantiate one’s own beliefs with arguments, although this ability also requires some factual knowledge.

On the other hand, learning in the context of school education is interrelated and intertwined with teaching. It could be said that these two terms describe two simultaneous and interdependent aspects of the activities that take place in the classroom: one refers to what the students do and the other to what the teacher does. Just as certain forms of learning presuppose a certain way of teaching, so certain types of teaching direct students towards certain forms of learning.

What is effective teaching? On the one hand, the answer is rather simple: one that directs students toward those learning experiences that contribute to achieving the desired outcomes. The teacher’s lecture on the structure of the argument will lead students to listen, write down and try to remember a certain amount of facts about the argument and its structure. But if the teacher is to teach students to shape an argument and support their beliefs with it, she will have to use the teaching strategies that require and stimulate different forms of learning than memorization.

If we have in mind that a large part of the goals and outcomes of the analyzed curricula refer mainly to cognitive skills whose mastery requires certain types of cognitive practices, it is clear that optimal forms of learning will fall into the category of what is usually called “learning by doing” or “active learning.” Of course, every learning is to some extent active, because learning is by definition a mental activity, and not, say, a state. However, if we look at the forms of learning that are usually associated with the concept of active learning, such as text interpretation and analysis, essay writing, Socratic dialogue, class discussion, debate etc., it is obvious that they engage students in activities that involve higher-order thinking, such as interpretation, analysis, synthesis or evaluation.
Abilities of philosophical inquiry or doing philosophy, which include asking meaningful, relevant and productive questions, defining problems, analyzing, comparing and evaluating concepts, arguments and philosophical positions, articulating and communicating one’s own ideas and arguments etc., are not something that can be passed on to students like, in Hegel’s words, as “a stamped coin issued directly from the mint and ready for one’s pocket” (Hegel 2018, 24). On the contrary, these abilities can only be developed through the forms of learning in which such cognitive practices are embedded both as their content and as their purpose.

The question “How to teach philosophy effectively” is, of course, very complex and requires an answer whose complexity goes beyond the purpose and ambitions of this article. However, most of the analyzed curricula at least imply some elements of a possible answer. First of all, teaching philosophy should aim at knowledge of philosophy, not just knowledge about philosophy. The latter one can be understood as being familiar with the teachings of great philosophers, their ideas and arguments, and their discussions and debates. But if we think of philosophy as an activity of thought, knowing philosophy then means knowing how to philosophize or how to do philosophy. Certain knowledge of philosophical concepts and theories may be needed to get a rough idea of how this is done, almost as an apprentice forms a rough idea of his craft by studying the actions of his master.

In addition to that, philosophical thinking, as has already been said, always constitutes itself in relation to a particular content which is therefore its medium. But the modes of teaching philosophy that are essentially focused on information transfer, whether it is embedded in the historical-philosophical or the problem-based teaching paradigm, do not result in forms of learning that develop the cognitive skills we typically associate with philosophy. The true learning of philosophy begins with its practice which is the practice of thinking in its various forms.
Chapter 3

The Benefits of Teaching Philosophy through Debate

Floris Velema

Velema, Floris (2022). The benefits of teaching philosophy through debate. In Floris Velema (ed.), *Debate / Philosophy: How to start debating in the philosophy classroom* (pp. 61-74). Leusden: ISVW Uitgevers
Chapter 3
The Benefits of Teaching Philosophy through Debate
Floris Velema

Several authors have developed a classification for the practice of teaching and learning philosophy in secondary education. For example, Steven M. Cahn describes various ways in which the curriculum can be structured, and distinguishes four approaches: the topical approach, the great texts approach, the historical approach, and the secondary source approach (Kasachkoff 2004, 1-3). When choosing the topical approach, students become acquainted with the major problems of philosophy, but face the pitfall of treating authors from different eras as contemporaries. With the great texts approach, historical works are studied in their totality. Although this can be intellectually satisfying, it is time consuming and could leave less time to focus on critical thinking. The historical approach offers students a clear and systematic overview of the history of philosophy, but neglects contemporary issues. In the fourth and last approach, the use of single-authored textbooks will make the subject matter easier to understand, but the homogeneity of a textbook inhibits a confrontation with the array of styles and opinions that enrich the history of philosophy.

Another example can be found in the classification of Ekkehard Martens, who focuses on philosophical methods that can be implemented in the philosophy classroom: the phenomenological method departs from everyday experience; the hermeneutic method aims at questioning our own views by interpreting texts and ideas; the analytical method focuses on definitions and argumentation; the dialectic method weighs counterpositions; and the speculative method aims at playfully trying out new ideas and hypotheses (Martens 2003, 54).

Lastly, Karel van der Leeuw & Pieter Mostert connect philosophy education with three types of activities: problem-oriented philosophy seeks to answer philosophical questions, history-oriented philosophy is based around the interpretation of philosophical texts, and per-
son-oriented philosophy aims at the development of a worldview (Van der Leeuw & Mostert 1991, 15).

What sets apart the classification provided by Tomislav Reškovac in chapter 2 of this book, is that instead of focusing on the structure of the curriculum, the philosophical method that is used, or the activity in the philosophy classroom, Reškovac distinguishes between possible goals and outcomes of teaching philosophy. In this way, he develops a taxonomy based on three “focal points”: specific content knowledge, thinking in a philosophical way, and application of philosophy in a broader context.

The aim of this chapter is to show that debate as a classroom activity is congruent with each of the possible goals and outcomes of philosophy education that Reškovac describes. To make this clear, various features and characteristics of the debate format will be described and connected to the different focal points in Reškovac’s classification.1 The conclusion contains a diagram that summarizes this superimposition of debate as a classroom activity and the practice of teaching and learning philosophy.

1 Debate as a Self-Directed Learning Activity

The first focal point in Reškovac’s typology of goals and outcomes of teaching philosophy is specific content knowledge. This is defined in the following way:

Specific content knowledge of philosophy, knowledge of philosophical ideas and theories, consists basically of factual and conceptual knowledge. It includes knowledge of philosophical terminology, the ability to understand and meaningfully use philosophical concepts, and to grasp their complex relations. Furthermore, students are typically expected to know the philosophical disciplines, philosophical problems and debates

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1 The features of debate used in this chapter are based on a discussion during Transnational Project Meeting 1 of the Erasmus+ project A Debate And Philosophy Typology (ADAPT). I am indebted to Debbie Newman for a first description of these features of debate.
that have formed around them. Finally, students are required to know the teachings of important individual philosophers or philosophical schools of thought and their place and role in the history of (in principle, Western) philosophy. (§2.1, page 47)

This detailed description of the kind of knowledge that is at stake in philosophy education naturally leads to the question of how this type of knowledge should be taught. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss various teaching styles and their respective merit for philosophy education, there are several authors that have insisted on the value of student participation in the philosophy classroom. Brook Sadler points out that philosophy as a discipline “may be understood as largely constituted by dialogue and discussion” (Sadler 2004, 252) and that such student activities as articulating a question, developing an argument, and imagining an example of their own, will lead to “developing and using the skills of philosophy—indeed, they will be doing philosophy” (id., 253).

Natascha Kienstra also emphasizes the idea of doing philosophy, which she describes as “thinking about how we use concepts and how concepts operate” (Kienstra et al. 2015, 4). Kienstra distinguishes between five types of classroom activities with ascending effectivity: rationalizing, analyzing, testing, producing criticism, and reflecting (id., 2). It is worth mentioning that Kienstra positions debate as a classroom activity at the level of producing criticism, thereby already acknowledging its value for philosophy education.

If the goal of philosophy education is not limited to the acquisition of knowledge, but also encompasses the ability to understand and meaningfully use philosophical concepts, as Reškovac aptly describes, then it follows from Sadler and Kienstra’s characterization of doing philosophy that student participation is essential to grasp philosophical concepts and their complex relations in an adequate manner.

Debate is an excellent way to ensure student participation. Teachers who wish to give more agency to their students and take a different approach to lecturing appreciate that debate is a student-led activity which is simultaneously academically rigorous. Students do their own research, prepare together in teams, chair the debate, share their learning with their peers through their speeches and can also take on
the role of assessors. As such, debate is a form of *active, student-led,* and *peer-to-peer learning.*

In a formal debate the motion\(^2\) is set and not deviated from. In contrast, a classroom discussion can meander from one area to another, bring in many diversions and end up in a very different place from where it began. A debate will keep its focus on the motion from the first to the last minute. Additionally, the goal of “winning” the debate motivates students and helps to engage them with their learning. Students research topics, apply their existing knowledge and interrogate what they and others know. The focus on *one topic* and the *goal-driven* nature of debate set this format apart from other learning activities.

With the students taking charge of their learning, the role of the teacher is to facilitate. This can include setting the topic, grouping the students, ensuring the students have the necessary knowledge or providing access to research opportunities. During the debate they can assist the chair as needed and after the debate they can correct factual errors, continue the conversation as appropriate and provide formative feedback. In their detailed conceptual analysis of feedback, John Hattie & Helen Timperley state that feedback is among the most critical influences on student learning (Hattie & Timperley 2007, 102). Debate provides a context that positions the *teacher as facilitator,* which opens up possibilities for *formative feedback.*

2 Debate as a Structured Thought Experiment

Reškovac goes on to characterize the second focal point in his typology of goals and outcomes of teaching philosophy as follows:

Thinking in a philosophical way necessarily includes certain specific dispositions or habits of mind, such as willingness to explore and understand different perspectives, readiness to provide and accept rational argumentation, and to critically examine ideas and positions (both one’s own and others’) with conceptual and linguistic clarity and rigor. (§2.2, page 51)

\(^2\) See Appendix II for a list of philosophical debate motions.
The debate format is precisely aimed at achieving conceptual clarity through opposition. It allows for both sides of an argument to be aired equally. A less formal conversation on a controversial topic can become one-sided or dominated by one viewpoint. The equal number of speakers and length of speeches on each side of a debate ensure a balanced argument. Debaters learn skills such as defining terms, defending positions, mapping the argument, constructing an argument, analyzing problems, using evidence, and selecting the best arguments. In short, the two sides format provides an environment where different perspectives can be explored through rational argumentation.

The formal structure of debate has many advantages. Having a set speaking order and set times of speeches gives clarity and ensures fairness. In a classroom discussion, more confident students can fill the time while those who are quieter can be passed over, through choice or because they feel intimidated. In a debate everyone is given the same time to speak and cannot be spoken over. The different roles for different speakers ensure a shape to the argument, with ideas being introduced, challenged, rebuilt and summarized. The structured rules and roles of the debate format form an excellent pedagogical tool to attain clarity and rigor in a discussion.

Lastly, a debate ensures a clash between both sides where speakers challenge and are challenged. It is often through this interplay that ideas are sharpened and given depth and nuance. In a classroom discussion, it is possible to hear two sides of a position being articulated without ever hearing them engage with each other. The debate format guarantees that the different perspectives are critically examined by deliberately aiming at a confrontation between opposing views. This can be illustrated with Arthur Schopenhauer's intriguing diagram on traveling (see fig. 1, based on Schopenhauer 1969, 48-49). The diagram consists of so-called concept-spheres, with a partial overlap between the spheres and the concepts which they represent. Schopenhauer uses this example to show how “the persuasive talker takes whichever way he likes, always as if it were the only way, and then ultimately

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3 Note that it is possible to include multiple perspectives and grey areas in a debate by introducing some of the exercises in chapter 4. See for example the “multi-sided debate,” or the exercise “draw a line.”
arrives at good or evil, according to what his intention was” (Schopenhauer 1969, 49). Debate is often criticized in this way, as if the debater is taught to argue any position, with no regard for truth. This critique overlooks the fact that the debater is not only moving from concept to concept to defend their position, but that their arguments are also carefully compared to the arguments of the opposing team, based on assumptions, relevance, exclusivity, etc. John Stuart Mill also acknowledged the significance of this process of weighing arguments in his work On Liberty (1985, 98):

He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side, if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion.

To stay with Schopenhauer’s example, it is possible to have a classroom discussion where one student describes traveling as “producing peace of mind,” while another student mentions that traveling is “the cause of becoming poor.” However, the formal setting of a debate compels the students to weigh both arguments against each other and to decide (if the Opposition’s argument is accepted) whether peace of mind is worth becoming poor. It is precisely in this in-depth engagement with the opposing viewpoint that debate distinguishes itself from the average classroom discussion.

3 Debate as a Discussion That Matters

Reškovac’s third focal point, application of philosophy in a broader context, is further developed in three parts:

1 Understanding and mastering other disciplines and areas of human knowledge;
2 Philosophy contributing to cultural literacy which, nota bene, includes not only the ability to understand culture (receptive moment) but also to participate in it, so it is most often understood as a fundamental premise of active citizenship;
Fig. 1  Arthur Schopenhauer's *concept-spheres* (1819)
Exciting sensual appetites

Travelling

Expensive
Causing losses
Cause of becoming poor

Ample opportunity for storing experience
Increasing knowledge of pleasures
Increasing desires
Exciting sensual appetites
Disturbing peace of mind

Dangerous
Injurious
Yielding honour
Pernicious
Exciting envy
Incurring hatred

Invigorating
Healthy

Evil

Fig. 1: Arthur Schopenhauer's concept-spheres (1819)
An attempt to empower young people to use philosophy or a philosophical way of thinking in their current and future personal and social lives. (see §2.3, page 54)

One of the challenges to active citizenship today can be found in the transformation of the media landscape by social media and its contribution to increased political polarization (Dittrich 2017, 18). That the isolation of viewpoints could potentially jeopardize democracy was foreseen by John Dewey, when he wrote: "everything which bars freedom and fullness of communication sets up barriers that divide human beings into sets and cliques, into antagonistic sects and factions, and thereby undermines the democratic way of life” (Dewey 1988, 227-228).

The personalization of online content has brought about a new structure of antagonistic sects and factions—coined by internet activist Eli Pariser as “filter bubbles”—that have the tendency of confirming one’s existing beliefs and convictions.

In the Paris Declaration for Philosophy, which was established during the UNESCO conference Philosophy and Democracy in the World in 1995, the authors confirm “that the development of philosophical debate in education and in cultural life makes a major contribution to the training of citizens, by exercising their capacity for judgement, which is fundamental in any democracy” (Droit 1995, 15). It is in the development of a capacity for judgement that philosophy and debate form a remedy against polarization. Especially the debate format has certain characteristics that make it well-suited to the attainment of this goal.

In competitive debate, the participants are assigned their side of the debate, rather than picking a side themselves. This is crucial, as it depersonalizes the issue and allows different perspectives to be explored separate from an individual’s own beliefs. The pedagogical tool of appointed sides helps students to see that there are always competing viewpoints, develops empathy and helps guard against confirmation bias.

Returning to Schopenhauer’s concept-spheres, the learning outcome of debate does not lie in being able to employ concepts for your own benefit, but rather in developing a sensitivity for the spectrum of possible views on a certain topic and their respective merits. The ability to express a range of opinions, including those critical of
the state and other instruments of power is a pillar of democracy. The debate format offers an *open and democratic* environment that prepares students to take place in civic life.

Lastly, debate is an oracy-based activity and practice in that it helps students to become confident, fluent, articulate, and persuasive speakers. Simultaneously, careful, critical and active listening is crucial to success in debate. The more students debate the more they will practice and develop both *speaking and listening* skills. Taking part in debates can help build social and personal skills such as tolerance, empathy, cultural sensitivity, control of emotions and the ability to disagree with kindness and respect.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to show how debate as a classroom activity contributes to the various goals and outcomes of philosophy education that Reškovac distinguishes, based on his analysis of the curricula of several European countries. If the goal of philosophy education lies in the transfer of *specific content knowledge*, debate as an *active, student-led, and peer-to-peer learning activity* can help to successfully attain this goal. When the approach to philosophy education is characterized as *thinking in a philosophical way*, then the *structured rules and roles* of a debate and its focus on *clash* will lead to a more thorough analysis than a classroom discussion. If the philosophy curriculum is aimed at the *application of philosophy in a broader context*, the *appointed sides* of a debate and its *open and democratic* form can empower young people to become more active citizens. These conclusions, along with some examples of debate motions that fit the various characterizations of debate, can be found in Table 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal point of philosophy education</th>
<th>Characterization of debate</th>
<th>Corresponding features of debate</th>
<th>Types of debate motions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Specific content knowledge         | Debate as a self-directed learning activity | Active, student-led and peer-to-peer learning — One topic, goal — Teacher as facilitator, formative feedback | Motions that invite students to research a specific philosophical concept:  
This house supports substance dualism, as opposed to substance monism.  
This house believes that the morality of an action should be judged by its consequences and not by its intention.  
This house prefers Plato’s philosopher king over a democracy. |
| Thinking in a philosophical way     | Debate as a structured thought experiment | Two sides — Structured rules and roles — Clash | Motions that invite students to think deeply about a certain issue:  
This house would pull the lever to make the trolley switch tracks.  
This house supports plugging into Nozick’s experience machine.  
This house believes that the Ring of Gyges would turn good people into crooks. |
| Application of philosophy in a broader context | Debate as a discussion that matters | Appointed sides — Open and democratic — Speaking and listening | Motions that apply philosophical concepts to a broader context:  
This house would not give organs to non-donors.  
This house would grant animals the same basic rights as humans.  
This house supports restrictions on free speech to combat the rise of right-wing populism. |
Chapter 4
Debate Formats
Debbie Newman

1 Running a Parliamentary Debate in the Classroom

To hold a parliamentary debate in the classroom the teacher needs a topic (known as the motion), a proposing team and an opposing team. The speaking order and the length of speeches should be agreed in advance of the start of the debate and either the teacher or nominated students should chair the debate and time the speeches.

Debates are flexible:
- You can vary the number of speakers on each team (but make sure that the teams have the same number to ensure fairness).
- You can vary the lengths of the speeches to increase/decrease the challenge (but make sure both teams have the same length overall).
- You can choose to include an audience debate or an audience Question & Answer session to involve more students in the class.
- You can choose to allow speakers to try to interrupt each other with Points of Information (see below for details).

Here is a sample format for introducing debate to a new class. It has three speakers on each side each giving three minute speeches:

**Speaking Order**
First Proposition
First Opposition
Second Proposition
Second Opposition
Audience debate
Opposition summary
Proposition summary
Class vote
The classroom should be set up with the two teams facing the audience—they are not trying to persuade each other but rather trying to persuade the audience that their side is more convincing. The chairperson and timekeeper sit in the middle to keep order.

1.1 The Chairperson

> The chairperson starts the debate by stating the topic and introducing the teams. They call on the speakers as following: “I now call upon the first speaker for the Proposition, Jack” “Thank you very much Jack. I now call upon the first speaker for the Opposition, Ria”.

> After the second Opposition speech they call on members of the audience: “Thank you Karin. It is now time for the audience debate. Does anyone have any points in Proposition? In Opposition?“.

> After the audience debate, the chairperson calls on the summary speakers: “That concludes the audience debate. I now call on Jarek to sum up the case for the Opposition”.

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After the Proposition summary speaker, the chairperson takes a vote: “Can all those supporting the Proposition raise their hands? The Opposition? Any votes in abstention?”. The chairperson counts the votes and announces: “The motion is carried” or “the motion is defeated”.

Some teachers like to run a vote before the debate starts as well as afterwards to see if anyone in the class has changed their mind.

1.2 The Timekeeper

> The timekeeper needs a stopwatch and a gavel or bell (if neither are available they can bang on the table loudly with their hand).
> In a three minute speech the timekeeper should bang once at 2.30 to give the speaker warning that they are nearly done. At three minutes they should bang twice to indicate that the time is up. At 3.15 they should bang continually until the speaker takes their seat.
> If there are points of information in the debate the timekeeper should bang at 30 seconds to show that points of information may be offered. The 2.30 bang serves to indicate that no more points of information may be offered.

1.3 The Roles of the Speakers

> The First Proposition speaker offers a definition of the motion and puts forward two or three constructive arguments to support the motion.
> The First Opposition speaker refutes the arguments of the First Proposition, lays out the position of the opposition team and offers constructive arguments against the motion.
> The second speakers (and any additional main speakers if you have more than three-a-side) refute the arguments put forward by the other team, rebuild their side’s arguments and add at least one constructive argument (the final speaker before the summary
The summary speakers should not introduce new arguments. They summarize the key points in the debate in a biased fashion to show why their side has won and deserves the audience’s vote. If there has been an audience debate, they also address points from the audience as part of their speech. If points of information have been allowed in the debate, none are allowed in the summary speeches.

1.4 Points Of Information (POIs)

Points of Information increase the participation in a debate and make sure all speakers are actively listening throughout. Once students are comfortable with debate, it will increase the challenge and enjoyment of the activity to include them.

To offer a point of information to a speaker, a member of the other team stands and says “Point of Information” and waits. The speaker can say “rejected” in which case the person who offered must sit down and try again later. The speaker can also say “accepted” in which case the person who stood can make a 5-10 second challenge or question and then sit down. The speaker should address their point directly and then continue with their speech. The clock does not stop during the exchange and so it would recommended to take no more than one or two in a three minute speech.

2 Before a Debate: How To Prepare?

If this is the first time a class is doing a formal debate then they should watch a video of a model debate before they begin.¹ This will familiarize them with the format and allow them to visualize what is expected.

¹ See for example https://noisyclassroom.com/category/oracy-videos/ secondarschooldebates/
2.1 Options

> Preparation for a debate could happen as homework or as part of a lesson. If the former then the teams will need time together to coordinate their speeches.

> Preparation for debates could involve the whole class. For example in a class of 20, four groups of five students are preparing for two different motions. Or it could be that six students have been selected to prepare for this particular debate and others will have their turn at different parts of the year.

> Debates could be a way of introducing a topic but they are usually most effective at the end of the unit or as a revision lesson so that students can apply the knowledge and understanding they have gained in class study.

2.2 The Preparation Steps

> Announce the motion(s) and allocate sides. Students should not be allowed to show a preference for which side they argue for.

1. Brainstorm ideas—in silence and then as a group, gather as many ideas as possible on paper.

2. Organize ideas—In a three-on-three debate teams will want 3-6 arguments. Identify these points from the brainstorm and decide which will go in each speech.

3. Develop arguments—Each argument should be developed using Statement, Analysis, and Illustration.

4. Consider refutation—think about what the other side will say and how it can be countered.

> If there are more than three students preparing together, the students or the teacher must decide which students are going to take the roles of the speakers. This best time to do this is after stage two or three.

> Once speakers have been selected their preparation diverges. The first four speakers will need to concentrate on making notes for their constructive arguments. Apart from the First Proposition
speaker they will also need to be prepared for key refutations. The summary speakers and any additional group members need to concentrate on thinking about everything the other side might say and how to refute it. They need to pass this information to their team members so that the side is consistent and prepared. The summary speakers may also consider the overall strategy of the debate and the big areas they will likely focus on during their speech, but they must be prepared to change these if the debate does not go as expected. Audience members can also use this time to think of questions for the audience debate, though the best questions will often come through close listening to the speeches.

> Students should not write out speeches word for word but rather make bullet point notes to speak naturally from. They may use cue cards or there are scaffolding sheets available for beginners. The worksheets available at https://debaticons.com are also a great resource to start from.

The structure of a speech is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preview of points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition/Refutation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point One</td>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point Two</td>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point Three</td>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminder of points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion (“I therefore ask you to vote for the Proposition/Opposition”).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students can be given prompts to help them generate ideas during preparation. Teachers could supply a list of questions such as these:

- What’s the most important reason why we should or shouldn’t do this? (e.g. is there a problem we want to solve, a principle we want to uphold?).
- Will this work? Why/why not?
- What do we need to prove/disprove in order for our side to win?
- What are all of the other advantages and disadvantages? (e.g. it’s cheaper, it sends out a strong message etc.).
- What are the principles? (equality, justice, freedom of choice, social contract etc.).
- Which philosophers are relevant to this debate and how can we apply their teaching?
- What are the practicalities (cost, time, resources etc.)?
- Who are the stakeholders in this debate? (e.g. government, parents, children, teachers, employers, universities etc. in a debate on education) How does this affect them?
- Are different countries affected differently? Developing/developed; democracy/dictatorship; religious/secular etc..
- How would we measure success?
- What examples can we think of from the news recently that fit into this? What other examples can we think of?

This list includes questions that are suited to “policy” debates where the topic asks the Proposition team to support a change to the status quo e.g. “This house believes that people who smoke should not get access to free healthcare”. If the topic asks the students to debate values or facts rather than proposing a policy e.g. “This house believes national security is more important than privacy”, then the list might look like:

- What’s the most important reason why we believe our position is right?
- What do we need to prove/disprove in order for our side to win?
- What are all of the other advantages and disadvantages associated with the two positions?
- Which philosophers are relevant to this debate and how can we apply their teaching?
- Who are the stakeholders that are affected by these positions?
- What criteria are we using to judge our relative positions?
- What different real world situations can this be applied to?
- What examples can we think of from the news recently that fit into this? What other examples can we think of?

**2.3 During a debate: what does the whole class do?**

> Whole classes can be involved in the debate through:
  - active listening
  - participating in an audience debate or Q&A
  - peer judging the debate
  - taking on the role of reporters who will write a newspaper article on the debate
  - taking on the role of chairperson and timekeeper

**2.4 After a debate: how to make the learning stick**

> The debate can lead to a class discussion which could cover:
  - What points were most persuasive?
  - Were any points missed out?
  - Could consensus or compromise be reached between the teams? Is there a grey area which was not articulated?
  - Are there other debates which consider similar philosophical issues?

> The debate could lead to a written piece of work which could be:
  - An essay on the debate topic.
  - A newspaper article on the debate as it happened.
  - A written out speech on one side or the other of the topic.

> The debate could be followed by teacher-led input:
  - The debate speeches could be marked as if they were essays.
  - Feedback can be given to pick up on any omissions or errors of understanding.
3 World Schools Debating Format or WSDC format

- Once your class are familiar with this simplified debate model, you can extend it to the full WSDC format. This format with its longer speeches and its additional speeches will allow your students to analyze the topic in more depth and breadth and will therefore bring greater academic benefits. This is the format used at the World Schools Debating Championships and at many other competitions around the globe.

**Speaking Order**
- First Proposition
- First Opposition
- Second Proposition
- Second Opposition
- Third Proposition
- Third Opposition
- Opposition reply
- Proposition reply

- The debate order is very similar to the beginner format but it now has an additional third speaker on each side. This speaker does not introduce any new arguments but attempts to systematically refute the material of the other side and rebuild their own team’s arguments. This speech allows for a deeper and more strategic exploration of the debate and may be the most cognitively challenging for your pupils.

- The WSDC format traditionally has three students per side with the reply speech delivered by one of the first or second speakers, giving them a second chance to speak. However, when used in the classroom, you may wish to have a fourth individual on each team to deliver this speech to maximize participation.

- At the tournament, the speech lengths are eight minutes for the six main speakers and four minutes for the reply speeches. This longer speaking time has the advantage of allowing for greater depth, however it will not be practical in all classroom
sessions. Five or six minute speeches will still allow the topic to be explored and may give necessary time to class participation or feedback and reflection after the debate. With these longer speeches, the first and last minute are protected from Points of Information.

- The format traditionally has no audience participation which may not be ideal for the classroom setting. It is an easy adaptation to add an audience, either before or after the reply speeches or to add a question and answer session at the end of the debate.

- One of the wonderful features of the WSDC format is that the students are expected to approach each motion with a global outlook. This means when considering a topic they broaden their minds to think about how it will apply in more economically developed countries (MEDCs) and less economically developed countries (LEDCS); in democracies and dictatorships; in societies dominated by religion and those that are largely atheist. Students will need to be explicitly told to approach topics with this mindset if it is to be used. The teacher may prefer to limit a debate to their own society and that is equally valid and can provide more simplicity. Again, the important thing is that the students understand what is expected from them.

- The WSDC judging criteria awards marks for content, style and strategy. Teachers should feel free to use this criteria or to mark the debates in a way which is academically relevant for their own setting.

### 3.1 Roles of the speakers in the WSDC format

- The roles of the first four speakers in the WSDC format are broadly the same as in the beginner format:

  **First Proposition**

  - The First Proposition speaker sets up the debate by offering a definition of the motion and outlining the context in which the debate is taking place. They flag up the points that they and the second speaker are going to cover and then spend the majority
of their speech putting forward their points. Most first speakers will have two or three points in their speech but the rules do not specify a minimum or maximum number.

First Opposition

> The second Opposition speaker should clarify whether they agree or challenge the context of the debate as it has been set up. They should outline their position in the debate and flag up the points to be covered in their own speech and that of the second speaker. Before they go on to make their own arguments they should refute the points put forward by the First Proposition speaker. They should then go through their own constructive points (again typically two or three points).

Second Speakers

> The focus of the second speakers shifts towards engaging with the debate that has happened so far. This has two parts: firstly defending and reconstructing the first speaker’s arguments which have been refuted by the other side. This should not mean merely repeating the arguments as stated, but explaining why the attacks have not damaged these original points. The second part is refuting the new arguments which have been by the previous speakers. The second speakers should also leave enough time to put forward at least one new constructive argument.

Third Speakers

> The third speakers do not bring in any new constructive points to the debate. At this stage the debate focuses on adding depth to existing arguments, rather than adding more breadth. The third speakers analyse the arguments which have been put forward by both sides and aim to show why their side is more persuasive. They do this through comprehensively refuting all of the arguments on the other side, including more nuanced detail than the previous speakers have had a chance to do and rebuilding their own side’s points. The third speakers can, and should, add new lines of analysis, facts and examples to the debate as long as they are within the existing arguments tabled and not a wholly new point.
An effective way to structure a third speech is to identify and flag up key questions or areas of clash in the debate. The material can then be presented under these headings, which allows for a more coherent speech than simply going through all of the points on the other side and then all of the points on their own side. For example the questions could be: (a) Is there really a problem? (b) Will this policy solve the problem? (c) Is it the morally right approach to take? The arguments of both sides can then be analyzed within these questions with the speaker showing why their side has won on each of the identified issues.

Reply Speakers

The reply speech is four minutes long and cannot be interrupted by points of information. There is no new material introduced in the reply speech (with the exception of refutation of the third Opposition in the Proposition reply). The purpose of the speech is to package and present what has already happened in the debate with a biased slant, to show why the debate was won by your side in the first six speeches. The speech should have a structure which could revert to the original points put forward by their side, it could be around the key points at the end of the debate or it could be around competing visions of the two teams. At this stage the focus is on the big picture ideas of the debate rather than minutiae of what had been discussed.
Alternative Formats

There are other debate formats which can be effective in the classroom. Using these formats alongside parliamentary debates can add variety and engagement, keep the students mentally agile and sharpen specific debate skills. Choose from:

Balloon debates
A fun way of comparing philosophers

Table debates
When you want all of the class to be giving speeches in the debates

Silent debates
For those times when you need a quiet classroom or a focus on writing

Multi-sided debates
When there are more than two perspectives you wish to consider

Panel debates
When you wish the view of different philosophers to be expressed
**Balloon Debates**

**How it works**  Students take on the role of different philosophers. The conceit is that they are all in a hot balloon which is going down. In order to save any of them, they must start throwing philosophers out of the balloon. If they are thrown over, their contribution to philosophy and the wider world disappears. Students take turns to argue why they should stay in the balloon and be saved. Other students in the class can ask questions and vote on who to save and who to throw over. This can be done in one round or there can be multiple rounds with votes after each one.

**Materials needed**  None needed

**When to use**  This could be a fun end of term lesson

**Differentiation**  In choosing which students to be which philosophers and which to be questioners. Students would be supported with a sheet of notes on their philosopher.

**Number of students**  Whole class

**Level of difficulty**  Medium

**Time**  20-40 minutes (depending on number of philosophers and number of rounds).

**Adaptations**  Allow the students to use costume or props. Allow students to choose their own philosopher.
Example topics
No topics, just your chosen philosophers.

Feedback
Feedback could focus on students’ knowledge and understanding of their assigned philosopher and ability to articulate their significance in a persuasive way.

More advanced version
Give different rounds specific themes e.g., “contribution to arts and culture,” “contribution to science” and “contribution to politics.” Or “importance within philosophy,” “impact on the wider world.” Or have a round where they attack each other’s value.

Principles addressed
- Understand and formulate
- Compare with competing views
- Evaluate
- Application to real world
- Articulate a position
### Table Debates

**How it works**
Debates are prepared and run in the same way as for Parliamentary Debates (see page 76) but multiple debates are held in the classroom simultaneously around tables. There is no audience, so no audience debate.

So for example in a class of 24, there may be six 3-on-3 debate happening at the same time.

The teacher acts as chair and timekeeper and announces when it is time for the next speaker.

**Materials needed**
None needed

**When to use**
At the end of a unit, to allow students to apply their knowledge and understanding.

**Differentiation**
Different groups could have different topics. Speech lengths could vary by class (though need to remain the same within each class).

**Number of students**
Whole class

**Level of difficulty**
Medium-hard

**Time**
With four minute speeches, 25 minutes plus preparation time. Can be made shorter or longer with different speech lengths.

**Adaptations**
Pick two topics and pair up two groups. Each group debates once and acts as the audience once.
Example topics

This house believes public service workers should not be allowed to strike.

This house believes that we should support charities in our country before we give time or money abroad.

Feedback/assessment

It is hard to mark this activity as the teacher needs to float from group to group. Peer and self-assessment is ideal for this activity, allowing the students to identify strengths, gaps in knowledge and areas for improvement.

More advanced version

n/a

Principles addressed

- Understand and formulate
- Compare with competing views
- Evaluate
- Application to real world
- Articulate a position
Silent Debates

How it works
Teachers choose a topic and stick large pieces of paper to the wall for “For” and “Against” (could we be two white boards or two large pieces of paper on two tables). Pupils write their arguments directly on to the paper (or stick post-it notes on). They read the other arguments and add/build on the arguments to improve them. To disagree with or challenge them, they can draw an arrow from the point and write their refutations or questions.

Materials needed
Large sheets of paper, pens, post-it notes (optional)

When to use
Any time

Differentiation
Teacher could add some arguments to start the debate off

Number of students
Whole class

Level of difficulty
Medium

Time
Flexible but at least ten minutes

Adaptations
Students write an argument for or against on the top of a sheet of paper and then pass it to the student behind them. They write a refutation to this and then keep passing it behind with more refutations being added. This keeps all students in their seats. There are now some online platforms which allow you to run class debate digitally. Your own Virtual Learning Environment may be suitable or you could try a bespoke debate programme such as Kialo Edu (https://www.kialo-edu.com).
### Example topics

- *This house would ban extreme political parties.*
- *This house supports censorship of music lyrics.*
- *This house would introduce a citizens’ wage.*

### Feedback/assessment

Feedback could focus on quality of expression, breadth of arguments covered, application of philosophical knowledge.

### More advanced version

To stretch pupils set harder topics

### Principles addressed

- Understand and formulate
- Compare with competing views
- Evaluate
- Application to real world
- Articulate a position
Multi-sided debate

How it works
Where there are three or more interpretations or viewpoints that you want represented, you can set up a multi-perspective debate. The class is divided into the different groups to prepare their material. When the debate starts, a representative from every group has a turn to speak for an agreed time. When every group has spoken, a second round allows a different speaker from each of the groups to have a turn and tackle the arguments they have heard. There can be as many rounds as you would like.

This can work well as a public meeting so all of the class sit in rows as an audience and the speaker comes to the front to speak from a table/podium when it is their turn.

Materials needed
Podium (optional)

When to use
At the end of a unit to apply knowledge

Differentiation
Changing times for different rounds; appointing some speakers to deliver prepared materials and others to respond to arguments or ask questions; appointing harder viewpoints to more able students.

Number of students
Whole class

Level of difficulty
Medium

Time
Flexible but at least ten minutes
Adaptations

You could run one round as a question and answer session between the audience and the speakers in that round. Bring in another class to act as the audience. To give it a town meeting feel, book the hall to run the debate.

Example topics

A question such as “Are human beings really free?” with groups representing Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

Or an issue such as “Should we legalize Assisted Suicide?” with groups representing doctors, patients, families and religious groups.

Or a town planning decision such as “Should we build a new library or sports centre?” with groups representing local schools, parents, residents, health groups, etc.

Feedback /assessment

Focusing on ability to articulate position and apply philosophical knowledge.

More advanced version

Harder topics, more complex positions, more rounds and longer speeches.

Principles addressed

- Understand and formulate
- Compare with competing views
- Evaluate
- Application to real world
- Articulate a position
Panel debate

How it works  Modeled on a television panel show, students take on the role of specific philosophers, as allocated by the teacher. The teacher or another student acts as the chairperson and fields questions from the rest of the class and mediates the debate between the panellists.

Materials needed  None needed. Costumes and microphones optional.

When to use  At the end of a unit to apply knowledge

Differentiation  Stretch the most able by giving them the hardest positions to apply to the theme. Support students with supplementary notes if needed.

Number of students  Whole class with some in main roles and some as the questioning audience. Probably needs at least eight students to work.

Level of difficulty  Medium

Time  As long as the teacher wishes to allocate. This could be a ten minute activity to conclude a lesson or it could be the lesson.

Adaptations  Students could represent philosophical schools rather than a single philosopher. The class could be allowed to ask any question, rather than limiting it to a theme.
**Example topics**

A panel debate could be around themes such as:
- The role of the state
- Life and death
- Morality
- Freedom

**Feedback/assessment**

Focusing on ability to articulate position and apply philosophical knowledge.

**More advanced version**

The panellists could take on the roles of politicians or scientists with the questioning audience being the philosophers. Or the panel could be a mix of philosophers and non-philosophers.

**Principles addressed**

- Understand and formulate
- Compare with competing views
- Evaluate
- Application to real world
- Articulate a position
5 Short Exercises

The skills of debating can be developed through shorter activities which can easily be incorporated into everyday lessons. If students become used to a culture of argumentation through such activities, they will be well prepared for full debates. Some colleagues may never embrace full parliamentary debating but may be amenable to introducing such activities into their practice. These exercises cannot replicate the depth of a full debate but neither do they demand the time commitment.
### Draw a Line

#### How it works
The teacher writes a statement on the board. Students are instructed to go to the left wall of the classroom if they strongly agree, the right wall if they strongly disagree or to stand anywhere in the line in between to indicate to what extent they agree. Once they are in position, the teacher facilitates a discussion asking students to justify their position and challenge each others’. Students can move along the line at any stage. Teachers need to guide discussion to ensure it stays focused on philosophy concepts/views and their application.

#### Materials needed
None needed

#### When to use
This is useful as a short activity at the start of a lesson, as a plenary at the end of a lesson or at a stage where the teacher feels the students would benefit from being out of their seats.

#### Differentiation
Choose the topic to match the ability level of the class. Target harder questions to more able students. For lower ability groups, tell them the topics you will use the lesson before so that they can prepare and/or give example arguments of people with differing opinions.

#### Number of students
One to one hundred!

#### Level of difficulty
Easy

#### Time
5-10 minutes per topic (depending on length of discussion)
Adaptations
If you do want your students to leave their seats, ask them to hold up a piece of paper with a number written on it from 1-10 (1= strongly agree, 10= strongly disagree).

Example topics
The right to privacy should be restricted to protect national security.
Assisted suicide should be legalized/banned.
Artificial intelligence is a threat to humanity.

Feedback /assessment
This activity does not need to be marked.
Feedback could focus on developing reasoning, choosing credible evidence and articulating views clearly using academic vocabulary.

More advanced version
Once the students are in line, ask the “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” groups to swap their positions and try to persuade those in the middle to come closer to their side and/or ask those in the middle to try to find a consensus between the two opposing views.

Principles addressed
- Understand and formulate
- Compare with competing views
- Evaluate
- Application to real world
- Articulate a position
Condensing

How it works
Every student has an argument to make or a position to represent. They start with two minutes to put forward their view. In the next round they have one minute. In the third round they are allowed just one sentence and in the final round just one word.

Materials needed
Stopwatch. Optional: materials to help the students prepare their position.

When to use
Use at the end of a lesson or unit of lessons to allow the students to apply their knowledge and understanding. Also useful as a revision tool.

Differentiation
Choose the arguments to match the ability level of the individual students. Change the timings to make the exercise easier/harder.

Number of students
One or more

Level of difficulty
Medium

Time
Four minutes per student involved (plus preparation time)

Adaptations
Have different students take on the different times for each point. Pair students with opposing views.
| Example topics | Happiness is more important than freedom.  
|                | Minority languages should be protected.  
|                | Humans have a duty to protect other species. |
| Feedback /assessment | Are the students able to identify the core principles in the shorter versions? Are they able to extend their analysis in the longer speeches? Are they expressing themselves clearly, accurately and with the correct vocabulary? |
| More advanced version | Some might argue that it is more advanced to start with one word and work upwards. |
| Principles addressed | - Understand and formulate  
|                       | - Application to real world  
|                       | - Articulate a position |
**Why? Why? Why?**

**How it works**
In pairs, one student articulates a position. After each statement, their partner asks “Why?” and they have to justify their statement. For example in a defence of referenda:

“It’s better to make decisions democratically”  
Why? “Because democracy is the best form of government”  
Why? “Because it’s important that everyone is represented”  
Why? “Because everyone is equal”  

**Materials needed**
None needed

**When to use**
This is useful as a short activity at the start of a lesson, as a plenary at the end of a lesson or when a teacher wishes to consolidate a new idea.

**Differentiation**
Differentiate by complexity of topic. Support students with written materials and more time to prepare or give on the spot challenges.

**Number of students**
Whole class

**Level of difficulty**
Easy

**Time**
5-10 minutes

**Adaptations**
Instead of in pairs, have one student at the front of the class. All of the other students ask “Why?” and can be used to help the speaker with ideas if needed.
| Example topics | Strong dictators are preferable to weak democracies.  
| Freedom of speech should be absolute.  
| We should protect the privacy of public figures.  
| Parents should not be allowed to smack their children. |
| Feedback /assessment | Feedback could focus on whether students are able to pick apart assumptions and articulate. |
| More advanced version | Set it up as chain so when the “Why?” question is asked, it moves on the next student to justify the position. This will encourage close, active listening. |
| Principles addressed | - Understand and formulate  
| - Application to real world  
| - Articulate a position |
Spar Debates

How it works
In pairs, students take on the “For” and “Against” of a statement and argue back and forth on the issue.

Materials needed
None needed

When to use
This is useful as a short activity at the start of a lesson, as a plenary at the end of a lesson or at any stage to replace looser class or pair discussion.

Differentiation
Put two people on each side, choose easier/harder topics, change the length of the debates.

Number of students
Whole class

Level of difficulty
Easy

Time
2-5 minutes per topic

Adaptations
Teachers could choose one pair of students to come to the front of the class and the other students listen.

Example topics
Animal testing should be banned.
Equality of opportunity matters more than equality of outcome.
There is no such thing as objective truth.
**Feedback /assessment**  
This activity does not need to be marked. Feedback could focus on developing reasoning, articulating views clearly using academic vocabulary and demonstrating critical listening.

**More advanced version**  
Only allow the students to speak in questions. Make the pairs swap sides half way through.

**Principles addressed**  
- Understand and formulate  
- Compare with competing views  
- Evaluate  
- Application to real world  
- Articulate a position
Defend the Indefensible

How it works
Students take it in turns to draw an “indefensible” topic from a pile of topics. They have one minute to persuade the audience of its truth; to defend the indefensible. Following the speech, the teacher can lead a discussion in the techniques used to grow the class’ awareness of persuasive techniques, good and bad.

Materials needed
Pre-prepared topics

When to use
Perfect for a fun activity at the end of term. It can also be used at any time to examine persuasion, argumentation, logic, rhetoric and sophistry.

Differentiation
Allow students more time to prepare for their turn if needed.

Number of students
One or more

Level of difficulty
Easy

Time
2-5 minutes per topic (or as the teacher wishes)

Adaptations
Allow the students to create their own topics. Have students work in pairs or groups to prepare their defence. Set as a written exercise.

Example topics
The moon is made of cheese.
You, the members of the audience, do not exist at all.
Being consists of an unchanging, ungenerated, indestructible whole. (Parmenides)
### Feedback /assessment
Formal marking of this activity is optional. Feedback could focus on developing reasoning and articulating views clearly and identifying fallacies.

### More advanced version
Students must not only defend their topic, they must do so from the point of view of an allocated philosopher. To add even more challenges allow other students the chance to interrogate the position.

### Principles addressed
- Understand and formulate
- Articulate a position
Chapter 5

Philosophy Does Not Tell Us How Things Are

Gijs van Oenen

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Philosophy does not tell us how things are. Those looking for positive definitions or authoritative expositions should consult a dictionary or glossary, rather than this handbook chapter. Admittedly, dictionaries are valuable in that they inform us of the uniformity, or variety, of meaning ascribed to terms in daily life. They thus testify to the importance of speech and language. Speech is an essential part of human life and human self-understanding, as already understood by Aristotle. Human beings use speech, Aristotle said, to distinguish between the advantageous and the harmful, the right and the wrong, the painful and the pleasurable (1944, 1253a10-16). This is what makes the human world human.

Such distinctions, however, are not merely descriptive, or innocent. Although they seem to simply indicate how the world is, or how we perceive it, they in fact represent judgments, which actively organize and shape the world. Such judgments divide and organize the world along “fault lines”; a world which otherwise would have no meaning to them, and would be unlivable. Moreover, as human beings are bound to disagree on how and where such fault lines should be drawn, speech is used to fight over such distinctions. Depending on whose philosophy you follow, speech is likely to either solve such disagreements, or further incite them. Thomas Hobbes’ opinion on this point is unequivocal: “men’s tongue is a trumpet of war and sedition” (1972, V.5).

We can reformulate this by saying that human beings are those beings/animals which are unable to live without speech—without this “affliction” of arguing over how the world should be divided into right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, etc. Human beings thus are unable to conceive of themselves outside of speech. Even sexuality, for instance, is something preconceived in speech, divided by speech into forms that are proper and improper, to be admired and respected, or
to be abhorred and rejected—or at least something to be reflected on, and classified, in some way. Equally, food is divided into kosher and non-kosher, halal and haram. Growing up and being socialized to a large extent means internalizing such distinctions, and their social meanings, so that we can behave accordingly, and answer properly when challenged. This also implies a political dimension to language, as indicated in the saying: “a language is a dialect with an army.” Kenyan philosopher Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o for instance writes about the way in which the imposition of the English language contributed to the subjection of African colonial people (Ngũgĩ 1986).

Unlike the dictionary, philosophical discourse is not a neutral bystander in this view of human life as essentially a “language game” (cf. Wittgenstein 1967)—a notion fully in line with the idea that human beings live in and through language, that human lives are “not worth living” when not investigated in and through language—an idea imprinted upon Western culture by Socrates. Philosophy itself lives in and through language. Philosophy’s ideas, concepts, and arguments cannot live outside language. But more importantly, this notion continues the Aristotelian view that human beings shape and value their world through language. Language is not just one “tool” among others that the particular animal “human” uses to hammer, chisel, and polish the world into some shape that fits him best. Language is the tool of tools; no other tool makes sense if it were not for language. This is one way to understand philosopher Jacques Derrida’s famous line: “Il n’y a pas de hors-texte,” “There is nothing outside text” (Derrida 1976, 159).

But aren’t there things, out there, apart from words? Yes there are, quite a few, but they make little sense to human beings when they are not somehow touched by language, so to speak. Maybe just in a negative sense: words or phrases may lack for some meaningful human experiences but even the lack of proper words can be supremely meaningful. Think of the lack of a proper name for God (“Jahweh,” “Jehovah”) in Christian doctrine: any name would do injustice to His immeasurable greatness, goodness, or omnipotence. And accordingly, “negative theology” turns around God’s (equally immeasurable) absence; poetically put, “God is a bell unrung.” Or think of some shocking event that leaves you “speechless”: you sense its extraordi-
nary impact exactly by the inability to express it in words. Or as we say in common speech: it is the exception that confirms the rule. So, is there actually something “outside of text”? Yes, but the point is that we can only make sense of this “something” by referring to it as “outside of text”—thus, by reference to “text.” And in that sense, it is not outside of text.

As might be clear by now, “debate” is no innocent bystander here either. Just as much as philosophy, debate is complicit in the idea—and the practice—that human beings live in and through language. Debate is a specific way of living and applying this idea, namely, a combative, competitive, and quasi-sporting way. We might call debate a form of regulated fighting for taking up—that is, creating—and defending a position in the world. But we should even go one step further: debate can use language to “turn the world around.” That is, in and through debate we can take up and defend a position different from, or even contrary to, our own. The world of debate is therefore somewhat like that of Alice’s Wonderland, where Humpty Dumpty famously told a surprised and somewhat unnerved Alice that “when I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean.” When challenged by Alice on this brazen proposition, Humpty Dumpty famously replies: “the question is which is to be master—that’s all.” (Carroll 1993, 205)

Philosophy does not tell us how things are. It tells us how people struggle for mastery over the words which they live by, both collectively and individually. Also, philosophy is not best employed in asking for definitions, concepts, or essences. Definitions are vulnerable to Humpty Dumpty’s critique: giving definitions amounts to exercising power in language. Similarly, for philosophy most (if not all) concepts are what William Brice Gallie (1964) called “essentially contestable”—they exist (only) in and through linguistic controversy. Reference to some essence is generally anathema in modern philosophy, as it suggests that terms or things possess some unchangeable, and thus incontestable, core or essence. So everything is up for debate!
Almost as foundational as philosophy’s concern with mastery over words that humans live by, is its concern for freedom. One would be hard pressed to find any modern (western) philosophical doctrine that does not proclaim the promotion of freedom as its main aim. With a poetical variation on Derrida: “there is nothing outside of freedom.” This does not imply that it is easy to define freedom, to agree about what it is, or what it requires. What freedom is and why it is valued, depends to a large extent on the philosophical doctrine that pursues it. And moreover: to agree on what freedom is, would diminish freedom—in any case, it would diminish the freedom to define freedom for oneself. (Similarly, it is undemocratic to agree about democracy—again, the essential contestability.)

Before the onset of modernity, freedom did not enjoy this special status in political philosophy. From the early Greeks on until the Renaissance (16th century), human beings generally reflected upon themselves as being part of a larger, preconceived system of life, world, and conviction—a cosmology, or a religion. The highest value in a philosophical doctrine would then typically express the aim to live in accordance with the requirements or prescriptions of such a system, e.g. to be a religiously upright person (piety), to fulfill the social role one has been assigned and to receive what is due (justice), or to excel in the activities proper to one’s status or position (virtue). The value of freedom here is either absent, or has a negative connotation, as it would imply, or even promote, some license to deviate from these prescriptions. Perhaps the main exception here is philosophy itself, especially as perceived by the ancient Greeks, who saw philosophical reflection on the values of life and culture, or human self-understanding, as itself being the supreme and most lofty human pursuit—a pursuit which could only be undertaken by those sufficiently “free” from other daily occupations (i.e., adult men with sufficient wealth and status).

We would be remiss here if we made no reference to the status of slaves, e.g. in ancient Greece. According to Aristotle (1944, 1253a3ff) some are slaves by nature, and some for other reasons (especially capture). Slaves by nature, he says, do not possess reason—although they
“participate” in it enough to understand, and follow, orders. Lacking a full and active capacity for reason, we cannot correctly perceive and judge what is required from us, hence we need guidance by some master. Such need for guidance (slavery) is then not seen as a “lack of freedom,” because without it one would be utterly lost, no better than an animal. Slaves through capture, however, presumably do possess the deliberative capacity, especially when they are men. Aristotle is somewhat evasive on this point, but one would be hard pressed to argue that such slaves would not benefit from being released, and thus gain freedom—even within the terms of Greek philosophy itself.

In modern philosophy (from the mid-17th century on, but especially after the French Revolution) however freedom is usually paramount, because modern philosophy rejects pre-given ends, statuses, and dogmata, and proclaims the equality of all. People have no natural “station” in life and do not fulfill pre-arranged roles. Both individuals and society are self-determining, which makes freedom the main requirement of modern self-understanding. Different from Aristotle, human self-understanding now also implies human self-transformation. This is an idea usually associated with Hegel (Habermas 1985, 26). Through the attempt at self-understanding, human beings change and develop themselves. We see this expressed in the modern philosophical process of Enlightenment, and its social and political corollary of emancipation. These are typically seen as processes that produce and increase freedom, because they liberate human beings from traditional and irrational restrictions and prejudices. (Of course, what is now identified as restrictions and prejudices, was previously experienced as habits and prescriptions implied by accepted cosmologies and religions.)

Modern philosophy thus entails that reflection and self-reflection produce and increase freedom. Or perhaps even that freedom consists in such reflection, and the personal and societal change it produces—an idea most forcefully articulated by Hegel, in the early nineteenth century. On this point, Hegel also sees a distinction between Western peoples and “Orientals”: the latter “do not yet know that the spirit, or man as such, is in itself free; because they don’t know this, they are not [free]” (Hegel 1986, 31). Freedom, Hegel emphasizes, is not something simply present in some state of nature; it is something to be gained, through understanding (id. 58-59).
PHILOSOPHY DOES NOT TELL US HOW THINGS ARE

Self-understanding

Freedom
Power

Authority
We need to note important critical objections from three major modern philosophers, however—called the “masters of suspicion” by Paul Ricoeur (1977). Karl Marx objected against Hegel that philosophers hitherto had only interpreted the world differently, while the important point is to change it—thus rejecting, perhaps too simplistically, Hegel’s (“idealistic”) view that interpretation already implies change (or in another, later vocabulary: that philosophy is performative). Especially the capitalist system of production needed to be changed, or rather abolished, in order to attain human freedom. Friedrich Nietzsche suspected that the self-reflective project of modernity amounts to self-deception and self-depreciation: it suppresses and abnegates the “will to power” that characterizes the truly magnanimous and creative human beings, turning them into slaves rather than masters. For Nietzsche, truth and reason are debilitating, rather than liberating and vitalizing. Sigmund Freud, in turn, proposed that human consciousness, and thus self-reflection, is (self-)deceptive because it is unaware of the “unconscious”: a domain of wishes and fantasies, which we “repress” because they conflict with our self-perception, or with prevailing social norms.

We should here also mention the distinction between “negative” and “positive” freedom most often associated with British philosopher Isaiah Berlin, and more generally with liberal ideology (Berlin 1969). “Negative” refers to the absence of obstacles, to whatever it is one wants; “positive” refers to enabling conditions to achieve whatever it is that one happens to want. The notion of positive freedom is already associated with Kant (also by Berlin himself) as Kant’s ethics imply that in order to be free, we need to be autonomous, and autonomy requires a positive idea of what we are and how we should realize ourselves. And of course Hegel’s notion of freedom, as something to be gained, would be “positive” in this sense.

The framing of liberty as divided between negative and positive is “liberal” because it is indifferent as to what is pursued, or not; this is seen completely as an individual preference. Negative freedom is considered harmless, because non-coercive; positive freedom is seen as potentially dangerous, especially when underwritten by government, as it might entail the state overruling individual preferences, by valuing and encouraging some pursuits over others.
Finally, freedom’s status as the highest philosophical value does not go uncontested. Often, freedom is weighed against e.g. equality, or contrasted with basic goods such as health, or mere survival. As Marxist playwright Bertolt Brecht put it in the *Dreigroschenoper*: “Was hilft da Freiheit, es ist nicht bequem—nur wer im Wohlstand lebt, lebt angenehm” (“What use is freedom, it is not convenient—only those living in affluence, live enjoyably”).

### 2 Power / Authority

Of all the elusive, “essentially contestable” concepts in political philosophy, power is perhaps the most elusive. Nearly all philosophers will agree that power is not a thing, an entity one could possess, like for instance gold, land, or real estate—although of course such possessions may imply or confer power. Rather than to a thing one “holds,” power refers to a position one occupies in some “field” of social relations. In an analogy with the natural sciences, power is not unlike “social gravity”—although of course the social field is not naturally given but constituted by structures and systems produced by humans themselves. “Produced,” yes, but not always (fully) understood, controlled, or even controllable by human beings. Think of Marx’s critique of capitalism and Freud’s discovery of the unconscious (cf. §1). In Marxist terms, capitalists—those who own the “means of production”—have power, in the sense that they occupy decisive positions in the “relations of production,” relations which for Marx translate into class positions, and class struggle. Similarly, a prime minister or a CEO “has” power not because of the person he or she is, but because of the position he or she occupies; released from that position, (much of) the power of that person dissipates as well.

In common usage, power is often perceived “negatively,” as in “oppressive” or “prohibiting”: an ability to control others by (the possibility of) denying or thwarting them. Classic examples include government using its police powers, a manager firing an employee, a multinational corporation threatening a national government to relocate in case of a tax increase. The relation here is asymmetrical: the citizen and the employee do not have similar power. Or in the case of
the multinational, the government does not have extranational powers. Which is not to say that they have no power: citizens may be disobedient, they may protest, or resort to (social) media; employees may call their union rep, or go on strike; government may take legal action. As social theorist Michel Foucault argues, there is almost always also power “from below” (Foucault 1980, 201). The examples also indicate that power is not just exercised randomly, “for the heck of it.” Government (at least when democratic) uses its police powers to achieve certain agreed-upon objectives; managers fire people if and when it is in the interest of the company; multinationals aim to satisfy their stockholders.

We may now already see why we can also perceive power as “positive,” or “enabling.” It is exercised for certain purposes, which implies that those over whom it is exercised in some way benefit from it. Citizens for instance profit from the safety and security provided by police powers. And even criminals profit from law enforcement, as e.g. Kant and Hegel argue: punishment “honors” them, as they are being taken seriously as rational beings—punishment “reminds” them of their responsibility (Hegel 1822, §100), implying that they should (and could) have known better. More generally, power as something positive refers to the sense that we would not come closer to realizing our goals by wishing all power away. No power would mean: no institutional functioning and no enforcement of rights. Or in line with Foucault: no discipline and no control. This is also why Foucault emphasizes that power also has a “positive” dimension (cf. §8), or in other words, that power is “productive.”

No less elusive than power is authority. Authority is related to power but looks more personal. We may rightly feel that someone “has” authority—although this is only ever exhibited through the behavior of others accepting, confirming, or conferring this authority. With social theorist Richard Sennett (1980, 19) we may see authority as “an attempt to interpret the conditions of power,” and doing so by “defining an image of strength that is solid, guaranteed, stable.” Thus authority makes power visible and expressive, in a form which is “performative” yet durable. Sennett’s example is the orchestra conductor: a person who expresses sovereign control, but can do so only by inducing, seducing, and inspiring others to perform, and perform well.
There may be something “natural” in such command. We find a
distant echo of this idea in Aristotle’s notion of specific people who
are “natural leaders” (or conversely, natural slaves) (1944, 1254bff),
while a modern example could be the conviction that one is somehow
“born” a music conductor (or not). In a comparable way, sociologist
Max Weber speaks of “charismatic authority,” to indicate some intan-
gible or idiosyncratic dimension of authority, in contradistinction
with “traditional” authority (mostly based on loyalty to a person) and
“legal” authority (based on the supremacy of law) (Weber 1922, 124; Al-
len 2004, 106ff). Authority conferred by law is the most common and
regular form of political authority in modern societies (in which “no
one is above the law”), yet traces of the other forms will remain pres-
ent—as is born out by the recent rise of populist leaders in advanced
democracies.

3 State / Citizenship

State and citizenship are political forms. Like with power, they do
not refer to things but to relations. The state is a form of relationship
between people, based on (the presupposition of) a common histo-
ry, territory, and/or will, which may or may not be represented in a
“social contract.” The “common cause” (“res publica”) of the people
constitutes the state, and in reverse the state confers citizenship on
its constituent people. In the technical sense of “republicanism,” pol-
itics is thus the—equal—status and ability of people to “fight for the
walls of the city”—or in more administrative terms, to equally share
in the responsibility for the well-being of the political collective. How-
ever, in a more traditional, monarchical view, it is the king (or queen)
who constitutes the people; as Louis XIV reportedly said, “L’état, c’est
moi” (“The state, that’s me”). Many modern states are democratically
organized, although monarchs may still enjoy abundant privileges,
and democratic presidents can still act like quasi-feudal authoritar-
ian rulers.

In Amsterdam, spray-painted on an overpass near Central Station
we read “Freedom lives when the state dies”; while an inscription on a
statue of Spinoza, in front of city hall, solemnly declares: “The state’s
aim is freedom.” What freedom is and why it is valued, depends to a large extent on the philosophical doctrine, or the political ideology, that professes it (§2). That the state aims for freedom is implicit in Spinoza’s—and Hegel’s—philosophical logic (Hegel 1986, 58). Placing the statue was a recent initiative of high-spirited bourgeois Amsterdam residents, to remind other citizens that the state is both rational, and theirs. The anarchist slogan, in contrast, reminds the same citizens that the state is oppressive and that its absence, rather than its presence, promotes freedom; the state is something “alien” to its citizens.

Liberals share with anarchists a sentiment of “the state” as a looming, powerful entity, opposed to individuals, and ever ready to interfere with their freedom. Outspoken in this respect are “libertarians,” who strive for minimal (liberal) government (Nozick 1974). They may even favor militia, meant to guard against excessive state power, as the second amendment to the US Constitution testifies. Hegel and republican political theorists—however different—see the state not as opposed to citizens, but rather as the citizens in common in their most rational form. In this view, every citizen can say: “the state, that’s me.” We see this for instance exemplified in the institution of the jury, in the legal system, where ordinary citizens function as (temporary) bearers of the state’s (legal) rationality. And we also find it in the classical Greek notion, as expressed by Aristotle, that “politics” refers to the functioning of (free) citizens at their highest level of reflection, or rationality. In such a view, politics and philosophy are not far apart.

Does this mean that a good citizen must be (somewhat of) a philosopher? That would seem an elitist principle running contrary to the ideas of, for instance, Rousseau, Kant, and the French Revolution—and more generally of modern society: in political democracy, everyone is competent, regardless of education, ethics, social status, or whatever. The solution here is “representative democracy”: the representatives are “philosophical” (i.e., reflective and rational) on behalf of their constituents. Idealistic, perhaps, but the presence of rationality in the system of the republic must be guaranteed somehow. The solution mostly favored by liberals is a constitution: this gives a certain positive, concrete form to the tensions that are “constitutive” of modern societies, especially the tension between popular sovereignty and the rule of law. As long as the constitution is well-orga-
nized, society will be. Such faith is especially strong in the USA—we call it “faith” here, because it places the rationality of the constitution beyond question; hence the habitual reference to, and reverence for, “wise Founding Fathers.” We could call this “negative political theology” (cf. §1), as these Fathers are conveniently absent—perhaps even: wise because absent.

Against republicans (and ancient Greeks), who insist on patriotism and civic high-spiritedness, liberals contend that citizens may also choose to abstain from politics, because they prefer to mind their private affairs. In fact, liberals place the highest priority on protecting citizens against claims from the general body politic, that is, the state. The state should protect citizens, but even more importantly, citizens should be protected against the state. The idea of individual rights is the main instrument in the pursuit of this paradoxical project.

Less favored by liberals is the protection of, and care for, denizens and aliens—those who reside, and often work, in the political community without having (full) membership. Most modern states contain significant numbers of migrants, asylum seekers or otherwise who dwell in a grey zone in which they can claim some rights and provisions, yet are vulnerable to legal and political challenges (Belton 2011).

### 4 Rights / Liberties

For most people born in modern Western democracies with a functioning rule of law, rights and liberties appear self-evident. In contrast, those living outside such systems value rights and liberties over just about everything else. From both perspectives, it is hard to see modern rights and liberties for what they are: ambiguous features of a particular political project, and theory: liberalism, broadly conceived. As we saw in §3, rights and liberties are prominent features of a political system which situates political rationality in a higher-order law, the constitution, so as to leave citizens free to (also) enjoy a non-political life. Rights are thus both political and non-political entities: they enable claims to enjoy participation in political life, but they equally enable claims not to be burdened by politics. Both types of claims have to be enabled and guaranteed by the state, which must
therefore both possess an independent judicial power, and a legisla-
tive and executive power willing to respect and enforce legal verdicts. Both types of claims together qualify us as a member of society, hence the denotation “civil rights.”

Modern rights and liberties exist objectively in the sense—and to the extent—that they are institutionally proclaimed and protected, yet they are subjective in the sense that it is up to each and every individual to decide when and why to appeal to them. This corresponds with our argument (in §3) that the good modern citizen doesn’t have to be a good person. Up to this point, Hegel and modern liberals could agree. Liberals however go one step further by emphasizing that we can act anti-socially and still be fully entitled to rights. Put otherwise, we are allowed to exercise a right (e.g. drive a car, carry a gun) without having to provide a justification. In that sense, the possession of rights and liberties allows us to act in arbitrary ways. Rights and liberties make us invulnerable to censure, hardship and punishment from the state. Hence we enjoy due process of law, and for instance sanctity of the home.

And the other way round, rights and liberties serve to protect our subjectivity: our status and capability as modern human beings to determine for ourselves where our interests lie and how our preferences should be ordered. No authority can or should tell us how to live, what to believe, or where to go. Freedom of speech, of assembly, of religion, and of education are therefore among the most important rights and liberties.

As modern citizens, we cannot imagine ourselves without such rights. They are nevertheless not static. New rights and liberties may be “discovered,” either by governments or by courts, or they may be found implied in international treaties. This corresponds to the evolving sense we have of ourselves as modern human beings, and citizens, and with both opportunities and pressures we are confronted with by contemporary society. For instance, privacy rights, or rights to identity, such as sexual or ethnic identity. Such “identity rights” nowadays often provoke controversies over issues like the “right to offend,” in contrast with political correctness, which aims to exclude offense from social and political life.

Modern rights do have a paradoxical dimension: any recognition
based on rights claims can have a formal nature only. Rights do not open up a discussion on value or substantive content of any claim of status or identity—they close it down. The paradox is that what we are really after is recognition of some substantive claim, about what I am, what I want, or what I need from you. But if I have trouble gaining such recognition and thus appeal to rights, I can only force you to treat me according to my demands in an outward, formal way; I can never force you to accept or affirm the inner needs that drove me to demand recognition. In a simplified example: if I am really hungry, what I want from you is to give me a sandwich, not a right to a sandwich, or the acknowledgment that indeed I have such a right.

Moreover, rights necessarily entail a certain format, a framework, in which such formal recognition takes place; “one size fits all.” This is the reason Hegel calls rights claims “abstract and one-sided.” My successful rights claim can only deliver whatever it is I am after in this specific, “abstracted” form; for instance, I can force you to formally respect my “minority status,” not the more complex, layered or perhaps ambivalent status I might individually prefer (Loick 2017, 231-259).

And of course, the reality of law may be very different from what the “law on the books” tells us. Formally having rights does not necessarily mean that these rights can be successfully realized. Authorities may be unwilling to enforce rights, or even prone to invading these themselves, as many minority groups can testify to (cf. #BlackLivesMatter). Some individuals or groups may feel socially, economically, or culturally disempowered to stand up for their rights, and carry through their enforcement, perhaps even in court or in politics. Having the law enforced may be slow, costly, or otherwise cumbersome. Getting legal assistance may help, but may also make matters worse (“Are you in trouble? Get a lawyer! You’ll have more trouble, but at least, you’ll have a lawyer.”). And people may also be tempted to have the law overenforced, to juridicize issues best left outside of the law (“See you in court!”).
Globalization

National Sovereignty
5 National Sovereignty / Globalization

Rather than a natural or universal phenomenon, the nation-state is an historical construct, born around the early nineteenth century, and answering to the economic, political, and cultural requirements of modernity and capitalism. Although the sense of belonging to a nation can be very strong, as testified in the mostly romantically motivated ideology of nationalism, it is quite difficult to say in what a nation consists. French historian and philologist Ernest Renan famously debunked all common perceptions of elements that supposedly bind together a nation: is there really a common ancestry (or: race), a common language, a shared religion, or even common interests? None of these hold up to the historical evidence. How many “Franks” (still) live in France? More likely, Renan says, nations have to do with a people’s self-perception of “having made great things together and wishing to do so again” (Renan 2010). Along similar lines, anthropologist Benedict Anderson describes nations as “imagined communities.” Especially the rise of print media and the growth of reading publics enabled the formation of such a shared imagination (Anderson 1983). Note that “imagined” here does not mean “fake,” but “constituted through collective imagination”—something often very real.

Next to how one should characterize or explain a nation, political theorists debate national sovereignty. Several issues are intertwined here. First, in order to be self-determining, any political community must claim national sovereignty: the right to independently make decisions for itself. Criticized by others for their policy, states typically react by rejecting such “foreign interference with internal matters.” And indeed, states need to be able to “mind their own business”; sovereignty requires that one is in command of oneself. In principle, this also applies to matters of immigration. If there is no right to exclude others, a state is no longer sovereign. In that sense, states are like private associations. There may of course exist international conventions or treaties which bind sovereign states, but this is only after they themselves have agreed to ratify them.

Second, (nation-)states claim sovereignty both in relation to other (nation-)states, and in relation to nations. States are formal political entities, with an administration (also for purposes of regular
tax collection), a system of law, and (usually) an army. As such, they relate to other states. But they also relate to nations, in the sense of peoples. State and nation may coincide, in which case we speak of a nation-state. Many nation-states however incorporate multiple nations (or peoples) which may or may not give rise to social and political tensions; think for instance of Catalunya, one of the “autonomous communities” of which Spain formally consists. (The same of course applies to ethnic groups, or regions which harbor a particular culture, which may or may not self-identify as nations, or peoples.) In reverse, one nation may be divided between several sovereign states—a salient example being the Kurdish nation. Complex arrangements, and/or the exercise of military and economic force, are often necessary to maintain the tense relation between the principle of state and that of nation.

Finally, sovereignty is challenged by processes of globalization. Formerly, states could (pretend to) live in “splendid isolation”; some, like the “Brexiters” in present-day Britain, may even believe they can return to such a condition. However, economic, financial, technological, biological and ecological forces now obliterate geographical distances and cultural differences. Global markets and multinational corporations threaten political sovereignties; nowadays major events trigger the question “how will the markets react?,” rather than “what will the political reaction be?” Even stronger, political actors will often take possible market (re)actions into account. On the other hand, globalization may also lead to the creation of a “global civil society”—an increased social and cultural understanding and communication between the citizen cultures of different (nation-)states, and perhaps even a “shared imagination” (Appadurai 2001, 6-7). This may lead to increased trust and mutual accommodation between states, rather than distrust, hostilities, and eventually war.

6 (Just) War / International Justice

In the early nineteenth century, Prussian military strategist Carl von Clausewitz characterized war as an *erweiterter Zweikampf*, “an extension of the duel”—an act of force, which compels an opponent to con-
cede to our will. As such, it is only gradually distinct from politics: war is “a continuation of politics by other means” (Clausewitz 1991, I.1.2; I.1.24). Given the sovereign character of states, war is inevitably a possibility, as states do not live in “splendid isolation,” and will at some point want to defend themselves against infraction of their sovereignty by other states. Conversely, tensions may also arise within one state, between factions who come to see divisive issues like religion, language, ethnicity, or a particular way of life as insurmountable obstacles to political unity. This may lead to secession, or civil war.

Just as past results in finance carry no guarantee for the future, present peace carries no guarantee against future war. Hobbes and Kant even agreed that the state of war is the “natural state”; the “state of peace” is something actively achieved, and maintained, by institutional structures for law and order. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes (1751, ch.14) famously formulated this “rule of nature”: “That every man, ought to endeavor peace, as farre as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of Warre” (cf. Burns 1991, 536). In his essay *Zum ewigen Frieden* (“Perpetual Peace”), Kant argues that peace can only be achieved when the following requirements (“articles”) are met: the civil constitution of each state shall be republican; the law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states; the rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality. This means that citizens must see themselves as actively involved in the defense of civil peace (“maintenance of law”); that international law (and thus international justice) can only be achieved when sovereign states join in a supra-national federation (rather than joining into one “world-state”); and that rights can only accrue to citizens of a nation-state, except for a limited right of sojourn (Kant 1970; cf. Habermas 1996, 192-236).

Both external war and internal (“civil”) war become inevitable when the antagonisms inherent to political life get out of control and mechanisms to mediate such differences break down. An important internal mediating mechanism is a constitution; external mediating mechanisms are diplomacy and the balance of power—and in a way, mutual deterrence (Walzer 1977).

If war is the condition in the state of nature, then a notion like
justice cannot apply to war, as justice only applies to peaceful, civil society. War is either unjust, or outside of justice: neither just nor unjust. Neither can it apply to international relations, as there is no international civil society. However, nowadays many states are party to international treaties which incorporate moral norms in the form of broadly phrased protections. For instance the right to life, and the right to respect for private and family life (European Convention of Human Rights, articles 2 & 8). These norms can be constructed as requirements of justice.

The idea of a “just war” originates in the (early modern) natural law tradition, which entails that states can somehow represent a “true normative order”—an objectively just order—infractions of which can be appealed to as a legitimate “casus belli.” A similar idea can be recognized in modern justifications for military intervention to stop violations of “human rights” committed by another state against its citizens. Another modern form of the “just war” argument can be to allow a people to defend its right to political independence (a typical example would be the Algerian war for independence in the 1950s).

Against such a common view of war and peace, as shared by e.g. Hobbes and Kant, we can put Foucault’s view that: “we can invert Clausewitz’s proposition and say that politics is the continuation of war by other means.” While it is true that political power puts an end to war and establishes, or attempts to establish, peace in civil society, Foucault emphasizes that in peacetime the effects of this power are not fully suspended, nor is the disequilibrium of forces as revealed by the last battle of war neutralized (Foucault 1997, 15-16). Civil society and its political rule sanction and reproduce the disequilibrium of forces manifested in war. Consequently, civil war for Foucault is a permanent state, “the war of the rich against the poor, the propertied against those who possess nothing, the masters/employers against the proletariat.” Important instruments in this war are policing and imprisonment—other authors sympathetic to this line of thought often speak of the “security state” (Greenberg 2020). Paradoxically, the security measures can infringe upon the rights of its citizens in order to protect them, from e.g. terrorism—think of the Patriot Act in the United States.
7 Justice / Equality

Surprisingly for some, justice has not been a central topic of political theory since times immemorial, although the concept does play a role in ancient Greek thought, and premodern notions of natural law. In modern thought however, there is almost no interest in the topic of justice until the early 1970s. We do not find justice as an important element in social contract theory, or in the ideas behind the French Revolution, the Marxist critique of capitalism, democratic theory, or reflections in political theory on World War II and the Holocaust.

For equality, matters stand differently. Partly this is due to the very open nature of the concept (equality of what?), but undeniably equality plays a large part in the justification of the French Revolution, and in practically all forms of democratic theory. Equality is probably the quintessential notion in modern political philosophy, from Rousseau and Kant onwards through theories of liberal egalitarianism like that of John Rawls, to radical political philosophy such as that of Jacques Rancière (Hallward 2006).

According to the ancient Greek view, political philosophy is about the art of living well, as represented in a number of “virtues.” In Plato’s Politeia (Republic), the dialogue partners try to identify the most crucial virtues and how these are situated in the practices of the polis. After an initially fruitless search for (presumably) the final and crucial virtue, justice, Socrates comes up with the solution: justice was “already there,” as it is not a separate virtue, but rather signifies the—correct—relation or proportion between the other virtues. Justice, as it were, assigns the other virtues their proper place, and relative significance. In this perspective, justice is both a political qualification and an ethical norm. In Aristotle, we find a less tight connection between politics and ethics (although politics and philosophy are still closely related). Aristotle espouses a republican view of politics—citizens rule in turn—and relegates justice to the sphere of private relations: it refers to what is “due” to others in economic transactions—in a way, a kind of ancient Greek tort law, or “corrective” justice (1934, 1131b25).

Except for this Aristotelian idea of republicanism, the ancient Greeks obviously didn’t care much for equality. A minority of resi-
dents held citizenship status, and in all other respects human beings were considered unequal. In fact, up until modernity, equality was not an issue in social and political thought. Or more properly, in as far as premoderns cared about equality, they perceived it as equality in the eyes of God—thus not a matter of worldly politics, or even consideration. Early modern thought, however, implies a quite radical notion of equality, as it sees human beings in “mechanical” terms, all similarly driven by primary passions and straightforward notion of—instrumental—rationality. Here, human beings are equal exactly in the lack of any “virtues.” Talk of virtues now appears as outdated, unwarranted moralism.

As mentioned, it is only with Rousseau that the idea of a fundamental moral equality of all (Western) human beings enters (Western) political thought. “All men are born equal,” Rousseau declared in Du contrat social (1762), adding: “yet everywhere they are in chains.” For Rousseau, this starting point implied political equality and democracy, whereas for Kant this is not the case. The French Revolution is the most famous attempt to translate Rousseauian principles into political and social practice. This was sharply criticized by twentieth-century political theorist Hannah Arendt, who argues that while a revolution can and should realize political equality, it should not attempt to address issues of social inequality, as state interference with social problems would exacerbate rather than solve these. Much more than with social equality, Arendt is concerned with political plurality, as a guarantee against unfreedom, or totalitarianism (Arendt 1951; 1963).

During the 1960s and the 1970s, we witness the rise of the welfare state, in which for the first time equality is realized in a social and material sense. As a philosophical corollary, equality becomes associated with justice, spurring the notion that the moral ideal of justice requires the politically coordinated (re)distribution of (mostly) material goods. This idea of “distributive justice,” best known from John Rawls’s A Theory of Justice (1971), subsumes politics under moral philosophy by providing a methodology for establishing certain general, universal “principles of justice” and using these for a constitutional design that should guide and constrain political confrontation and deliberation. As discussed in §3, the function of this constitutional form is to guarantee the rationality of political deliberation.
Rawls’s work has incited many to think about political theory in terms of justice, and to think of justice in terms of liberal egalitarianism—liberalism—informed by certain egalitarian premises. These egalitarian premises were shrewdly disguised as absence of any substantive premise—or as Rawls called it, any prejudice—about human beings. But as an early critic of Rawls already argued, any such theory reflects implicit anthropological and historical assumptions about what shapes and motivates human beings—in Rawls’s case, liberal egalitarian assumptions (Sandel 1983). A more openly anthropological alternative to Rawls has been proposed by Michael Walzer, acknowledging that many institutions and domains (or “spheres”) of societal life operate on the basis of historically or socially “shared understandings.” Rather than one or two overarching principle of justice governing all domains, Walzer thus argues for a variety of principles fitting specific domains, leaving liberal reason only to perform what he calls “the art of separation”: deciding how the domains are to be defined, and how to keep them separated—as they are liable to be corrupted, for instance by money—unjustly—buying political influence, or academic prestige (Walzer 1983).

Another alternative is the “capability approach” developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Here, justice is operationalized more or less in Walzerian style as requiring different “capabilities” in different aspects and domains of life. But rather than (re)distributing goods, Sen and Nussbaum propose that people’s capacities to acquire sufficient standing in the most basic domains of social life should be guaranteed, thus respecting each person’s interest and willingness to further realize such capacities, or to choose not to (Nussbaum 2011).

8 Law / Punishment

Although the association with punishment could suggest otherwise, law—like power—is not necessarily repressive. We already saw in §2 that even criminal law, which is most readily associated with punishment, is not merely repressive, as it may be said to “honor” the criminal as an accountable and responsible subject, someone who can understand why he is punished, and even that this benefits both society
and himself. If you do not see the point, consider the fate of Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky’s *Crime and punishment* (or watch Woody Allen’s movie *Matchpoint*, inspired by this book). Or alternatively, read *Macbeth*. Most people feel haunted by the realization of having committed a serious crime, and experience the need for penance; exceptions are sociopaths, and perhaps the Nietzschean Übermensch who poses his own values and lives “beyond good and evil.”

Still, one may plausibly argue that societies need law to maintain order, and threaten those who might transgress with sanctions. It will mostly be anarchist and utopian political theorists who challenge this point. The most pronounced representative of the need for order is probably Hobbes (1651), who finds that civil war or anarchy can only be prevented by assenting (“contracting”) to a sovereign whose will constitutes law. Contrary to common opinion, this does not imply a (“negative”) view of human beings as distrustful, antisocial, or inclined to evil, inclinations only held in check by a powerful sovereign enforcing law and order. What it does entail is the insight that although people may mostly be disposed to cooperate and be reasonable, there will always be instances where they will be short-tempered, emotional, or irrational (e.g. not paying fare on a train, engaging in a bar fight, cheating with taxes). If only for these cases, we need a sovereign power—that is to say, an authority that cannot be disputed.

Note, however, that Hobbesian sovereign power also fulfills a function in that vast majority of cases in which people voluntarily cooperate. Cooperative people don’t need repressive power, but they do appreciate approval of their cooperation. In other words, the sovereign has an important *symbolic* function. Also, sovereign supervision has an instrumental, or prudential function. Even when people are inclined to be cooperative, their resolve can be weakened by seeing others repeatedly getting away with cheating. In both cases, the function of a “sovereign,” like the conductor on the train, is not just to punish transgressors, but also to bolster the spirit of those who do show social responsibility.

Another “positive” dimension of law and its enforcement can be found with Jeremy Bentham’s early nineteenth-century utilitarian philosophy. As utilitarianism seeks to maximize social well-being rather than apply moralistic maxims, Bentham figured that prison
time spent should be edifying rather than merely punitive (Bentham 1985). This could be achieved by designing prisons in such a way that the prisoners feel observed at any time—materialized in the Panopticon architecture, or dome pavilion, as famously analyzed by Michel Foucault in *Surveiller et punir* (1975). Full “transparency” (total visibility), rather than custodial repression, should induce prisoners to behave properly at all times, thus optimally preparing them for social rehabilitation.

This edifying or “enlightening” principle is, for Foucault, an illustration of the positive dimension of power, in the sense that power “produces” behavior, rather than just repressing it (cf. §2). Of course, Foucault is not a utilitarian. Rather than seeing the edifying and rehabilitating effects of the Panopticon as a contribution to Enlightened self-direction, Foucault describes them as “disciplining” mechanisms that produce “docile subjects”—meek individuals who don’t even need oppression in order to conform to social norms and expectations. Here we can recognize the Nietzschean inspiration in Foucault’s thought (Rabinow 1984, 214ff).

The Foucaultian view forms a counterpoint to the more common “positive” view of law as essential part of the *Rechtsstaat*—or in inadequate translation, the “rule of law”—as we find it for instance in the tradition of the Frankfurt school of critical theory. While “rule of law” merely indicates that “no one is above the law,” a *Rechtsstaat* also entails that law—or more properly “right”—empowers individuals to be citizens who are not merely “subject” to law but also its co-authors, guardians, and critics. Upholding the law is not merely a specialistic concern of magistrates, police, and other legal professionals, but an institutional practice in which all citizens carry responsibility. This decreases the likelihood that law is arbitrary, or unjust, and or simply an instrument of power. Or conversely, that citizens abuse or subvert the law.

9 Community / Individual

Former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher famously declared: “There is no such thing as society.” She added: “There are only indi-
viduals, and families.” Philosophically formulated: individuals and families are ontologically prior to society. In laymen’s terms: individuals and families are more real than society, and family is a more real community than society is. And indeed many people would agree that society is more abstract than family, or individuals.

Aristotle however provides a more subtle analysis. For him, the simplest social unit is the household, family. At an intermediary level he situates the komè, a group of households that through cooperation can realize economic independence. At the highest level of aggregation we find the polis, the city-state or political community. Thus for Aristotle, the family is a community but in a very restricted sense, while only the political community—the polis—enables human beings to fully realize themselves, as citizens with the freedom to deliberate together on matters of common interest. It is therefore not surprising that Aristotle declares the polis to be (ontologically) “prior” to the individual (1944, 1253a19). And we may find a comparable argument in much of (Western) history regarding religious (Christian, or Jewish) community. Only through membership in such a community can someone qualify as fully human.

This illustrates that throughout much of human history, belonging to a community was thought essential for being recognized as a—proper, dignified—human being. This could concern a political community, a community of faith, or indeed the community of family. The latter obviously has the strongest claim to being a natural community: everyone is born into some family—even if (God forbid) you do not belong to a community of faith, or a political community. Now someone might object: don’t all those communities “in the end” consist of individuals? Well, no—this is the liberal gambit, or ideology, as we also find it articulated in Thatcher’s statement. Individuals are not “always already there.” They are a social and cultural product.

Historically speaking, the “individual,” as something ontologically prior, may be said to make its entry in early modernity, when the dominant idea of the world as a (divinely inspired) meaningful whole gets in decline, also due to the rise of “natural” science demystifying nature. Human beings come to be perceived as separate particles moving through space—either natural or social—without any specific, pre-given or guaranteed meaning, striving first and foremost to
secure their physical existence. In German Idealism, late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, we find a notion of individuality which is more reflexively mediated, associated with the notion of autonomy, or “positive freedom” (cf. §1). It is the self-understanding of modern people that enables them to be self-directing individuals, shaping their own subjectivity and their own criteria of normativity. Think of both Kant and Hegel here, although Hegel would emphasize that individual freedom is empty when not considered in relation to how it is realized in daily social reality (or Sittlichkeit) (Neuhouser 2013, 29).

With the rise of sociology in the second half of the nineteenth century, the shift from community to individual becomes a central topic. Émile Durkheim famously saw a transition from traditional societies to modern societies, in which “mechanical” forms of integration (characteristic of group-based societies with a direct or “mechanical” relationship between value systems and members of society) are replaced by “organic” forms of solidarity (characterized by individualism and division of labor necessitating anonymously organized cooperation, guided by generalized norms rather than substantive values) (Durkheim 2013). Around the same time, Ferdinand Tönnies described the modern world in terms of the demise of community (Gemeinschaft), signifying the cohesive and organic world of traditional social relations, while “society” (Gesellschaft) stands for the complex, economically interdependent social relations of modern society (Delanty 2009, 26-28).

In political theory, individualism is most often associated with liberalism, and identified as its core value; a classic example is the work of Friedrich Hayek from the 1950s (Kukathas 1989). We see this reflected in liberalism’s defense of individual rights, which they most often invoke in their “negative” sense, of shielding preferences and choices against “interference” or frustration by government or society. The freedom of choice is valued over its content; liberalism is thus strongly anti-paternalistic, that is, it refrains from judgments of what is in someone else’s best interest. There is little doubt that this contributed to liberation and emancipation of individuals, and more generally to the rise of a permissive, perhaps even progressive culture—although liberalism by itself is not necessarily progressive.

Liberalism enjoys quite a dominant position in (Anglo-American)
political theory. But it also has many detractors. On the one side, (post-)Marxist and other radical thinkers on the left criticize liberalism for obfuscating social contradictions and the ensuing social and economic inequalities, and more generally for reducing all social issues to matters of individual choice and preference. On the other side there are radical conservatives and right-wing nationalists who feel that liberalism contributed to the decline of religion, the nation-state and the family, and even more generally to “the decline of the West” (Sedgwick 2019).

10 Private / Public

The distinction between public and private is another example of a topic often associated with liberalism. Liberals believe that in our private lives, we should be free to live as we please. “Public” for liberalism means little more than those contexts in which individuals willy-nilly have to deal with others. Liberals are wont to apply John Stuart Mill’s “harm principle”: everything is allowed as long as others are not harmed (Mill 1859). Mill’s principle opposes moralistic and, especially, paternalistic based intervention, by either government or society. Millian liberalism can claim to be a tolerant doctrine: it is in principle indifferent towards what others believe, and even how they act—for instance their sexual orientation, or their religion—with the only “proviso” that no (physical) harm is caused.

The contrast between private and public is however an issue with much broader historical and systematic implications. For Aristotle, as we saw, we can live a full and complete life only as public beings, as reflecting and deliberating free members of a polis. Private life merely refers to the sphere of “necessity,” the reproduction of life, a sphere of activity where human beings do not distinguish themselves from animals. For Christianity (and probably other monotheistic religions), in contrast, the distinction between public and private has little value. Religion is the most important guide for both spheres of life—in as far as they are meaningfully to be distinguished at all. The contrast between church and state is more important here than the contrast between public and private. And perhaps more importantly, the “in-
ner life” of individuals (i.e., their faith) is more important than their public acts (i.e., their constitutional commitments).

A recognizably modern form of “public” and “public sphere” we find for the first time in the eighteenth century. Appearance in public here is largely “representational,” that is to say, how one appears in public—among and before strangers—is “representative”: clothes, and other aspects of appearance and behavior, correspond to one’s place in society and one’s status. One is treated according to this “surface” only. From our modern perspective this might seem stifling and conformist, but it could also be considered as quite liberating, as no one cares about your “inner life,” and its propriety. The interest in “how you really are, below the surface” is an obsession which starts only with Rousseau and romanticism, and according to sociologist Richard Sennett (1977) leads to a “tyranny of intimacy” from which we are still not liberated.

Under these new conditions, public appearance becomes “unreadable,” as we cannot read off someone’s inner life from the surface. New rules—conditions for interaction in public life—need to be forged, now through creative-aesthetic means. The now “solitary” person—one who cannot be identified anymore as belonging to some fixed status group, neither by others nor by himself—becomes the object of the “gaze” of others, and has to employ the means and crafts of the stage and the theatre to convince his or her “public” through expressive forms of action, which uniquely express one’s intentions. And conversely, the understanding of societal phenomena now requires investigation, so as the decrypt the equivocal clues provided by social actors (Boltanski 2013). Generally, the sharp separation between the “geographies” of public and private behavior that existed previously is now disappearing.

The same process has been studied from a slightly different perspective by Jürgen Habermas in Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit (1961). From the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century on, Habermas argues, the character of the public sphere has changed from “representative” to “bourgeois.” He builds here on Hegel’s analysis of the rise of civil society as a new sphere between the state and the family which brings a new kind of independence and freedom to (bourgeois) citizens (Jaeggi & Celikates 2017, 28). But also on Hannah
Arendt’s pioneering thoughts on how appearing and acting in the public sphere represents both “natality,” the human capacity to bring forth new ideas and new practices, and “plurality,” the idea that human beings should be respected not in their equality but precisely in their irreducible difference from each other (Arendt 1958). Habermas provides a historical-sociological account of how a “discussing public” formed itself through the exercise of critique in newspapers, journals, magazines, and other publications and public manifestations and performances, for instance in the arts. Through such public existence, citizens were able to constitute an institutionalized form of opinion formation, Öffentlichkeit, indispensable for the rise of a democratic culture—for in such a culture, people must be able to participate in the creation of a public opinion, separate from their particular habits and traditions in private life.

The upshot is that modern democracies need a sphere in which citizens can be public, but this sphere can only exist through continued effort by citizens themselves. The “switch” modern citizens need to be able to make from private to public “persona” requires frequent exercise, and a culture which encourages and sustains such practice. This is also an argument against the view implied in Rawls’s A Theory of Justice, in which any and all “unencumbered” citizens seem to be able to switch effortlessly—as a kind of thought experiment—from private to public reasoning. But a public perspective requires much more than such Rawlsian “instant impartiality”; it requires building together a culture of public trust and communicative capabilities. This is all the more challenging in a (neo)liberal market culture dedicated to privatization, to making public things private. Think especially of public utilities, services which should be accessible and guaranteed to all residents (and denizens) at an affordable price.

11 Privacy / Security

To some degree, both security and privacy are anthropological constants. Everyone needs basic “security” in order to preserve their lives, as Hobbes posited (cf. §6 and §8). And almost all societies contain arrangements, spatial or otherwise, which shield certain person-
al activities from view (Moore 1984; Roessler 2015). But beyond these basics, why and to what degree privacy and security are experienced as normal or as problematic, depends on cultural perceptions, social expectations, and societal affordances. For instance, how much security and “privacy” we expect on public streets, also depends on the time of day, or night, and on the neighborhood. In the past decades we have seen a strong increase in concerns about security and privacy.

Today, many are worried about the “data mining” engaged in by powerful companies like Facebook and Google, the massive surveillance scandals around organizations like the NSA, the drastic measures (ostensibly) introduced to counter terrorism, and more generally issues like facial recognition and the digital “traceability” of nearly everyone everywhere. Social psychologist Shoshana Zuboff speaks of “an unwritten policy of ‘surveillance exceptionalism’ forged in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, when the [US] government’s concerns shifted from online privacy protections to a new zeal for ‘total information awareness’” (Zuboff 2019; 2020). According to Zuboff, surveillance capitalism undermines human agency, usurps privacy, diminishes autonomy and deprives individuals of the right to combat.

The omnipresence of computerized media and internet also makes many security and privacy issues antagonistic. Installing security cameras on every street corner might increase safety (or not), but simultaneously infringes on privacy. Carrying a mobile phone at all times may add to our security, yet the phone also “spies” on us 24/7, extracting our data and monetizing them, often by selling them to the highest bidder. Adding to the ambiguity is the subjective dimension of security and privacy. We may feel safe, for instance because of security camera’s or mobile phones, without actually being safer. And in using our phone we may feel very private—even if our data are being harvested and our accounts perhaps hacked.

A considerable rise in the concern for privacy can be seen from the mid-1960s onward. This was triggered by the societal change of the 1960s, which allowed a large number of people a much broader scope of freedom than before, in many fields like lifestyle, occupation, and personal relations. Accompanying this development is the desire to protect these freedoms through an appeal to rights (cf. §4), such as a right to privacy. In the USA, the establishment of a right to privacy has
played an important role in fights over issues like abortion and the use of contraception. Similarly, security became a much bigger issue after two major events. First, the explosion of the nuclear reactor in Chernobyl in 1986, which made clear that technology nowadays puts whole populations at risk, also in peacetime—a point made by sociologist Ulrich Beck in *Risikogesellschaft*, a book published just a few weeks after the Chernobyl explosion. Second, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the fear of further (suicide) attacks.

Privacy also has a strong liberal connotation: the “right to be left alone,” primarily by government. In other words, the right to live a private life, unbothered by politics, as was already phrased by philosopher Benjamin Constant, against the high demands placed on citizenship by republicanism (see §3). In line with Constant, liberalism’s “core business” (or core ideology) is individual freedom in the sense of protection of the individual against the state, mostly through a system of (individual) rights. Security, in turn, has acquired a strong neoliberal connotation. Security increasingly stands for an absence of public access, or inspection. Spaces are increasingly being stripped of their common or public character, by being either privatized or policed, or even weaponized (Hristova & Czepczyński 2017). Security measures protect capitalist infrastructure as much, or more, as they protect the population. Access to spaces or systems often requires identification, or special privileges. Whatever the precise regime and the means of control, the main message is clear: “the people” are not welcome.

Technology does come up with initiatives that promise to deliver both privacy and security, nowadays most prominently blockchain, on which for instance Bitcoin is built. Blockchain is supposed to provide a mathematical solution to the difficult question how to guarantee the authenticity and validity of transactions between anonymous partners without the intervention of some trusted third party—government, or a bank. We can even retrace such initiatives to the larger, political ambition of “Silicon Valley,” since the 1960s, to replace unruly—and potentially corruptible—practices of democratic politics by the supposedly perfect aggregative capabilities of computing. It is doubtful however whether the cultural conditions for trust, as they have been created by civil society, and the concomitant forms of social authority can adequately be converted in, or replaced by, digital code (Finn 2017).
Security

Privacy
National Identities

Multiculturalism
12 National Identities / Multiculturalism

Much of political theory, until as late as the early 1990s, treated political societies as closed units. It did not consider emigration and immigration to be important phenomena, let alone constitutive for the nation-state, and political theory itself. A prime example of this approach would be John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*, from 1971. Rawls himself modified this approach in the course of the 1990s, in *The Law of Peoples*, trying to take account of at least the existence of other nations, and what this requires in terms of justice (cf. §6 and §7). Both the fall of the Berlin wall, in 1989, and the strong currents of globalization in the 1990s and later confronted political theory with fundamental questions about the character and legitimacy of the nation-state.

Until the present day, the nation-state is still often treated as if it entailed one constituent culture with a long and distinguished pedigree (cf. the discussion on Renan in §5), in western nation-states often referred to as “the Judeo-Christian tradition.” Undeniably in many cultural perceptions in such states Christian and Judean motifs can be identified, as found in common stories, songs, festivities, in “Christian” names, and even negatively in common blasphemy. Emotions can still run high when doubt is being expressed whether there exists some single and unique national identity, as for instance happened when in 2007 queen (then princess) Máxima, a native of Argentina, denied that “the” Dutch identity existed, as Dutch society is “far too multi-faceted” for such a label.

Probably this opinion by Máxima, in its somewhat guarded phrasing, nowadays would count as a widely accepted view. It doesn’t precisely undermine Dutch identity, but pronounces it part of a broader palette of colors and flavors deriving from other cultures. In other words, it makes a case for multiculturalism. In political theory, this stands for the recognition that nation-states are now made up by people with differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds—partly because of larger-scale immigration processes, partly because of the belated acknowledgment of native minorities.

The best-known effort to integrate multicultural elements in liberal political theory is the work of Canadian theorist Will Kymlicka. Kymlicka modified the basic Rawlsian framework of liberal justice by
proposing that for some cultural or ethnic minority groups, culture should qualify as a Rawlsian “primary good” (Kymlicka 1995, 84). That is to say, liberal considerations of justice should take into account that members of specific minority groups need “access to their own (minority) culture” in order to develop themselves as good citizens of Western liberal democracies. Kymlicka also goes some way towards acknowledging the claims of indigenous peoples, as being entitled to far-reaching exemptions from the regular demands of distributive justice, for instance by way of “multicultural jurisdictions,” and other rights- and policy-oriented schemes. However, partly because of the constraints of the Rawlsian framework, Kymlicka frames minority rights as compensation for cultural “handicaps” that citizens with a non-liberal provenance would suffer from, rather than portraying cultural diversity as a positive societal asset.

Many researchers and policy-makers nowadays prefer other terms to indicate cultural and ethnic diversity, such as superdiversity and interculturality. Superdiversity points to the variety of origins of immigrants, their transnational connections, their socio-economic differentiation and their legal stratification—and more generally to “diversity within diversity.” Interculturality emphasizes the interrelatedness within diversity, thus the co-existence of plurality with connectedness. Both views entail that it is no longer adequate, descriptively or normatively, to speak in terms of majority and minority, or dominant and non-dominant groups (Council of Europe 2018; Meer & Modood 2012; Abdou & Geddes 2017).

Yet widespread sentiments of national identity exist, as we can witness in many European countries today, but also e.g. in the USA, or Tibet. Such sentiments can form for different reasons, including a reaction to trends like superdiversity and interculturality. People may feel threatened by such trends, or they may believe that national elites have “sold them out,” profiting from the benefits of interculturality, while leaving the lower classes to deal with the problematic effects of migration, cultural transformation, and globalization—such as the transformation of traditional neighborhoods and schools, unemployment, and housing. As ethnic and cultural groups and minorities may feel similarly beleaguered, superdiversity may also lead to a diversification and proliferation of struggles over identity. (Hjerm & Schnabel 2010)
13 Pluralism / Tolerance

Like all political doctrines, pluralism finds its raison d'être in changing social and political circumstances. In modern times, the idea of pluralism gained traction as a response to significant developments in twentieth-century European history. Here I want to briefly discuss three such moments. First, a normative view of value pluralism was defended by Max Weber, taking up insights from Friedrich Nietzsche about the condition of modernity. Following Nietzsche, Weber argues that in modernity no validation of ideals and goals can be given other than their being “posited,” upheld, and pursued by individual human beings (Kronman 1983, 21). Values and goals are therefore only as strong as the personal convictions behind them, and there is thus no possible objective sense in which they are superior to other values and goals—or perhaps better, to other “rankings” of those values or goals. In more technical terms, individuals are forced to make choices between often incompatible values. Consequently, for Weber culture is a matter of struggle, between conflicting values more or less passionately upheld by individuals. French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty called this Weber’s “heroic liberalism”: the liberalism that acknowledges that all politics is militant, yet “recognizes the rights of its adversaries, refuses to hate them, does not try to avoid confronting them” (Merleau-Ponty 1955, 26).

After the Second World War, pluralism was valued as the best, and perhaps the only, antidote against totalitarianism. In her analysis of the totalitarian character of both fascism and communism, Hannah Arendt was the first to characterize totalitarianism as the attempt to obliterate all plurality. Therefore Arendt proposed that the preservation of plurality should be the first and foremost characteristic of politics (Arendt 1951). But pluralism was also advocated from very different philosophical perspectives. In his Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (1945), Joseph Schumpeter wrote that “to realize the relative validity of one’s convictions and yet stand for them unflinchingly is what distinguishes a civilized man from a barbarian.” This motto was adopted by liberal thinker Isaiah Berlin (1958) in his essay Two Concepts of Liberty (cf. §1).

Berlin here formulates what we might call a tragic answer to Nietzsche’s and Weber’s challenge. On the one hand, in order to be free,
societies need value conflicts. “Only those societies are free which are in a state of ‘agitation’, unstable equilibrium; whose members are free to pursue—choose between—a variety of ends or goals” (Berlin 2013, 200). This is why philosopher John Gray (2013) perceptively characterizes Berlin’s view as “agonistic liberalism.” On the other hand, no matter how strong our determination to fight, the choice between values is inevitably tragic—in the choice, something will always be lost.

The third manifestation of pluralism in recent European history can be associated with the increase of migration and globalization, from the 1990s onward. This meant the more or less continuous entry into society of people with quite different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This incited new discussions, on whether these new differences could and should be “integrated” into society. Multiculturalism, as discussed in §12, can be seen as one of those proposals for integration. However, migrant communities, especially the second and third generations, have emancipated and are demanding recognition as full citizens with cultural claims of their own. More than in earlier times, pluralism here also implies shifts in status, and power.

Taken as above in its “agonistic” sense, pluralism relates uneasily to toleration. Toleration implies some degree of indifference, while agonistic pluralism professes a positive valuation of difference. It will not be surprising that toleration is most often associated with liberalism, as liberalism positions itself as “agnostic” towards value controversies and claims to deal with them non-ideologically. Philosopher Chantal Mouffe, in contrast, argues for an “agonistic pluralism,” in which the other is not perceived as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an “adversary,” someone whose ideas we combat but whom we do not condemn. She calls this “the real meaning of liberal-democratic toler- ance” (Mouffe 2005, 101-102).

Over and above indifference, toleration may even imply an acceptance, or putting up with, something one actually disagrees with, or even considers unlawful. Here toleration has affinities with a concept like loyalty, which equally signifies putting up with something—even against one’s better judgment. Still, toleration and loyalty are far from straightforward negative concepts. Many people would agree that, under certain circumstances, toleration or loyalty are correct attitudes. In the case of toleration, the goal is normally the peaceful
coexistence of groups of people with different histories, cultures, and identities. Political theorist Michael Walzer (1997, 14-36) insightfully distinguishes five “regimes” of toleration: multinational empires, for example ancient Alexandria (tolerating internal differences as long as taxes are paid); consociationalism (like Belgium, Switzerland, Cyprus, Lebanon, Bosnia); international society (maintaining a status quo between sovereign nations); nation-states (in which toleration mostly is focused on individuals) and immigrant societies (for instance multicultural, or perhaps superdiverse regimes). The relevant motivation for “doing” toleration may differ: it will often be merely realistic or prudential, but can also become institutional, or even moral.

14 Identity Politics / Class Struggle

Inspired by the anarchist slogan mentioned in §3, we might pronounce: “Identity politics lives when class struggle dies.” Or alternatively, varying on Clausewitz’s aphorism in §6: “Identity politics is the extension of class struggle by other means.” Again, we need to refer to historical change in social and political circumstances. In certain political theories, of which Marxism is the most prominent, society is not characterized by cohesion or integration, or toleration for that matter, but by irreducible and intransigent opposition (“contradiction”) between major societal actors—in the case of Marxism, between “classes”: the capitalists and the proletariat. All social relations are indelibly stamped by class characteristics; social power relations are determined by the capitalist “relations of production,” which entails that one class, the capitalists, owns the means of production, while the propertyless class, the proletarians, is thus forced to sell their labor-power to the capitalist, a condition which structurally produces economic “surplus value” which accrues to the capitalist. Or rather: to the capitalist system of production, which uses surplus value to increase production, which produces more surplus value, and so forth.

This view was adhered to by the Marxist left for some 120 years, roughly from 1848 to 1968. Then the sexual revolution happened, the second feminist wave, and other forms of radical social and cultural transformation. It now seemed that imagining yourself otherwise, in-
dividually or collectively, was the real revolutionary act. Or as one famous 1968-slogan had it: “Soyez raisonnable, demandez l'impossible” (“Be reasonable, ask for the impossible”). To be sure, this imagination had to be developed in and through practices, in solidarity with others. Now it seemed that the class label was obsolete, or at least, radical social and cultural change no longer seemed to depend on class analysis—and, importantly, on the concomitant communist leadership. Rather than fighting the class enemy, liberation now implied refashioning, reinventing, and re-identifying yourself. Important philosophers associated in the 1970s with these changes are Herbert Marcuse, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze together with Félix Guattari.

And, somewhat later on in the 1980s, “post-Marxists” Chantal Mouffe & Ernesto Laclau (1985) argued the philosophical need to break with classical Marxist analysis: there was no “ontological” basis for assuming the primacy of the class opposition over, say, opposition of the sexes, or ethnicities, or whatever socially identifying characteristic. Following a lead provided by Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1971) from the 1930s, they propose that although class positions and relations still matter, these have become entangled with cultural forms, practices and institutions in such an elaborate way that radical social change now also necessitates engaging this cultural dimension—rather than dismissing it, in classic Marxist style, as mere “superstructure” which would collapse once the economic structure is toppled. In this cultural dimension, many other social oppositions play a role, such as man/woman, straight/gay, Western/non-Western. When an identification with one of these (op)positions becomes politicized, the result is “identity politics.”

“Identity” signifies that politics “after Marxism” is less about socio-economic interests, individually or collectively, and more about symbolic identification with issues of a more cultural and personal nature. The 1970s feminist slogan “the personal is political” expresses this well. It touches on the most cherished perceptions, emotions and self-evidences people have about how life should be organized. And of course sexuality is at the core of those deeply ingrained convictions. Identity politics is often in some way or another related to differences concerning sexual norms and practices. Similarly, the “culture wars” that rage from the 1960s until the present are nominally about pro-
gressives versus conservatives, but in fact mostly turn around sexual identity (cf. abortion, #metoo), in relation to self-realization.

Identity politics is also linked to “politics of recognition.” The politics of recognition refers to the philosophical idea that social and political self-realization requires being “recognized,” in diverse spheres of life: in personal relations, in the Rechtsstaat, and in the societal division of labor. Such recognition provides—respectively—the self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem needed to function in modern society. As Axel Honneth has argued, people can and should make claims against others who deny them these basic statuses (Honneth 1992; cf. Jaeggi & Celikates 2017, 63ff). Charles Taylor has employed this theoretical framework in a political context—especially a multicultural one—to argue for a “politics of recognition”: a politics of claims by disadvantaged groups against groups who, through their social and political dominance, deny them these statuses (Taylor 1992). A comparable point can be made by associating identity politics, or the politics of recognition, with the discussion on distributive justice, so as to argue that considerations of justice require something like a politics of recognition, or an identity politics (Young 1990).

Nowadays, identity is perhaps less exclusively associated with struggles over sexualized self-realization, and more connected to concerns over procedures and mechanisms that establish and safeguard identity both online and offline. Thus it concerns issues like identity fraud and identity theft, and ethics of disclosure and anonymity, or more generally: being “read,” and targeted through data, and data management. As Jean Baudrillard remarked, the contemporary economy of legibility and transparency casts us as a species that needs to “see itself continually on the video screen of statistics”—nowadays on the apps on our mobile phones, and the Excel-sheets of administrators. There is thus a case to be made that identity politics is now increasingly turning into “information politics” (Frieze 2019, 12). In Marxism, the ruling class owned the means of production; in information politics, it owns the means of datafication (cf. Bucher 2018).

But simultaneously, identity and identity politics are nowadays associated with the “tribalization” of politics—a concern with collective identity, national heritage, being rooted in a specific culture. This is an aspect never really understood by the political left, as Michael Walzer
has observed (Walzer 1994, 64; Birnbaum, 2004, 283). Since the early 1990s (think of the fall of communism, and the Yugoslavian civil war), we are witnessing a “de-nationalization of the state” (Mazrui 1999): an insistence on regional identities and a distaste for federalized political association. Nowadays, we recognize this in right-wing movements in many European countries, and in latter-day nationalist sentiments like Brexit and “make [our country] great again” (Fukuyama 2018).

### Social Change / Political Participation

The relation between political participation and social change is complex. Social change may lead to broader political participation, and increased political participation may lead to social change. Yet social change and political participation are not necessarily related—causally, systematically, or historically. Hannah Arendt (1963) famously rejected any relation between political participation and social change. She favored the model of American republicanism, which involves a widespread, “grass roots” level of political participation—for instance in the “town hall meetings” already favorably described by Tocqueville in *De la démocratie en Amérique*—yet such participation is not aimed at affecting, let alone eroding, social differences and social inequalities. Political participation here is more “theatrical” in nature, creating and affirming a shared sense of responsibility for common affairs which is possible, and desirable, large differences in status and wealth notwithstanding. In fact, the United States is built exactly on the idea that large social differences and political equality should go together. The American model also shows that widespread political participation is not necessarily a modern, post-revolutionary phenomenon; as again Tocqueville already reported, such participation was already a feature of eighteenth century political life in colonial America, when it was formally still under British rule.

The counterpoint to this model is the modern, revolutionary state of which France is the typical historical example. As Arendt disapprovingly noted, broad political participation here aimed to revolutionize social relations: class oppositions were to be abolished and the “social question” (large segments of the population living in poverty)
was to be remedied. In other words, political equality should bring about social equality. This has become the common sense of most European societies in the twentieth century, especially after the experience of the First World War which made clear to political leaders that one cannot ask enormous sacrifices of the population without giving them a voice in government. However, extended political participation did not necessarily lead to great upheavals, either socially or politically. Contrary to what many feared, or desired, general suffrage—either excluding or including women—did not lead to more votes for socialist or communist parties.

The rise of the welfare state implies a kind of “pacification” of the tension between the goals of political and social equality. Increased economic and technological powers and capabilities enable pursuing social equality without radicalizing political relations. In the second half of the twentieth century, social change itself changes, and increasingly becomes a matter of individual self-realization, or sometimes revolt, rather than class-based societal struggle. Where in the early sixties president John F. Kennedy could still remind his fellow Americans to “ask not what government can do for you, but what you can do for your government,” barely a decade later most people find it almost self-evident that government institutions are there to assist us in our individual “becoming who we are.” We could diagnose this as a rise of “narcissism,” as historian Christopher Lasch (1979) did, or see it as a shift from “social critique” to “artistic critique,” as argued by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (1999), who describe how capitalism adapts so as to enable us to find fulfillment in work—rather than in culture, private life, or politics; a point also forcefully made by sociologist Richard Sennett (1998).

Nowadays we witness a forceful demand for more political participation in the sense of a more frequent and direct popular influence on political decision-making. The most radical part of this broader tendency is known as populism, which technically is best understood as a revolt against representation. In this sense, populists count as heirs to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who argued that the people are sovereign, and government should conform to the quasi-spontaneous “general will” of the people, the volonté générale. Culture, knowledge and expertise, as we may find them in representatives, are “obstacles” be-
between the naturally good inclinations of common people, and rightful rulers who directly represent, or execute, the general will. Representation should thus be “direct,” or perhaps even absent, as some radical democrats and anarchists advocate—for example the “democratic confederalism” of Abdullah Öcalan (In de Maur & Staal 2015).

16 Ethics / Moral Justification

For Aristotle, ethics constituted a self-evident part of ordinary life as well as philosophy. As the first sentence of his Ethics famously goes: “Every art and every investigation, as well as every practical pursuit and undertaking, seems to aim at some good”—hence, Aristotle (1934, 1094a1-2) concludes, it is rightly said that the good is that which all things aim for. “The good” as the proper goal of action simultaneously signified the place of this goal within the harmony of the polis as well as the cosmos, appreciating both the practical and the aesthetic value of harmonious order. Living well, acting ethically, and experiencing happiness (eudaimonia) are all aligned. All express what the Greeks called aretè, denoting something like the quality of life and action (“virtue” is a traditional yet frustratingly unsatisfactory English translation). There is no tension between them, except in tragedy, where hybris, contingency, or fate are seen, and felt, to derail happiness and goodness.

Without the harmonious metaphysics of the Greek world, or some divinely installed and guaranteed order as in the Middle Ages, we can no longer expect living well, acting ethically, and being happy to line up unproblematically. In protestantism, morality becomes to be conceived as a duty—something which goes against natural, bodily inclinations (e.g., happiness). We may also feel that a rift opens up here between living well, in the Greek sense, and living morally. Against the societally traditionalist, duty-oriented moral tradition of which Kant is the most famous representative, British philosophers like James Mill and Jeremy Bentham proposed that ethics should be about what is good or useful for people, what makes their life better, or happier; this is the purport of utilitarianism. British philosopher Bernard Williams (1986) accordingly proposed to distinguish “moral-
ity” from “ethics”—ethics being a broader, encompassing view of how to live well, while a reduction of such a view to a system of behavioral rules—prescriptions, prohibitions—would count as morality.

Reasoning along these lines, we may also conceive of a philosophy of immoral ethics, which makes “living well” completely resistant to acting, and thinking, morally. This is the position of Friedrich Nietzsche, who rejects the whole tradition in which morality rests on an internalized sense of guilt. For Nietzsche (1888), moral approval, or disapproval, should rest on an external appreciation by others of one’s strength, or worth. Such an aristocratic warrior ethos, still present in Homeric times, started to fade in the more sedentary and democratic times of the Greek polis, and was finally resentfully undermined by the rise of Christianity which managed to make the strong feel uneasy about their natural superiority, and turned weakness into a moral asset (“turn the other cheek”). On a metalevel, Nietzsche found an ally in twentieth century philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), who concluded that we cannot escape a choice between Aristotelian or Nietzschean ethics, as every system of ethics in between—both historically and systematically—was bound to be incoherent. For MacIntyre, all Enlightenment thinkers have failed to construct what is needed for a properly modern ethics: a rational, secular defense of shared moral principles.

Against the Nietzschean ethics of self-assertion in battle against (worthy) enemies, we could pose the Kantian tradition of ethics as self-assertion in a struggle against the most worthy opponent of all: the self. Kantian ethics asks us to respect the force in us that is potentially stronger than ourselves: the ability to critically interrogate our inclinations and, if appropriate, act against them. More specifically, Kant (1785) thinks that as a rational person, we should ask whether we could want our desires, formulated as a “maxim for action,” to be universalized. A prominent example is: I made a promise, but I’d rather not keep it. Is this permissible? Kantian answer: no, because you cannot want this as a general rule. Not just because it would be unfair, but more fundamentally, because the whole point of making a promise would be undermined by everyone having license to break it. Moreover, in breaking your promise, you become unable to respect yourself.
Nietzsche does not want us to formulate such maxims, much less ask whether they can be universalized. For Nietzsche, there is only one worthy guideline for action: am I willing and able to affirm my own values? Almost all other guidelines are ultimately based on resentment, that is to say, a begrudging of the strong, and a bad faith consisting in turning one’s own lack of such powers into a virtue (“blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”; Matthew 5:5). We might find Nietzsche here is somewhat in alliance with utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill (1859)—*bien étonné de se trouver ensemble*—in that both value the uniqueness of the individual over any virtue of social conformity; although Nietzsche’s appreciation lies more with individual, unrepentant strength, while Mill is more interested in leaving space for the eccentricities and idiosyncrasies of others. Mill, in other words, is more interested in a form of pluralism, while Nietzsche values only certain extraordinary individuals.

A modern literary example of Nietzschean ethics, or at least a clear case of immoral ethics, could be Don Giovanni, the Tirsa de Molino hero, featured in Mozart’s famous opera. Don Giovanni’s life was undoubtedly immoral, as he seduced and violated women without any regard for them or others. But his acceptance of the offer of the Stone Guest—the petrified form of the ghost of the Commendatore, the father of one of the women he violated—for dinner in the underworld, proves his fidelity to himself. As Slavoj Žižek argues: Don Giovanni is immoral not for pleasure or profit, but out of principle, acting in according with a fundamental choice. As a feminine example, Žižek adds, we could take Bizet’s Carmen. Or, in a more present-day addition, the philosopher Lee Edelman, who sees homosexuality as involving an ethics of unconditional fidelity to *jouissance* (Žižek 2012, 123-124)—*jouissance* being the Lacanian term for the ultimate realization of desire, in all its inextricably intertwined bliss and horror.
17 Environment / Global Responsibility

Back in 2011, the progressive Dutch weekly *De Groene* asked me and 74 other public intellectuals in the Netherlands which danger we found to be most underestimated. My answer was twofold: the rising sea levels, and microbiological threats. As I write, we are all experiencing the corona virus outbreak, confronting us with unprecedented measures and unpredictable futures. And it should be admitted that this is not the only crisis we are faced with: the ecological crisis and the refugee crisis were already present. All three testify to urgent, and failing, global and environmental challenges and responsibilities.

What connects the three global crises in a general sense is the ever increasing activities and movements of people, and goods. Before the industrial revolution, although there were certainly crises, of disease and poverty—and in another registry, of faith—the possibility of a global crisis hardly existed. The mechanization of transport, the disruptive powers of the modern economy, and the globalization of finance, travel, and commerce—and not to forget communication—have changed that. Colonialism already implied globalization, although of course asymmetrically: Western powers exerting their power and influence in other parts of the world. Capitalism and imperialism followed suit, tendentially turning the world into a global market place. The financial system undergirding this globalization basically runs on “bought time,” a perverse system in which the normal lifeworld of human daily life is increasingly being financialized and indebted, so as to make it answer to the capricious and ever more imposing logic of global financial markets (Streeck 2013).

Among many other horrors both World Wars produced massive displaced populations, people “out of place” who could not be easily resettled. And as a result of the Cold War, political refugees started to emerge from the countries of the Eastern Block. This was an important stimulus for the international treaties recognizing a right to political asylum in case of politically motivated prosecution. Still, many other people got displaced and unsettled because of war, famine, and other economic, social, and religious hardships, yet not being recognized as refugees. While western countries, especially from the 1980s on, introduce stricter policies of asylum and immigration, most dis-
placed people reside in or near their own region of origin. At present, we have to count with some 20 million refugees and 60 million displaced people worldwide (and those of us not so displaced may count ourselves fortunate).

What used to be known as the question of the environment, is now generally understood as (a crisis of) ecology. For a very long time, the colonizing of nature by man through technology was taken for granted. Instrumental reason says that nature is there to be exploited by man. Early liberal political theory conforms to this line, although in John Locke’s classic formulation of the (individual) right to acquire property, there is a quasi-religiously motivated “proviso” to “leave enough, and as good in common for others” (Locke 1689, II, 27); in other words, a form of stewardship. Marxism of course strongly criticizes Locke’s liberal ideology of acquisition for the sake of productivity, but it does not contain any comparable “proviso”—except for the confidence, also found with many post-Marxist radical thinkers nowadays, that in a communist system there will be exploitation of neither man nor nature (Joas & Knöbl 2008, 14).

A less dogmatically invested radical thinker like Michel Serres (1995, 38) characterizes western modernity’s relation to nature as a “war.” In reply, we should add to the exclusively social contract something like a “natural contract of symbiosis and reciprocity in which our relationship to things would set aside mastery and possession in favor of admiring attention, reciprocity, contemplation, and respect.” Comparable approaches discuss the implications of the Anthropocene—the radical intersection of human history and geological time—as being a Eurocentric, individualist, and exceptionalist figuration, or call for “inventive practices” with multispecies environmental justice, implying “nurturing and inventing enduring multispecies, human and nonhuman, kindreds” (Haraway 2016).

All such approaches recognize that the main dangers threatening the human world are nowadays a product of human—productive—activity, not only in the social and political sense already addressed by Marx, but also in a biological and biopolitical sense. One of the first to understand this relatedness was idiosyncratic anarchist Murray Bookchin (Biehl 2015). As mentioned in §11, German sociologist Ulrich Beck published a book called Risikogesellschaft, pointing out that
the normality of extreme individualism and consumerism of modern society induces and produces threats that cannot possibly be weathered individually. Such threats, whether they concern the climate, finance, chemical accidents, terrorism or pandemic, have now become “blind passengers of normal consumption” (Beck 1986, 10; cf. id. 2007, 56). The great question articulated by Beck is whether we can contain the possible consequences of this “normality” of risk, caused by modern production and consumption habits, by applying measures based on the same kind of scientific, calculating rationality.
Chapter 6

Argumentation and Engagement in Debate

Devin van den Berg

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1 How to Prepare for a Debate

It might be needless to say, but a good debate starts long before the first speaker of the Proposition begins their speech. In order to have a good debate, it is crucial that both teams know what the debate should be about, have had the time to prepare their arguments and know what is expected from them. If these criteria are not met, the debate might end up being nothing more than a superficial discussion without meaningful interaction. That is why the first part of this chapter will be dedicated to the question: “How can I make sure that my students are ready to debate?”

1.1 Read the motion carefully

The first part of the preparation process is carefully reading the motion. This might seem obvious, but the motion gives students a lot of information about the debate that is often overlooked. Imagine students having to debate the following motion:

*This house believes that after their basic needs are met, individuals have a moral responsibility to donate their wealth towards poverty alleviation.*

If students would read this motion carefully they would see that there are a lot of hints about what the debate should and should not be about. Firstly, the motion states your basic needs need to be met first before you need to help others. This means that you do not have to give up your own minimum standards to help others but that once your basic needs are met, it is immoral not to give your wealth away. Next, the motion states: “individuals have a moral responsibility to...”
This means that the motion expects the Proposition to argue that everyone whose basic standards are met, regardless of how they were able to meet those, has this responsibility. Moreover, the debate is about a moral responsibility. That means that it is not enough to argue that it would be good if people would do it, but that the Proposition needs to show that people are actually morally obliged to do it. Lastly, the part about “donating to poverty alleviation” suggests that it is up to an individual to decide how they want to contribute to poverty alleviation since they can donate it to whatever source they deem best.

As you see, closely reading the motion already gives you some hints about what the debate should be about. In some cases reading the motion carefully helps students to know what they need to argue. Other times it just helps them to understand what the debate should not be about, which is equally important.

1.2 Defining key terms

After reading the motion carefully it is important to define the key terms in the motion. Defining these key terms has two purposes. First of all, it makes sure that the team is on the same page when preparing their arguments. If the motion reads “This house would lower the voting age” it is crucial to define what the new voting age should be and whether this will be implemented in all elections or just local ones. The second reason why the motion needs to be defined is to make sure that the teams are on the same page during the debate. It is one of the main responsibilities of the First Proposition speaker to present the definitions (a more in-depth explanation of the speaker roles can be found in chapter 4).

1.3 Context and characterization

After setting the basic parameters, it helps to zoom in on the context in which the debate takes place. To understand the context, a student should answer questions like: Which actors are impacted by this motion? What are the incentives and interests of these actors? Are there any important values or principles at stake when implementing
this motion? To which part of the world does the debate refer? Which societal trends are relevant to the motion? Answering these questions creates the building blocks that students need to construct a clear vision of what the debate is about.

1.4 Basic argument generation

When feeling confident about the broad outline of the debate, it is time to generate arguments. After reading the motion, some students will immediately start associating and generate arguments. Others might need a bit more time to get their thinking process started. For students who struggle to come up with arguments, it might be useful to stimulate them by asking certain basic questions that apply to most debates. For policy debates—debates in which a change is implemented (e.g., This house would ban smoking), such questions would be:

1. Are there severe problems in the status quo that need to be solved?
2. Why is the motion the best way to solve these problems?
3. Is solving the problem more important than the harms that might occur?

The team in favor of the motion should be aware that for them to win the debate, the judge should be persuaded that the answer to all three questions is “yes.” For the Opposition, on the other hand, disputing one of them might be enough to win the round. This might seem unfair but it does make sense. If you have a great idea but you do not solve the problem you seek to solve or if there are better ways to solve that problem, there is no reason to implement your policy. If you do solve the problem but the harms that occur are not worth the sacrifice, the motion should also not pass.
1.5 Using clashes to get a deeper understanding of the debate

One of the key skills that debating stimulates is the ability to structure information. This does not only mean the ability to structure your thoughts or structuring your speech, but also the ability to see how different contributions relate to each other. Being able to structure your own argument is one thing, but being able to keep a clear oversight over everything that happened in the debate is something else. A way to help your students develop this skill is by introducing them to the concept of clashes. Clashes are the overarching themes or the big questions within a debate. All relevant arguments and refutations are part of these clashes. The example below illustrates how this would work with regard to the following motion:

*This house believes that developing nations should impose a “brain drain tax” on individuals who emigrate.*

Let’s assume that the following six arguments would be brought up during the debate:

**Proposition**

A. Skilled workers are more likely to stay in their country of origin which will lead to more development.

B. People who have the ability to emigrate are only able to do so because of the opportunities their nation provided them with and are thus indebted to their nation.

C. Even if skilled workers leave, the country of origin will be able to invest more because of the tax revenue.

**Opposition**

A. The state should not be allowed to disincentivize their citizens’ freedom of movement.

B. It is harmful if people are disincentivized to emigrate because of the loss of remittances.

C. The skilled people that do not emigrate because of this policy will not be able to meaningfully contribute to their country, because the country has not developed enough yet for their skills to be useful.

This would lead to the following clashes (see next page):
Using clashes does not only help students to structure the debate, it also helps them to get a clearer picture of what they are expected to prove. Clash 2, for example, shows that one of the key questions in this debate is: Which option generates the most revenue for the country, remittances or the revenue that the tax generates? By being aware of this clash, students are less likely to just talk about the value of remittances but instead compare the revenue generated by remittances to the revenue generated by the tax. Moreover, it helps students understand that they also need to compare the outcomes of the various clashes. So even if they show that the tax generates more revenue they still need to show why that revenue is more important than the freedoms we restrict in order to generate that revenue.

Now that the benefits of teaching the concept of clashes is made clear, the question remains as to what students can do to identify these main clashes. One way to find such clashes is by thinking of any possible arguments both sides could run and then predicting
which of those arguments would clash (assuming you do this during your preparation time. If you look for clashes during or after the debate you should identify the arguments that have been brought up.) Some students, however, prefer to do it the other way around. They first think of the big questions of the debate and only afterwards think about the arguments that will be used within those clashes. One method is not better than the other, they are just two different ways to get to the same result.

Although finding clashes is important, the value of correctly formulating them should not be underestimated. Students often have the tendency to formulate clashes too broadly or too vaguely. The result of this is that clashes do not really help them to structure the debate. When formulating clashes students should keep in mind that a clash should:

1. Encompass contributions from both sides of the debate;
2. Be about a specific part of the debate;
3. Preferably be phrased as a closed-ended question (able to be answered with yes or no).

Adhering to these three criteria should help students to formulate clashes that truly add clarity to the debate. Let’s take a look at how these criteria could play out in an actual debate. If we take the aforementioned motion about a brain drain tax, a student could suggest that one of the main clashes of the debate could be: Should the state implement a brain drain tax? Although this meets criteria 1 and 3, it is not a clash that brings insight into the debate as the question is too broad and is thus not fulfilling criterion 2. All the student has done is rephrase the motion into a question. By doing so, answering this question would still require a student to discuss all the possible arguments in favor or against the motion while the goal of clashes is to create sub-questions that help you analyze the motion.

1.6 What Is the role of research when preparing for a debate?

Students are often told that they need to prepare well and that the way to do so is by doing research. Although researching a topic is a valuable way to prepare, this well-intended advice often leads to stu-
Students simply googling facts or visions from authors and replicating those during their speeches. A debate is, however, not a contest in encyclopedic knowledge. Instead, it is an activity where we incentivize students to apply concepts to specific cases. So the focus should be on the application of knowledge rather than focusing on gathering information. This does not mean that students should not get familiar with their topic. It does, however, mean that it is crucial for students to understand the exact function of doing research within the process of preparing a debate.

Doing research can have multiple goals. Firstly, research could be a way to get the process of argument generation started. By reading what other authors wrote about a topic, students can get their thinking process started. If that is the case, it is recommended to instruct students to mainly focus on understanding the gist of the concept and after that focus on the applicability to the motion. A second goal could be to assess how other authors develop an argument. The difference between step one and two is that step one would just focus on generating a thesis while step two focuses on trying to understand which assumptions you need to prove in order to prove the argument as a whole. In this stage, students can zoom in on the analysis that an author uses to find out if that analysis could help them prove their assumptions. Naturally, this second step requires a more thorough reading of a text. Even though a student would read the text more closely, the student would still be looking for specific cues that point out the different assumptions.

The third goal of research could be to come up with evidence to support your logic. In that case, students should aim to go on a targeted quest to find the piece of evidence that supports their analysis. So instead of reading for hours and hoping that a relevant example pops up, they should actively look for an example that supports their analysis. This might all sound straightforward, but it is important for students to understand these different goals to make sure that they are spending their research time efficiently to get the information that helps them develop their case.
2 Argumentation

In this part of the chapter, we will zoom in on how to construct solid arguments. Just like the previous part of this chapter, all concepts in this part will be accompanied by corresponding icons that visualize the concepts used. When using the word “argument,” we simply mean a reason in favor or against something. In this part, we will discuss both consequentialist and non-consequentialist arguments. Although these are different types of arguments, they share a lot of characteristics when it comes to teaching students how to construct them successfully.

We will first go over the different components that together form a solid argument. This is followed by exercises that will help you to familiarize your students with these components. Examples of how the individual components can be applied will be given along the way. It is important to keep in mind that the vision presented in this part is not intended to be “the only right way to construct an argument.” The theories and concepts introduced are, however, widely used throughout the international debating circuit and have proven themselves to be a good foundation to develop students’ argumentative skills.

2.1 How to build a solid argument

In general, well-constructed arguments consist of five elements. These elements being:

- **Statement**: A one-sentence summary of the argument
- **Analysis**: Logical reasoning that shows why the statement is true
- **Illustration**: Evidence, examples and analogies that strengthen the plausibility of your analysis
- **Impact**: The desired outcome of the argument
- **Relevance**: The relative importance of the impact within the debate
2.2 Statement

A statement is a one-sentence summary of an argument. There are two main reasons why formulating a concise and clear statement is crucial when teaching argumentation:

1. Coming up with a concise statement forces students to clearly formulate what their argument tries to prove. By doing so it will become easier for them to structure their thoughts.
2. When a student formulates a clear statement it makes it easier for you as a teacher to understand the exact argument your student tries to make. Because of that, it will be easier to give feedback.

A well-formulated statement always consists of two parts. First, the change implied by the motion and second, the impact the argument tries to prove. Suppose that a student needs to argue in favor of the following motion:

*This house would allow prisoners to volunteer for risky military missions in return for lighter sentences.*

An argument to support this motion could be that volunteering in the army would be a good way to repay the debt these prisoners owe to society. Since punishments are partly given for retributive reasons, repaying society by joining these missions should thus result in lighter sentences. The change that is instigated by this motion is that prisoners would be allowed to join these missions in return for lighter sentences. The impact would be that choosing to join these missions would be a justified way to repay their debt to society. The statement would then be:

“In this argument, I will demonstrate why allowing prisoners to choose to join risky military missions in return for lighter sentences is a justified way for them to repay their debt to society and should thus result in lighter sentences.”
Clearly, formulating a statement is also a great way for students to distinguish between consequentialist and non-consequentialist arguments. The statement of a consequentialist argument will always involve words such as: “x will lead to, cause, or result in y.” While the statements of non-consequentialist arguments will centre around terms like: “has an obligation to, is allowed to, is responsible for.” This is important as we do not want students to mix up different lines of analysis.

2.3 Analysis part I: logic

After formulating your statement, the validity or truthfulness of your statement has to be proven. This is done by analyzing why the statement you presented is likely to be true in the majority of cases. A student must go beyond asserting and try to prove their statement through logical reasoning. The student should make their line of thought or the “links” they make in their chain of logic, as explicit as possible. By making their thoughts explicit students make it easier for the audience to follow their line of thinking. Moreover, they learn to identify which parts of their analysis have been explained sufficiently and which parts were merely asserted.

One of the hard things about teaching analysis and logical reasoning is that people who are good at analyzing issues understand what those terms mean, while people who are not yet familiar with these terms have a hard time figuring out what is expected from them. This often results in a language barrier between people who understand the concept (you as a teacher) and people who do not (your students). To bridge this gap it is helpful to visualize terms like “logical reasoning” or “links within a logical chain.” A worksheet to help students visualize their logical chain can be found at https://debaticons.com/worksheets.

When talking about “links” I refer to the different steps of analysis that are visualized above. When speaking, these different steps are often linked together by phrases like:
- this will lead to
- as a consequence
- because of that
If it feels like a student’s explanation was shallow, this is often because they have missed some links that needed to be explained in order for the argument to be plausible. Simply zooming in on the parts that you felt were explained insufficiently and saying “it was unclear to me why x would lead to y” will already help students to see what you mean when you say “you need to expand your line of reasoning.”

A second reason why analysis can feel shallow is that students might have a solid line of logic for some parts of the analysis but forget to explain other parts of the analysis. These “parts” are the different assumptions that an argument consists of. The next paragraph contains an in-depth description of what assumptions are and how to use them.

2.4 Analysis part II: assumptions

When students understand the basics of constructing logical lines of reasoning, you can choose to take their analytical capabilities one step further by introducing them to the concept of assumptions.

The example on worksheet #3 (see https://debaticons.com/worksheets) shows a straight logical chain. It contains one assumption (or premise) that is substantiated by logic. But in reality, a lot of arguments are more complex. They consist of multiple assumptions and every individual assumption needs to be proven sufficiently for the argument as a whole to be considered proven. Some students might struggle with finding the assumptions that underlie an argument since it requires a certain level of abstract thinking. For other students, however, this approach might help them to further structure their thoughts. The ability to structure an argument around its key assumption will eventually lead to students being able to understand the full complexity of an argument as opposed to just grasping the
initial layers of the argument.

The assumptions are in a way, the subquestions that need to be answered for the argument to be plausible. If we take the statement from page 174 (“In this argument I will demonstrate why allowing prisoners to choose to join risky military missions in return for lighter sentences is a justified way for them to repay their debt to society and should thus result in lighter sentences”), the assumptions that need to be proven are:

1. Why do we punish people?
2. Why is joining risky missions a way to repay your debt to society?
3. Why does the fact that you repaid part of your debt mean that you deserve a lighter sentence?

The reason why the first assumption needs to be proven is that our statement assumes that one of the reasons why we punish people is to repay their debt to society. If you do not prove that repaying your debt to society is one of the reasons why we punish someone, there is no clear relation between “doing something for society” and getting “a lighter punishment.” After proving that repaying your debt is an important consideration (retribution), you need to prove why joining risky missions is a way to repay that debt. After proving the second assumption, you need to link assumption one and two together by analyzing the third assumption.

Another reason why it is beneficial to stimulate students to think about arguments as a combination of assumptions is that it forces them to make a more deliberate decision about what it is they want to prove. If we take the second assumption as an example, a student could decide to explain that joining these missions means that there is a higher chance of a nation achieving its goals. Because you have helped your country to achieve those goals you have done something for your nation and have thus repaid your debt. If a student decides to go for this line of consequentialist analysis, they should realize that the argument will in the end depend on the practical outcomes of the motion. This is the case because the student argued that the fact that someone joined a mission, helped that mission to
be successful. That means that if the mission fails because of or even though a person joined the mission, the individual did not contribute to the success of the mission and should thus not get a sentence reduction. Whether or not someone gets a sentence reduction would then rely on whether or not they increased the likelihood of those missions being successful. Hence the argument would become reliant on the outcome of the mission.

Especially in philosophy classes, a teacher might want to stimulate students to come up with a non-consequentialist way to defend this argument too. A way in which students can make this argument non-consequentialist is by explaining that going on a risky mission means that you put yourself at risk for the sake of the collective. This means that you repay society because you take a bigger risk upon yourself than you would had you decided to accept your original punishment. Since the accepted risk is bigger than strictly necessary, you give back more to society than you would do if you would not join these missions. The fact that you made that decision should thus lead to a lighter sentence.

Of course, this line of reasoning can still be attacked but the responses would not be of a consequentialist nature, because whether or not your participation in those missions leads to a higher chance of success is no longer important. The important question becomes: Is the fact that you take an extra risk a reason to get a deduced punishment? Thinking about an argument in terms of assumptions thus helps students to make more deliberate decisions and helps you as a teacher to give more precise feedback.

2.5 Illustrations

Another way to further improve the plausibility of an argument is by using illustrations. Illustrations consist of evidence and examples that illustrate how your logic manifests itself in real life. One of the reasons why adding illustrations is such a powerful tool is because logic can quickly become too abstract. The harder someone needs to think when trying to follow a line of reasoning, the more likely it is that they will lose their attention. Moreover, illustrations show that your analysis is not just something you made up. Instead, your analy-
sis is a systematic explanation of how the world works.

So what do you need to do to use an illustration properly? The first thing you need to do is give a clear description of your illustration. This means going beyond just naming an example or piece of evidence and describing what the illustration is about. The second thing you need to do is explain why the illustration you just described is relevant to the situation you are arguing for. Suppose that a student needs to argue in favour of the following motion:

*This house would not punish those living below the poverty line for committing economic crimes.*

A student could argue that the reason why we normally have to adhere to laws is that we live in a society where you have to give up some of your freedoms to the state in order to get other rights in return. That is why a state infringes on your right to property by collecting taxes and gives you education, roads and hospitals in return. But when you are living below the poverty line, the state failed to live up to their side of the bargain. Living below the poverty line means that the state failed to provide you with the minimum standards that are necessary to lead a dignified life. Because of that, you should also not be forced to keep up your side of the bargain.

One of the crucial steps in the argument above is the assumption that if one party breaks a contract, the other party cannot be expected to be held to their side of the contract. Although this might be an intuitive assumption for some, others might still be in doubt about that line of reasoning. This means that this is the ideal place to add an extra example. The wrong way of adding the example would be to simply say:

“If the state does not live up to their side of the bargain, you should be able to do the same. Just like we see with every other contract in society.”

This example is not explained sufficiently yet. The student just claims that it happens somewhere else too without (a) explaining how it works in the cases they refer to, and (b) why those cases are analo-
gous to the case they are arguing for. So a better way to do it would be as follows:

“If the state does not live up to their side of the bargain, you should be able to do the same. In our everyday lives, we also see that if one party fails to meet their side of the contract, the other party can decide to do the same. This is why you are allowed not to pay your rent if your landlord refuses to do necessary repair work. If you don’t have hot water because the landlord didn’t fix your boiler, you can decide not to pay rent. The reason why this is the case is because the goal of a contract is to codify an agreement between two parties. In this way, both parties know what they can expect from each other. This same principle applies when it comes to the relationship between a civilian and the state. The state is not just a dictatorial power that can do as it pleases but instead is bound to uphold its responsibilities towards its citizens. So if they don’t create the circumstances in which you can meet your minimum living standards, they should not be able to force you to adhere to their rules.”

The critical reader might have noticed that I have sometimes used examples without describing them and explaining their relevance. That is because not every illustration needs the same amount of explanation. The general rule is that if an illustration is just used to make abstract reasoning more tangible (the example of taxes versus education, roads and hospitals) naming the example might suffice. In cases where analogies or hard evidence is used to prove that your analysis has proven itself to be true in other cases, a more elaborate explanation of the illustration is needed.

2.6 Impact

After proving the soundness of your argument, attention should be given to the impact the argument has on the debate. As Cicero put it: “When I am collecting arguments for my cases I make it my practice not so much to count them as to weigh them” (De Oratore II, lxxvi, 309). One impactful argument can be more important than three
low impact points. Therefore, it is important to highlight the size of the impact in a debate speech. When it comes to consequentialist arguments there are four common ways to highlight the size of your impact. The first way is by highlighting the number of people that are affected by an argument. Let’s assume a student has to defend the following motion:

*This house supports restrictions on free speech to combat the rise of right-wing populism.*

An argument against the motion could be that the restrictions on free speech would anger the people on the centre-right making them likely to adopt more extreme beliefs. This might be a powerful argument but the impact needs to be highlighted. That is why students should explain why the number of people that will be angry and adopt more extreme beliefs is significant. If this would only happen to a handful of people the argument might not be that impactful.

The second way to highlight the size of an impact is by focusing on the gravity of the impact. If many people are angered only slightly or reveal their anger only by writing angry posts on Reddit, the impact of the argument again decreases. However, if you are able to show that a significant group will feel considerably angry and will act upon it, the impact of the argument will increase.

A third way to evaluate the impact of a point is by looking at the duration of the impact. Is the impact just short term or will the impact last for a longer time? If many people get angry and start a protest where they yell racial slurs, it would be unfavorable. But if it only happens once the argument is less impactful than if it would happen over and over again.

The fourth way to describe the importance of your impact is by showing that we have a special responsibility towards a certain group. This is often the case when we talk about sick people or people who have been disenfranchised by the state. Palliative care could be taken as an example. The number of people that need palliative care is relatively small if you compare it to society as a whole and even though palliative care is crucial it only makes suffering more bearable and does not prolong someone’s life. Still, we provide this
care because “caring for the sick” is a value that is strongly supported in most societies. The reason why this fourth way of highlighting your impact is still part of the section about consequentialist argument is that focusing on the special responsibility to a group is most impactful after proving that you actually help that group.

For non-consequentialist arguments, a slightly different approach is needed. To give an example, looking at the gravity of the impact or the number of people affected is not relevant when you are arguing in favor of the fact that a CEO should be held legally responsible for the environmental crimes committed by their company. However, it is important to establish how the non-consequentialist argument relates to the consequentialist argument in the debate. A Proposition speaker might prove that CEOs are responsible for the culture within a company and that exactly that culture pushes the rest of the company to commit environmental crimes. Moreover, they could argue that it is the job of the CEO to know what is going on within the company and thus not knowing about the environmental crimes that happen points to serious neglect from the side of the CEO.

On the other hand, the Opposition might argue that introducing the motion makes people less likely to become CEOs and that it gives CEOs an extra incentive to hide their practices. In this case, it’s up to the Proposition to highlight the importance of their contribution by explaining why, if you believe that the CEO is indeed responsible, you should disregard the practical doubts brought up by side Opposition. Of course you can also choose to refute the points of the Opposition. How to effectively refute a point will be explained in later in this chapter.

One way to explain why the practical lines of the Opposition should be disregarded is by explaining that one of the pillars of our justice system is that people guilty of crime should be punished for their actions regardless of the practical consequences. That is why we lock up criminals, even if that means that their children grow up without their parent. By doing this a student clearly shows what the importance of the non-consequentialist argument is on the debate.

Highlighting the impact becomes trickier when you want to prove the importance of a non-consequentialist argument compared to
another non-consequentialist argument. Let’s go back to the motion we used in the previous paragraph:

“This house would not punish those living below the poverty line for committing economic crimes.”

As explained before, the Proposition could argue that people living below the poverty line are let down by the state and, as such, do not have to adhere to the rules of the state anymore (for the more nuanced explanation go back to page 179-180). The Opposition on the other hand could argue that individuals have a right to property and that it is, therefore, unjustified to steal someone else’s possessions even if it improves your own situation. In situations like these, it is harder to come up with a generic way to show which of the two arguments is most important. One way to compare these impacts is by exploring the limits of both values and decide how these limits would interact. So for example:

“There is an inverse relationship between the amount of property you have and the value every extra bit of property adds to your life. That is why most countries have a progressive tax system in which we tax richer people more than we tax poorer people. Given that the right to property and the right to minimum living standards are both important, we need to choose the option that infringes on both rights the least. In this case, we should decide to infringe on someone’s property rights because by slightly infringing on someone’s property rights, someone else can fulfill their right of having minimum living standards. This is why we normally allocate a part of the tax money we collect towards welfare. So if the person that lives below the poverty line steals bread from a bakery, they are in essence not different from the government ‘stealing’ a part of that baker’s profit to make sure a poorer person can buy a loaf of bread with the welfare payment they receive.”

2.7 Relevance

The last hurdle in building a strong argument is doing a quick rele-
vancy test. Next to highlighting the impact of your arguments, there are some additional questions that students needs to ask themselves to make sure that the argument is relevant to the debate. The first question is: “Is this argument inherent to the motion and exclusive to my side?” Imagine that students have to debate the motion that only prisoners who committed violent crimes should be incarcerated. Proposition could argue that implementing the motion would save money because we have fewer people in prison. Assume they explained that it is important to save money because this would lead to a higher budget for the prevention of crime (police, etc.). In itself, this might be a plausible and impactful argument. We can however still question the relevancy of the point. One of the ways to question this point is by explaining that implementing this motion is not the only/best way to obtain the money that is needed to invest in the police force. The Opposition could argue that there are other ways to collect that money, without having to face the negative aspects of this motion.

Another case where we often see a problem with the exclusivity of points made, is when students implement measures in their model that are not exclusive to their side of the motion. With the motion about only sending violent criminals to prisons, students could for example state that next to implementing the motion, they would also like to focus more on the rehabilitative aspect of prison by focusing on schooling inside of prison rather than focussing on adding more punitive measures. Assuming that they do not explain why this is only possible if we have fewer people in prison, this statement is not exclusive to their side, since the Opposition could do the same.

The previous section shows that arguments can be irrelevant even though they are plausible and impactful. There are however also ways to make impactful arguments extra relevant. One of the best ways to enhance the relevancy of a point is by linking it back to common values that both parties agree about. Let’s go back to the motion about restricting the right to free speech to combat the rise of right-wing populism. The Opposition made the argument about antagonizing people that were on the centre-right of the political spectrum but were moving towards more extreme beliefs because
they felt silenced. If a speaker can link the relevance of this point to the key values of the Proposition team, this point becomes even more impactful. In this round, they could do that by linking this point back to the problem that the Proposition is trying to solve. The Proposition will probably argue that the rise of right-wing populism creates more segregation and hate in society. The Opposition can point out that by antagonizing this centre group they do the exact opposite. They are enlarging the problem that they were seeking to solve.

3 Engagement

Debates get interesting when teams start to interact. By challenging each other’s ideas, students are forced to think on their feet and use the critique they are getting to improve the strength of their arguments. But properly engaging with someone else’s ideas is not easy. That is why the third part of this chapter will be dedicated to training students to engage with the ideas of others. In this part, we will both focus on how to refute points as well as how to ask critical questions.

3.1 Common mistakes

To give you a better understanding of how you can stimulate your students to engage with others, I will first discuss some of the pitfalls that often arise when students try to engage. It might help to put this theory into practice by trying out a debate format from chapter 4 to see if the following problems occur.

1 Students do not engage
2 Students re-emphasize their own arguments instead of engaging
3 Students do not engage with the best version of their opponents’ argument
4 Students point out why the argument is not perfect instead of disproving it
5 Students marginalize one of their opponents’ points and believe that the point is therefore irrelevant
The first common mistake is quite obvious and often occurs because students deem an argument to be either irrelevant or hard to refute. Not responding because you think that a point is irrelevant is problematic because the judge might have a different idea of what is relevant and what is not. Therefore, even ideas that sound silly should be dignified with a response. The second reason why students often decide not to respond is that they prefer responding to points that are easier to refute. You feel more confident when you know that you have a outstanding response compared to a response of which you know that it is flawed. The problem is that points that are easy to refute are often less relevant because they are not the strongest arguments in the round. So even if students know that their response is flawed, it is better to attempt to engage than to ignore.

Another common mistake is that students pretend to engage, or think that they are engaging, but in reality just repeat their own argument. Suppose a team is arguing in favor of the motion: “This house would introduce a 100% inheritance tax.” They might argue that by introducing this tax states will receive a considerable amount of money that they can invest in improving social services. Someone new to debating might respond by stating that this might be true but that the introduction of this motion would make sure that people will lose motivation to work because they cannot leave their possessions to their children. Even though that could be a relevant point in the debate, it is not a direct response to the point that the Proposition presented. As a teacher, you might be able to see that those two points could potentially interact because if people work less that also means that the state loses money in other areas and is thus not able to invest as much as the Proposition would like. But remember that it is not your job to fill in the blanks, instead, you should listen and stimulate your students to do the work by themselves.

The third common mistake is not just made by beginners, but also by more experienced debaters. When critically listening to someone’s speech, students tend to focus on every flaw they can find in their opponent’s case. That in itself is not wrong, but often causes students to underestimate the strength of their opponent’s arguments. Because of that, they do not respond to the best version of the argument, i.e. the argument the other speaker was meaning
to make, rather than the exact argument that the speaker presented. Examples of this are only refuting an illustration that might be badly chosen, and only responding to the most extreme case of the other side instead of attacking the most nuanced version of the point.

Another common mistake is that an attempt to engage properly might push students to show why the other argument was flawed instead of disproving it. This often manifests itself in students pointing out what their opponents did not do, instead of proving why the implicit assumption of the opponents is unlikely to be true. For example, if one of your students argues that we should get rid of patents for life-saving medication, they might argue that societal benefits can, at times, outweigh individual property rights. They might argue this by explaining that your ability to invent a medicine was largely because of others. The government created the schools that taught you basic biology and you needed the research of other academics to get to the medicine you invented. This means that your idea cannot be considered fully yours and because of that you should not have full ownership over the result of that idea. Consequently, you do not deserve the patent. An example of a response that merely points out that point is flawed instead of disputing it would be: “The previous speaker hasn’t explained how you need the work of previous academics to get to your final work, so the argument doesn’t stand.” Even though it might be true that this was not explained yet, the speaker refuting the original point has also not explained why it is not the case that you build on existing knowledge. The reason why the response is not sufficient is twofold. Firstly, the only thing the next speaker needs to do is fill the gap that was pointed out to undo the damage to the argument. Secondly, the response of the Opposition still leaves it up to the judge to decide whether or not it is plausible that researchers build on each other’s knowledge. So students should remember that they should show why an argument is unlikely to be true and not just imperfect.

The last mistake that is often made is failing to see the difference between marginalizing a point and refuting a point to the extent that it has become irrelevant in the debate. Marginalizing a point means refuting it in a way that shows that the impact of the other team is much smaller than they claimed it to be. Imagine that a team is in favor of the following motion:
This house believes that governments should ban their citizens from overseas groups fighting against terrorism which are not official military forces.

The team in favor could argue that this policy would make sure that fewer people would join these unofficial military forces and because of that, the conflict becomes less scattered and easier to solve. The Opposition team could state that the most extreme people will ignore this government ban and still leave their country to fight overseas. Even if this is true, it only marginalizes the Proposition impact, since it shows that not everyone will listen to the ban. After this response, a judge might however still feel like fewer people will join these groups, meaning that the conflict is still somewhat easier to solve. This response thus marginalized the Proposition’s impact, because it showed that the decrease of the number of people joining these groups is smaller than the Proposition suggested. At the same time, it doesn’t completely refute the point, because the number of people will still decrease. Marginalization is a good way to interact with a point, but the student should be aware that the Proposition point is not completely defeated and that they have to engage with the part of the argument that still stands. A way to do this is by comparing the marginalized impact with one of the impacts of your own argument and showing that, on a balance, your arguments are more important.

3.2 Best practices: attacking the plausibility of the argument

Now that you know how not to refute a point, we will focus on best practices that will help your students to meaningfully engage with each other. We will discuss three levels of refutation:

1. Refuting the plausibility of an individual argument
2. Refuting the relevance of an individual argument
3. Case level refutation

An in-depth explanation of the terms plausibility (analysis) and rele-
vance can be found in paragraph 2.3, 2.4 and 2.7. There are multiple ways to refute the plausibility of a point. The first way to do so is by directly attacking the analysis that someone else uses to prove an assumption. Assume your students are debating the following motion:

*This house would give parents extra votes in national elections.*

Proposition could argue that children are not represented in the status quo and that giving parents an extra vote would be the best way to represent the interests of the children. This would be the case because parents would keep the interests of their children in mind when voting. In this instance, directly attacking the analysis would mean that a student explains why parents will not keep the interest of their children in mind when voting. This is considered a *direct attack* because it responds to the analysis that was presented by the Proposition.

A second way to attack the plausibility is disproving some of the underlying assumptions that the Proposition did not touch upon. For the argument we just mentioned this could consist of disproving the fact that parents are able to make an objective decision about what is best for their children’s future. This would be an underlying assumption because the logic of the Proposition suggests that if parents want to vote in the best interest of their child, this would mean that their child is better represented within the political system. But if the Opposition manages to prove that parents do not have the capability to decide what is best for their child, or even better, are likely to choose an option that would actively be against the interest of their children, the argument would fall.

A third way to weaken your opponent’s point is by showing that the point is empirically untrue. This means that you zoom in on the analysis of your opponent’s case and point out that the analysis does not apply to what we see in reality. So if the motion would be that homework should be banned and the Opposition would argue that banning homework would lead to worse results, Proposition can point out that this motion was already introduced in Finland and did not lead to worse results at all. Again, it is important to not only just
state that a point is empirically untrue, but to add which flaws in the analysis or unproven assumptions cause the real world to differ from the world that the other team is envisioning.

The last way to cast doubt on the plausibility of a point is by pointing out the discrepancy between the analytical and the illustrative impact of the other team. This sounds more complicated than it is. Often students try to make their arguments more plausible and persuasive by adding examples to their impact. So with the motion stated above, a Proposition team might explain why giving parents an extra vote means that policymakers are more likely to design their policies in a way that would benefit the younger generations. To emphasize the strength of this point they might take climate change as an example and state that having more policies that benefit the young generations will lead to more future proof policies like solving climate change or alleviating people out of poverty. Although more future proof policies might be realistic, the examples might not be. It is implausible that the motion will suddenly solve the big problems mentioned above. Opposition can weaken their opponents’ points by pointing out this mismatch. However, as was mentioned in the common mistakes part, pointing out the discrepancy is not sufficient. To truly discredit the point made, it is important to point out what the likely outcome would be. So, instead of saying: “they are exaggerating, we will not solve climate change,” it is better to say: “they are exaggerating, we will not solve climate change. At best politicians will focus on climate more during their debates, but the mechanisms that withhold politicians from creating actual change in the status quo, like corporate lobbying, will still prevent them from implementing these radical policies.”

3.3 Best practices: attacking the relevance of the argument

A second way to engage with the arguments is to engage on a relevance level. Because even if the logic of an argument is sound and the argument as a whole seems plausible, the argument could still be vulnerable. The first problem that could arise is that the argument presented is not exclusive to a particular side of the motion. Imagine students having to debate the motion that a teacher’s salary should
be proportional to the performance of their students. Let’s assume Proposition would bring an argument that states that we should implement this motion because teachers are not earning enough in the status quo and therefore deserve a chance to earn more. The fact that teachers do not earn enough in the status quo and might deserve higher pay is non-exclusive. This is because Opposition could also state that they want teachers to get a higher salary while still rejecting the motion. They would simply say that teachers deserve an increase, regardless of the performance of their students. Exclusivity thus means that only one side is able to claim the benefit or harm of an argument. If the other team can claim that outcome too, without crossing the house (saying something that does not support your side of the motion), the argument can be considered non-exclusive. The second way to engage on a relevancy level is to show that the other team’s arguments are less relevant than your own arguments. To do this you can use the four criteria that determine the size of your impact (see page 180-183). In that case, students would make a comparison between the size of the different impacts and show why their impacts are more important.

3.4 Best practices: case level engagement

So far we only looked at how to engage with individual arguments. Within a debate, students can however also decide to engage on a case level. A case is the combination of all the constructive material (arguments, context, etc.) that a team presents within a debate. The reason why case level engagement is interesting is that student at times present arguments that are interesting in a vacuum but do not work well with the rest of the case.

One of the most common problems on a case level is that teams present arguments that contradict each other. The arguments might individually be true but contradict each other or other parts of the case. Suppose that students debate the motion:

This house supports the right to die.

In their model, a student states that they only support this right in the
case that someone is terminally ill. Then they bring their first argument. In this argument, they explain that every individual should have the right to decide how and when to end their life. Assuming that they explained this perfectly, there is tension within their case. On the one hand they explain why every individual should have the right to end their life, yet in their model, they would only allow terminally ill patients to use this measure. If they would truly support their argument they should allow everyone to make use of this right. Pointing this out often causes teams to make concessions in their arguments that make it easier to refute the argument entirely.

A second problem that often arises is the so-called problem-solution mismatch. What happens is that teams read a motion and then think of a problem that the motion might solve. Because they want the problem to sound urgent they make the problem as big as possible. But because of that, the problem becomes too big for the motion to be a solution. This often happens with motions like:

>This house believes that states should remove statues or memorials which commemorate or glorify military campaigns or the service of soldiers in war.

Proposition teams often argue that having those statues creates some form of pro-war sentiment. They will start their case by stating how awful wars are and how we should do everything in our power to prevent them from happening. But as you might notice, after a grand introduction about how bad wars are, removing some statues might sound like an anticlimax. Sure it might have some impact, but it is hard to prove that those statutes (a) have a bigger impact on how civilians perceive wars than alternative sources of information might have, and (b) that the change in perception will cause policymakers to make different decisions. That does not mean that the motion has no effect but if you inflate the problem you try to solve, it will be much harder to solve it.

A third case level problem that is quite common is that a teams’ case only engages with one context. Consider the following motion:

This house believes that states should allow all non-citizen migrant workers to vote in local and national elections.

It is tempting for students to talk about the groups that benefit their case. For Proposition this would mean, talking about exploited migrants who do low skilled work, who do not get fair compensation and have no means to change their situation. An Opposition team should however recognize that the way in which Proposition characterizes these migrants does not engage with the full scope of the debate. Opposition could argue that in many countries, migrant workers are in fact highly skilled and have great jobs. That is for example why 77% of the physicians trained in Liberia currently work in the US. This does not mean that the arguments of the Proposition are invalid nor does it mean that you should not engage with their context, but it does mean that the debate is more diverse than the Proposition portrays it to be.

3.5 How to structure your engagement: refutation

The most common way of engaging in a debate is by responding to the arguments that the other side has made. We call those responses refutation. On the previous pages, we have walked you through different ways in which you can refute the content of the other side. But how can you structure your refutation in a way that makes sure that you persuasively communicate your ideas? We propose following the steps listed below:

1. Announce to whom you are going to respond
2. Briefly paraphrase the argument that you are going to refute
3. Announce the number of responses you are going to bring
4. Present your responses
5. Clearly explain what your responses mean for the debate as a whole

Here is a quick example of how this would work. Assume that we are debating the motion that we should not punish those who live
below the poverty line for economic crimes. Proposition brings an argument where they say that the government failed to provide the people living below the poverty line with basic standard of life and therefore people should be allowed to take what is needed to survive. In that case, the refutation could look like this:

“I would like to start by responding to the first argument of the Proposition. In this argument, they state that the government failed to provide people with a basic standard of living and because of that people should be allowed to take matters into their own hand. There are two reasons why this argument does not stand. Reason number one. Proposition explains that the government failed those people. But it is not the government they will be stealing from. They will likely steal from the local bakery to get their bread. That local baker is in no way responsible for the dire situation that those people are in. Now going on to my second response. It is not always the government’s fault that individuals do not have minimum living standards. Some governments are simply not able to provide social welfare for everyone. If a government does everything in its power to uphold its side of the bargain but fails, that does not mean that you are allowed to forsake your side of the bargain. For the debate, this means that the Proposition has not proven why it would be justified not to punish people living below the poverty line for economic crimes.”

3.6 How to structure your engagement: rebuilding

The second form of engagement is rebuilding. If your arguments are attacked by the other team, you might need to do some reconstruction to make sure that your arguments stay relevant in the round. The structure of rebuilding and refuting is relatively similar:
We will use the same motion that we used to illustrate how to structure a refutation. We will now rebuild our (Proposition) argument by responding to the refutation you have read before.

“I will start by rebuilding our first argument. In our first argument, we explained that if the government fails to provide a basic standard of living, people should be allowed to create a minimum income themselves. The first response they gave was that the government failed you and that it would thus be illegitimate to steal from an individual. They are however missing the point. We explained that the reason why you should listen to laws is that you are in a relationship with the government. Since you never choose to be born in the country you are born in we do not think that you have an obligation to the other people in that country. The reason why you would normally not be allowed to steal is that the government has a relationship with all of us and uses that to create collective good. We argue that if a government failed to uphold their side of the bargain that can be interpreted as a termination of that relationship. That means that you no longer have to adhere to the rules that strive for the good of the collective but are instead allowed to take the steps necessary to improve your own life. The second response they gave is that not all governments can provide their citizens with these basic standards.
We think that the fact that they are not able to provide them with these minimum standards is untrue. Often it is just a matter of prioritization. Government officials do not want to tax their rich friends or donors and do not fight corruption in the system. That is the entire reason why they cannot provide minimum standards for everyone.

For the debate, this means that we prove that the contract between the government and the individual has been terminated at the point at which the government did not live up to their side of the bargain. It is thus legitimate to implement this policy.”

3.7 How to structure your engagement: Points Of Information

During the constructive speeches in the debate, speakers from the other side are allowed to stand up and ask Point Of Information (POIs). A POI could point out all of the flaws we have mentioned in this chapter. There are a few things students should keep in mind to make sure their POI strikes a maximum impact:

1. Keep it short and simple. After you have asked your question there is no time to clarify the question. This means that you should leave no room for misinterpretation.
2. Phrase your POI as an open-ended question. If you fail to do this, the other team might simply say “yes” or “no” and your POI has limited impact.
3. Do not ask a POI to request the speaker to respond to your own material. In that case, you are showing them what they need to do to weaken your points.
Chapter 7
Debating Freedom
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1 Different Concepts of Freedom and Liberty

\textit{Negative liberty or freedom as non-interference}: freedom is defined as the absence of obstacles, barriers or constraints. People are free when they are not interfered with in performing whatever action they intend. That is to say they are free to the extent there is no obstacle that would be stopping them in carrying out intended actions.

\textit{Freedom as the capability to act}: freedom is about what a person can or cannot do, not about what is stopping them. If people have no means and capability to exercise freedom or follow their intentions, it means that they are not free (even if there are no laws restricting them to do so).

\textit{Freedom as non-domination (republican liberty)}: freedom is about whether people have power over an individual and not whether they actually use the power to limit their intended actions. The most important thing about freedom are the relations of power and possible power imbalances.

2 Winning the Clash of Individual Freedom

2.1 Freedom as non-interference and its use in debates

When debaters are preparing arguments for the Opposition on the motion “\textit{This house would enforce a minimum wage in all sectors}” we can expect they will come up with the following argument (especially if we ask them to prepare a principled argument or an argument considering the role of the state in the free market economy):
“The role of the government is to safeguard individual liberty. By introducing the minimum wage, Proposition is banning a voluntary free agreement between two consenting adults or parties: employer and employee. Therefore Proposition is violating the individual liberty. This is why we oppose this motion.”

There are two common (complementary) strategies to respond to such an argument that the majority of Proposition teams would use to engage with the Opposition. With moderated discussion, coaches or teachers can easily lead debaters to the two following responses in defense of the Proposition case.

First response: Contesting the idea that this debate round should be (primarily) about protecting individual liberty.

“We on side Proposition agree that in the free market economy there are always two consenting adults reaching a free voluntary agreement specifying the contract and labour conditions, including the wage. That means that no individual liberty is violated in this decision making process. However, this particular decision (agreed monthly wage) can be harmful in terms of the effect on the economy, income inequality and wellbeing of workers. This is unacceptable, comparatively worse and more important than governmental violation of a free voluntary agreement. We agree that we are willing to violate individual liberty (to sign a contract of your choice) to achieve better equality in society.”

1 This is a very common form of an argument using the concept of freedom as non-interference. Debaters might use similar arguments in different debates considering “ban” or “regulation” but also in debates on “government intervention” in general. For example, let’s imagine a private apartment complex which restrict individuals who rent the apartments to host political gatherings there. Debaters might argue that the government should step in (that is to say the government should intervene) and force private owner of this complex to allow political gatherings in order to protect the freedom of assembly (even if this violates private property rights).
In this case Proposition will (a) use comparative analysis (saying that violating equality is more important than violating liberty) and (b) contest the criterion to judge this debate round (saying that this debate is predominantly about equality).

Second response: Attacking the truth of the argument (but accepting the criterion of individual liberty)

“We on side Proposition agree that this round should be primarily about protecting individual liberty. However we do not agree with the Opposition argument’s statement which is claiming that agreement between employer and future employee is an example of a free voluntary agreement between two consenting parties. This is a case of soft or economic coercion²: even though this may appear to be a fully free decision, workers are always under huge economic pressure and might be forced by the market to accept harmful and exploitative conditions to avoid poverty, to feed their families and to prevent someone else taking their job.”

(Debaters might boost the impact of the last part of the argument by introducing the argument of “reserve army of labour”³ from economic theory.)

In this case Proposition will attack the truth of the opposing argument by saying that the argument is simply untrue.

Both of these responses are valuable and can make the team win the round. Debaters can also use both of the strategies together at the same time in a so-called “even if-structure” and say:

2 Soft coercion or soft power involves shaping the preferences and actions of others through appeal, manipulation or economic over-power.
3 Reserve army of labour is a term from critical political economy used to describe the ranks of the unemployed who—through the absence of any meaningful choice—are prepared to work for very low wages in temporary jobs. This results in decreased prices of labour on the market since it gives employers a chance to negotiate lower wages with their employees.
“We believe this round should not be about individual liberty but rather about equality. But even if this round in the end will primarily be about liberty, we are still winning it because the employee-employer relation is not based on free agreement between two equal consenting adults but rather on a coercive power imbalance.”

2.2 Additional ways to engage or refute

At this point coaches or teachers can introduce a new strategy to engage with the initial argument by the Opposition. The strategy consist of four steps:

1. Accept that this debate is about individual liberty (agreeing with priorities and the main criterion in the debate).
2. Deny the definition of individual liberty by Opposition and offer a new definition or interpretation.
3. Construct arguments or intuitive analogies to support the new interpretation of freedom.
4. Show how your side is uniquely and exclusively protecting (the redefined) individual freedom.

To be able to implement this strategy, debaters need to familiarize themselves with two new concepts of freedom from political philosophy.

2.2.1 Freedom as the capability to act

Coaches and teachers should first briefly introduce and define this interpretation of freedom (see §1). The most important part of the session is to discuss possible arguments or analogies that debaters might use to show that this interpretation of freedom is more intuitive, more explanatory and more productive than the first one. Here are two suggestions that debaters usually come up with or understand quickly:
Example 1: purchasing power and freedom to travel
There is no rule, law or restriction preventing people to travel, but many people cannot do so because they simply do not have enough money—they do not have the means to travel. They want to travel and nobody is stopping them, but they are still not free to travel since they lack the capacity to act upon their desire. According to the non-interference definition of freedom all people are fully free to travel wherever they want (because nothing is stopping them directly), but we all intuitively feel and know they are in fact not free to do so. It does not matter if nobody is preventing them, it is important that in the end they are simply not able to. In this sense they are not free since they are physically not able to do so. This is why defining freedom as the capability to act is more explanatory and a more intuitive approach to understanding freedom.4

Example 2: severe drug addiction
People might want to quit drugs badly and try as hard as they can but in the end they are still unable to do so. Such people seem to be unfree—they are doing something that is against their will and they are not able to make the changes they want. But they are not being interfered with, so that does not seem to fall under the first definition of freedom as non-interference.5

After this discussion debaters should be able to use their new understanding of freedom in debate and to apply the new strategy of refutation with all four steps. The refutation should look something like this:

“Opposition has made a classic argument about government interference being bad because it is violating individual freedom. We as the Proposition accept their framing and the criterion to judge. We agree that

4 Experiences or more philosophically inspired students might try to take a step back and discuss if everybody is free to gain same purchasing power and how the different answer to this question might change the argument described above.
5 At this point teachers can ask students to come up with more examples and scenarios to prove the same point.
individual freedom is the most important thing in this round and that the job of the government is to protect individual freedom. But the Opposition is thinking about freedom in the wrong way. We are proposing a better way to think about freedom. And if you think about the freedom in this way, we are winning the round. Opposition thinks that freedom is only about whether somebody is interfering with you, but this is not what we should truly care about when thinking about liberties. We should care about what people can or cannot do. And if someone is unable to do something that matters the most to them, they are unfree. And this is the type of unfreedom we should prioritize. In terms of freedom and in this specific round not being able to get a living wage is much worse than not being able to sign any kind of contract. If somebody is not paid a living wage there are many things this person cannot do, for example provide for themselves, pay for the education of their children, afford medical care... All these things are more important for the freedom of an individual than not being able to sign a contract of your choice. Therefore, If we think about freedom in the right way, the Proposition team is the one safeguarding individual liberties.”

2.2.2 Freedom as non-domination

Debaters might choose the same strategy also using the third definition or interpretation of freedom (see §1). There are several scenarios teachers might use to discuss the advantages of this new approach to freedom as the question of power relations:

Example 1: slavery
Everybody agrees that the slave is the least free person one can find and that slavery is the worst violation of individual freedom possible.

6 At this point of the argument debaters might use analogies and examples discussed above as intuition boosts to illustrate importance and comparative benefits of their new definition of freedom.
However, slavery is not about how much one is interfered with: if the owner of the slave only interferes with a slave twice per day nobody would call this slave any more free than a slave that is interfered with ten times per day. Interference does not matter, what matters is that a person is enslaved—that the owner has absolute power over the slave (even if this power is rarely used). So we should care much more about the power dynamic than about interference.

*Example 2: divorce law in a single income household*

A single income household without any kind of divorce assets protection might be seen as a form of unfreedom for an unemployed spouse. The freedom is not about whether the spouse can leave whenever they want—if they are leaving with nothing, they are unfree to leave. It is the power dynamic that matters. Absence of divorce assets protection might create an imbalance of power for the employed person in a single income household and this makes the other person unfree even if they are not restricted to leave (which would be the criterion of freedom under the first non-interference approach) and have the capability to leave.

Debaters should now repeat the exercise and prepare a response to the initial argument against the minimum wage using this new interpretation of freedom:

“**Opposition has made a classic argument about government interference being bad because it is violating individual freedom. We as the Proposition accept their framing. We agree that individual freedom is the most important thing in this round and that the job of the government is to protect individual freedom. But the Opposition is thinking about freedom in a narrow way by understanding freedom as non-interference. We are proposing a better way of thinking about freedom. Freedom is about the balance of power. In this particular instance when employees are not guaranteed a living wage they are at the mercy of their employers. The balance of power is skewed towards the side of employers (they can**
offer whatever they want to people who urgently need income). In this sense workers aren’t free. Enforcing minimum wage might look like it makes people less free (because it bans a certain type of contract and prevents people to negotiate their own conditions of employment), but in reality it makes people more free because it prevents huge power imbalances and therefore frees people from a form of oppression. If we think about freedom in the right way, the Proposition team is the one safeguarding individual liberties.”

This is how a Proposition team can facilitate the change of definition of freedom or philosophical re-interpretation to hijack the rhetoric of the Opposition and bring the “moral high ground” in terms of freedom back to the Proposition side.

3 Advice for Further Work and Implementation

3.1 Additional readings

For better understanding and further research of newly learned concepts of freedom debaters can read the following political philosophers and their texts:

For a better understanding of negative freedom or freedom as non-interference: Two Concepts of Liberty (Berlin 1969).

For a better understanding of freedom as the capability to act: What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty (Taylor 1985, 211-229).

For a better understanding of freedom as non-domination: Freedom as Antipower (Pettit 1996) and The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference: The Case of Isaiah Berlin (Pettit 2011).
3.2 Additional exercise and sessions to strengthen philosophical knowledge

Activity 1: Coaches and teachers should encourage debaters to try to construct a list of strong arguments with several examples and illustrations in support of different types of freedom. The main research question for such a session is: “Why choose one approach to freedom over the other?” Debaters should prepare Proposition and Opposition arguments for each of the definitions. Debaters can work individually at home and help themselves with additional readings or research (they later present and discuss their work in class), but the same activity could also be implemented as a group moderated brainstorming session.

Activity 2: Teachers or debaters could come up with a list of possible real life examples from the news or from previous debates and then try to analyse the freedom of all included agents in the described scenarios through the perspective of all three definitions of freedom. Here are a few possible scenarios to discuss:

- A person decides to undergo plastic surgery to feel beautiful.
- A bank offers pay-day loan with high interest rates to a poor person.
- A state enforces strong progressive taxation to increase the welfare budget.

3.3 Motions

To exercise the implementation of a new strategy for refutation and the use of different concepts of liberty, debaters should try to debate the following motions:

- This house would cancel all student debt.
- This house would implement universal basic income.
- This house would disregard the opinion of local inhabitants when building public infrastructure.
- This house supports the “minimal state.”
- This house believes that the feminist movement in the
West should heavily promote the concept of self-partnership.
This house believes that the feminist movement should oppose capitalism.

3.4 Building principled arguments

Coaches, teachers and debaters can help themselves with the three-part development of the term freedom when they are developing other principled arguments, especially arguments on specific individual rights. For example, here are three different levels of understanding of the right to vote:

1. The right to vote (importance of the formal political right).
2. The capability to vote (a person needs to be able to exercise the right, that is to say to have education to understand the election issues, to be able to get to the voting cabin on the day of the elections, etc.).
3. The power to influence the results (being able to really influence the results, that is to say not being manipulated by media, being able to promote personal interest, having access to a platform to reach or spread important information).

Debaters can always approach the analysis of every individual right through these three steps:

1. Formal right (the right in itself);
2. Material right (having the capability to exercise the right);
3. Being in the situation where exercising the right can change the world around you (but also making sure that exercising this right does not create a world where your right interferes with the right of somebody else (i.e., relations of power).

Suggested exercise: take the motion “This house would ban the Facebook accounts of people using hate speech against minorities on social media” and ask debaters to approach the right to free speech through the three steps described above.
3.5 Connection to other topics

Freedom as non-domination is often used as an argument to justify democracy and the democratic process as comparatively better than other forms of government. Coaches and teachers could try to brain-storm ideas on how to use this concept in defense of democracy in debates such as:

- This house prefers a strong enlightened dictatorship over a populist democracy.
- This house supports technocratic expert governments over a democracy to fight the global climate crisis.
- This house believes that civil disobedience is a justified form of political participation in liberal democracies.

3.6 An additional conception of freedom

There is another relevant competing conception of freedom in political philosophy, which is freedom as non-frustration. According to this definition a person is free so long as they are not hindered in doing the things that they want to do (i.e., so long as their will is not frustrated). This approach is famously taken by Hobbes: the Hobbesian conception of freedom suggests that what is required is non-frustration of the will. This conception originates in a quote from Hobbes’ most famous work Leviathan (1651): “A free-man is he that in those things by which his strength and wit he is able to do is not hindered to do what he has a will to” (Leviathan, 21.2). In other words, you are free if you are not frustrated in doing the things that you want to do. This conception of freedom has several interesting implications. It implies that external constraints are only relevant to freedom when they affect the decisions you actually make, not the ones you might have made, in a different possible world.
3.7 The same refutation strategy with different philosophical topics

Teachers and debaters might use the same strategy of refutation for many competing concepts from political philosophy in debates:

Equality (material versus relational equality, formal versus material equality, or equality of opportunities versus equality of outcomes); Justice (redistributive justice versus corrective or restorative justice); Democracy (procedural democracy versus substantive democracy).
About the Authors
Han van Ruler is Professor of Intellectual History and Vice-Dean of Education at Erasmus School of Philosophy (ESPhil), Erasmus University Rotterdam. He has published extensively on Renaissance and early-modern Western philosophy and has made numerous modern editions in both Dutch and English of 17th-Century philosophical texts (Descartes, Geulincx, Spinoza, Leibniz). He is general editor of Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, project lead of both the Erasmus of Rotterdam Research Centre and the Decoding Descartes-Research Project at ESPhil, and currently chairs the “Syllabus Committee” preparing the 2024-2027 VWO-level school examinations in philosophy in The Netherlands.

Tomislav Reškovac is a philosophy teacher at Privatna klasična gimnazija in Zagreb, Croatia, and an external associate of the Teacher Education Agency. He is the author of three high school textbooks (Philosophy, Bioethics, and Moral Philosophy). He is one of the founders of the debate program in Croatia.

Floris Velema teaches philosophy at Wolfert Bilingual School in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. He chairs the board of the Dutch Philosophy Olympiad and is a board member of the Association Internationale des Professeurs de Philosophie (AIPPh). He is also the founding editor of https://ethics.community, a platform established in 2018 to explore how ethics is taught in secondary schools across Europe.

Debbie Newman is the founder and director of the Noisy Classroom. She has experience of coaching speech and debate around the world at all levels. She is a previous English national debating champion, president of the Cambridge Union Society and world champion schools debate coach. She has been on the faculty of the World Debate Institute, the International Debate Academy (IDAS) and the UK Debate Academy and is a former Head of the Centre for Speech and Debate at the English-Speaking Union in London. Debbie is a qualified secondary teacher and her focus is on speaking and listening in schools: both working with children, from 8-18, and also working with teachers to help build their skills and confidence. She is the author of two books: Pros and Cons: A Debater’s Handbook. 19th Edition
Gijs van Oenen is Associate Professor of social and political philosophy at Erasmus School of Philosophy (ESPhil), Erasmus University Rotterdam. He holds an MA in political science and a PhD in legal philosophy from the University of Amsterdam. He has published widely on topics like politics, citizenship, democracy, rule of law, art, public space. Most recently, he published *Nu even niet! Over de interpassieve samenleving* ("Not right now please! On interpassive society"). Next to publishing in e.g. *Citizenship Studies, Continental Thought and Theory*, and *Theory and Event*, he is a regular participant in the public debate in national media.

Devin van den Berg is a three-time national debating champion (The Netherlands) and a World Championship semi-finalist. He has coached the Dutch national high school debating team during six World Championships and has helped students and teachers across the globe to improve their debating skills. Currently he is the debate coach of Wolfert Bilingual School in Rotterdam and founder of Debaterexpert where he helps professionals to improve their public speaking and critical reasoning skills.

Miha Andrič is an international communication, speech and debate teacher, philosopher, and sociologist. He is currently a member of the board of directors of the International Debate Education Association (IDEA) and president of the Slovenian society for the development of the humanities. He has been serving as program director of several international debate academies and has been the head coach of national World Schools Debate teams since 2013. He has been chief adjudicator or expert coordinator at more than thirty international competitions around the world and has been training students and teachers in over forty countries.
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Appendix I

Key Concepts in Debate
The definition comes at the start of the First Proposition’s speech. It is not a dictionary definition of the words in the motion, but rather a clarification of the terms of the debate. It is essential for a good debate that everyone in the room is clear about what they are debating and what the parameters are. For example, if a motion is phrased “This house would legalize soft drugs,” the opening speaker must define what they mean by soft drugs.
In policy debates (debates that call for an action—for example to ban, to legalize, to invade), the definition needs to include a model of how the action will be undertaken. The First Proposition speaker must establish the what/when/where/who/how of what is being discussed so that the rest of the debate can focus on the why/why not. Some motions require very little in terms of a model, others need more details to ensure a good debate.
This forms the backdrop to the arguments and can make a powerful difference to the debate. Both teams try to convince the audience that the world is how they see it. For example, if there is a motion on introducing state-funding of political parties, the Proposition team would wish to establish a context of big money corrupting democracy. The Opposition, on the other hand, wish to paint a picture of a high-functioning democracy where current regulations work to help ensure elections are fair.
The clash points are the specific areas which the two sides disagree on. This cannot always be predicted before a debate begins. The Proposition may put forward a problem, a solution and principles in their case. The Opposition may not oppose all of these and only those they do become the clash points. By the end of the debate, the reply speakers must analyze the clash points to show why their side has won.
Principled argument

Both sides will usually have some principled arguments as part of their case. In the philosophy classroom, these are the arguments that will be given the most importance. Regardless of the practicalities, what is the right thing to do? Common principled arguments in debates revolve around freedoms and responsibilities, identity, justice and equality.
Practical arguments are common in policy debates. Regardless of what is the right thing to do in principle, what will happen in practice if we do or do not follow this course of action? Will it work? Is it too expensive or time/labour intensive to be realistic? What will the consequences be of the action? Of inaction?
Statement

The statement is where you put forward the argument that you are going to develop, analyze and attempt to prove. The statement itself is an assertion and needs the reasoning and evidence which follow. It flags up to the listener what your argument is going to be.
This is the largest step in the argumentation. Here, the debater must go beyond asserting their point and try to prove it through reasoning. It is important that the debater shows all the logical steps in their thinking. In their analysis they can show why the argument is true, why it is relevant and significant and ultimately why it supports their side of the motion.
Illustration

Each argument should have an illustration to support it. The analysis shows why the argument is valid logically; the illustration seeks to show that you can see the truth in the real world. This could be a case study or example of where the policy has been carried out before. It could be scholarly evidence. It could be statistics or the support of a relevant individual, organization or school of thought.
Assumption

An assumption is a premise within the argument (or the case) that (a) has to be true in order for argument function (that is to say to be valid and sound), but (b) was assumed to be true or was not proven in the constructive argumentative material. Attacking the assumptions on the opposing side can be an effective refutation.
One form of analysis and refutation focuses on relevance. The argument may be logically sound and supported by good evidence, but does it contribute to whether the motion should pass? For example, in a debate on shutting down zoos, if the Opposition team argued that keeping animals in captivity was important for medical research, the Proposition do not need to attack the argument itself, only to show that is not relevant to a debate about zoos.
When a team develops an argument, they try to establish that the benefits they discuss are unique to the proposal they put forward. The Opposition may try to show that these benefits would come about without acting or through another proposal which had less harms. In addition, if the Opposition run a counter-plan, it must be mutually exclusive with the proposal put forward by the Proposition.
One form of analysis and refutation focuses on impact. The argument may be logically sound and supported by good evidence, but how much of an impact is it actually going to have? The speaker making the point needs to consider impact in their reasoning and the other side can look for opportunities to show limited impact in their refutation.
It is important that an individual speaker’s arguments and those of their team are coherent and cohesive. It is not acceptable for two speakers to run contradictory arguments. For example, we should bring back the death penalty because prison is a soft option and we should bring back the death penalty because a life sentence is a less humane punishment. It is an effective tool of attack to identify and expose contradictions on the other side.
Refutation is the attack that debaters make on the other side’s arguments. They may, for example, show flaws in the analysis, a different interpretation of the illustration, challenge the assumptions or reject the principle. Refutation is key to a debate. It is not enough for the debater to present their own arguments. They must listen carefully and attempt to dismantle the other side’s case.
Most refutations focus on what has been said, but when it comes to omissions one focuses on what hasn’t been said. This may be pointing out that the other team has omitted details from the definition or model which make the terms of the debate unclear. It could be pointing out underlying assumptions in a case and attacking those. It could be accusing your opponents of missing a key step, for example failing to establish that there is a problem that needs solving.
Rebuilding

When an argument has been attacked through refutation, the next speaker must attempt to rebuild it by showing why the refutation is to be rejected. The aim is to have all of the arguments standing in the audience’s mind by the end of the debate, so the team must not let attacks go undefended.
Appendix II

Philosophical Debate Motions
1 Ethics

1 This house believes that the morality of an action should be judged by its consequences and not by its intention.

2 This house would require judges to take into account the views of victims and their family when setting punishment for crimes.

3 This house believes that scientists are responsible for the consequences of their research.

4 This house believes that traditions are neither good nor bad, they simply are. (Feyerabend)

5 This house believes that tribal courts in indigenous communities should be allowed to try civil and criminal cases within their territory.

6 This house believes that the Ring of Gyges would turn good people into crooks. (Plato)

7 This house would implement a Social Credit System.¹

8 This house would plug into the experience machine. (Nozick)
9. This house would pull the lever to make the trolley switch tracks.
   (Foot)

10. This house believes that all living beings have inherent worth regardless of their instrumental utility to human needs.
    (Deep ecology)

11. This house would grant animals the same basic rights as humans.

12. This house believes that the unexamined life is not worth living.
    (Socrates)

13. This house believes that the eternal recurrence should be the main directive for ethical behavior.
    (Nietzsche)

14. This house prefers an ordinary life of mediocrity and simplicity, as opposed to a life that strives towards outstanding achievements.

15. This house believes that science is the key to human flourishing.

16. This house believes that it is immoral to have children.
3

This house believes that scientists are responsible for the consequences of their research.
This house believes that everything that can be said meaningfully in one language, can be translated into any other language.
2 Epistemology

17 This house supports empiricism, as opposed to rationalism.

18 This house believes that we are living in a computer simulation.

19 This house believes that truth is what people accept as the truth.

20 This house would criminalize the spreading of fake news.

21 This house would take the blue pill.

22 This house believes that everything that can be said meaningfully in one language, can be translated into any other language.

3 Metaphysics

23 This house supports substance dualism, as opposed to substance monism.

24 This house supports a movement towards granting human rights to AI.

25 This house believes that the ship of Theseus remains the same ship, despite all of its parts being replaced.
26 Assuming the technology is available, this house believes that parents should secretly replace deceased pet animals with their clones.

27 Assuming the technology to significantly alter the body exists (e.g., changing memory capacity, limb reinforcements, etc.), this house would recognize the right to morphological freedom.

28 This house believes that post-conflict states should actively promote a unifying national narrative in the history curriculum.

29 This house would prefer a world where memory is permanent and infallible.

30 Assuming feasibility, in countries with conscription, this house would forcibly delete all soldiers’ memories of combat situations upon their discharge.

31 This house prefers a world which accepts hard philosophical determinism as reality, as opposed to a world with belief in free will.
20
This house would criminalize the spreading of fake news.
45
This house would not give organs to non-donors.
4 Aesthetics

32 This house believes that whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.
(Wittgenstein)

33 This house believes that artworks should be evaluated on their formal properties only, and not on their content or meaning.

34 This house believes that artists should not participate in the ongoing interpretation of their art.

35 This house believes that state subsidization of art should be distributed through a random lottery.

36 This house would not consume art created by people who have engaged in gravely unethical behavior.

37 This house believes that social disgust is sufficient justification for censoring art.

38 This house believes that our aesthetic preference is the product of evolution.

39 This house supports the rise of computational creativity.²
40  This house believes that art leads us away from truth and toward illusion.  
    (Plato)

41  This house regrets the increasing presence of nihilism in popular culture.  
    (e.g., BoJack Horseman, Rick and Morty, etc.)

5  Social Philosophy

42  This house prefers a philosopher king over a democracy.  
    (Plato)

43  This house supports restrictions on free speech to combat the rise of right-wing populism.

44  This house believes that we should recognize a right to be free from intentionally offensive speech.

45  This house would not give organs to non-donors.

46  This house believes that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.  
    (De Beauvoir)

47  This house believes that the feminist movement should not use rhetoric about women being more empathetic or caring than men as part of their advocacy (e.g., “Women are good leaders because they are more compassionate”).
48 This house, as the feminist movement, supports the sexualization of men in the media and pop culture.

49 This house regrets the rise of rainbow capitalism.³

50 This house would ban all treatments and cosmetic surgeries that alter your ethnic appearance.

51 This house regrets the medicalization of human diversity.⁴

52 From behind a veil of ignorance, this house would choose to not be born. (Rawls)

53 This house believes that in a just and fair society there should be no inequality.

54 This house believes that poverty is a legitimate defense for crimes of theft.

55 This house would defund the police.

56 This house supports violent civil disobedience as a legitimate response to injustice.
57  This house believes that a teenager’s right to privacy is more important than a parent’s right to know.

58  This house would give legislative veto power to a Future Generations Commission.5

59  This house believes that the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.
    (Hobbes)

60  This house would dedicate an enclosed part of Europe to recreate the state of nature.
A Social Credit System is a national government-facilitated rating system that rewards citizens for good behavior and sanctions them for bad behavior. It evaluates a defined set of actions that includes but goes beyond illegal or legally-obligatory acts (e.g., charitable donations, recycling, volunteer work; or jaywalking, and littering). Scores can be given by members of the public, corporations, NGOs, and the government. Based on these scores, the government applies rewards and sanctions (e.g., fast-track through airport security, government-subsidized mortgages, free public transportation; or higher tax, slower document processing times, and increased barriers to public sector jobs).

Computational creativity is a scientific field researching AI models that simulate or replicate human creativity. Projects in the field include but are not limited to using AI to script films, compose music, write poetry, and paint.

Rainbow capitalism refers to the incorporation of the LGBTQ+ movement into capitalism and the market economy. This includes, but is not limited to commercialisation of pride month and pride parades and using themes of LGBTQ+ rights and sexual diversity in advertisements.

Medicalization of human diversity is a rising trend of human characteristics being labeled as illnesses, rather than personality traits. Examples include ADHD and autism. The medicalization of human diversity does not relate to mental illnesses that inherently harm the patient, such as depression, schizophrenia, or bipolar disorder.

For the purposes of this debate, a “Future Generations Commission” is an independent body mandated with mapping the long-term impacts of governmental policy on the young, or unborn generations.
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From Plato’s dialogues to medieval scholasticism to John Stuart Mill’s defense of free speech, there is an intimate historical relation between debate and philosophy. So why have debate clubs and philosophy classrooms become such separate worlds in contemporary schools?

This book presents a method that combines the argumentative skills of debate education with central concepts in political philosophy, such as freedom, justice and equality. A practical guide for high school teachers that offers a new approach to fostering democratic values and engaged citizenship.

Editor
Floris Velema

Authors
Han van Ruler
Tomislav Reškovac
Floris Velema
Debbie Newman
Gijs van Oenen
Devin van den Berg
Miha Andrič

Reviewers
Natascha Kienstra
Kiki Varekamp
Corrado Soldato
Gorazd Jurman
Bojan Marjanovič

Graphic design
Paul Swagerman
Quinten Swagerman

3D modeling
Quinten Swagerman

Web development
Tom Walter

debaticons.com