

An Introduction: Making Sense of this Stuff



CHRISTIAN Americans have a tremendous conflict within their hearts, because two different traditions are opposing each other and are vying for supremacy. One tradition is Greek, or western; the other is Hebrew. Because of their origin, Americans are thoroughly immersed in western ideas and thought. However, after being redeemed by God, the Christian American experiences a different way of thinking. Since Christianity has its roots in Judaism and uses a Jewish book for its guide, Christians have an intellectual foundation that is adopted from the Hebrews. This tradition does not rely on human reason and logic. Instead, the Hebrew tradition emphasizes *obedience and adherence to strict principles that have been revealed*. Therefore, knowing how to live correctly is not a matter of “discovering” these principles through reason, because they are easily learned by reading the “lively” oracles of God, which were given only to the Jews (Romans 3.1–2). With the Bible in his hands, anyone is able to learn about the most important theme in the Bible: the reconciliation of man with God.

On the other hand, Christian Americans are still participants in their national history and heritage, which are based on the Greek tradition. Most western theories about philosophy, ethics, politics, metaphysics, jurisprudence, and aesthetics come from the ancient Greeks and Romans, who based their beliefs on *human reason*. When Socrates stated the wisest man is the one who knows he knows nothing or when Sartre believed existence precedes the essence of who we become, the emphasis is no longer about obeying an authoritative rule, but rather about breaking away from the conventional in order to exercise freedom of thought. This individualism was important to the ancients as well as to the humanists of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Indeed, the early American Republic was the result of the political philosophy popularly held during the 17th century, tempered by liberty of conscience promulgated by the Baptists.

In short, while the Hebrews seek salvation through God, the western tradition seeks salvation through man. Since the emphasis of western thought is upon man and his works, this tradition is *humanism* and its subject matter is the *humanities*. Also as a contrast, while the Hebrew tradition shows a cooperative spirit with nature by working with nature, the western tradition through science has an increasing hostility towards nature and the environment, which are to be conquered by and controlled with more advanced technology.

Do not expect this course to reconcile these two opposing traditions. As you should see already, no reconciliation is possible. The Hebrew tradition assumes there is a Creator-God without any attempt to prove his existence logically. On the other hand, the Greek tradition assumes there is no Creator-God, because such a belief cannot be proven logically. Therefore, the purpose of this course is two-fold. First, the student will be afforded the opportunity to study the major ideas of the western philosophers. Please note that this course is not intended to be a smorgasbord of western ideas where you can pick and choose “what works for you.” Yet, this study will have value, since many of these ideas are prevalent in our social, political, and religious institutions today. You will need to understand the origin of these ideas to combat them. Since these ideas are products of human reason, the systems of thought will have flaws due to the human heart being corrupted by sin, and important decisions about life and living should not be guided by “wishful thinking” or unsupported opinions.

But, second and more importantly, you will learn the proper role of reason, and where reason fits into the Christian worldview. An important point to remember is that philosophy is the use of the human logic without any external aids to help it in order to understand questions about our existence and purpose in life. God did give you a profound thing called the heart in order to help you to think deeply about life. Indeed, to fail to use your reason would make you less than human. However, reason is only a part of what makes you a complete human being. As a human being, you are much more than just heart. You also possess a body, a mind, and a soul. To neglect any to these facilities in favor of just one is folly.

Therefore, the desired outcome of this course in philosophy is to have you answer this very important question, which is essential for your life: WHAT WILL BE YOUR FINAL AUTHORITY? When it comes to living your life to the fullest, the epitome of stupidity would be to hazard guesses about what you should believe and do. Every question, every thought, and every action ought to be compared with and weighed by an authority with a proven record of reliable information and guidance. The choice is really quite simple: either you will rely on the subjective opinions of men, or you will rely on an objective authority, which is not the product of human thinking.

Regarding the text, *Sophie's World*, the book is both a novel and a textbook. As the creator of *Sophie's World*, Jostein Gaarder is a Norwegian, who became a full-time writer after the success of this particular book. However, as a warning, Gaarder supports three views, which receive a very favorable bias: evolution, globalism, and feminism. Even though he is an obviously brilliant and creative thinker, Gaarder accepts these notions as good things, which is unfortunate, because none of these positions has any logical foundation and is quite irrational as further material in this course will show. In addition to their failing to be philosophically sound, all three views are manifestations of rebellion against a holy and righteous God. Nevertheless, Gaarder does a fine job when summarizing the major players and

ideas in western philosophy, and *Sophie's World* is an excellent primer for an introduction to this field of study.

I attempted my best to make this course challenging, yet not so comprehensive as to bore the student silly. While I have tried to be careful, I am certain flaws exist. If you find errors of any sort, especially in logic or explanations, I solicit your thoughts. Also, if you believe that some topic is missing or needs more information, I request that you give me your suggestions as well. I shall admit that my feeble understanding has struggled over the years with many of the ideas presented here, and I am still learning. My intent is to be a blessing particularly to young Christians, and not to be the last word about anything presented in these pages. With your insight and valuable input, *Ever Learning* can become a great tool for those in the body of Christ.

ROBERT W. WATSON

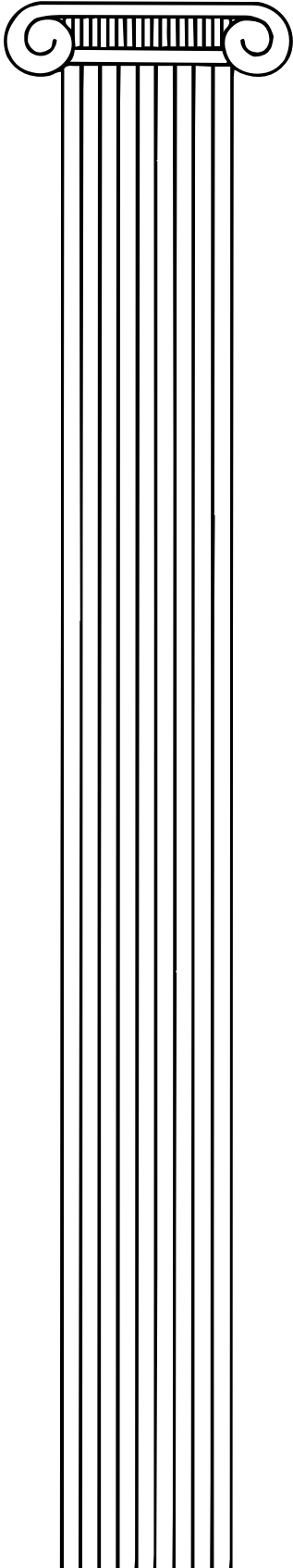
High Falls, Georgia on New Year's Day, 2008

Objectives for this course

Text: *Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder

Study Guide: *Ever Learning: The Fundamentals and History of Western Philosophy*

1. To develop and understand the terms used in western philosophy.
2. To have a cursory knowledge about the major figures who developed western philosophy.
3. To understand and analyze the major theories found in western philosophy.
4. To appreciate the proper role of reason and to understand its place for creating human culture.
5. To compare philosophical ideas with the objective standard, the Holy Bible, and more specifically, the Authorized Version for English-speaking people.
6. To understand that western philosophy and Hebrew thought cannot be reconciled.
7. To establish the Holy Bible as the final authority to be the guide for all human thought, action, and life.



Lesson 1

The Garden of Eden

Objectives

After you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Define the following terms: faith, philosophy, heart, assumption, objective, and subjective.
2. Recognize the following personality: Sophia
3. Recognize the irreconcilable differences between the Greek and Hebrew traditions.
4. Understand the limitations of philosophy to solve certain questions about life.
5. Understand the various ways in which people justify their faith.
6. Understand where philosophy fits into the Biblical world view.
7. Understand the importance of the “word” both in creating and in maintaining the universe.
8. Understand the two different types of wisdom.



Understanding *Sophie's World*

Period of time: The present

Definition of terms

Faith. As the central activity of all living human beings, faith consists of both substance (belief) and evidence (action). In other words, faith is the confident belief in the truth of an idea, which is demonstrated in a tangible way. See “Supplemental Material” for more information.

Philosophy. This word is derived from two Greek words, meaning “a lover of wisdom.” But there are two kinds of wisdom, making merely “a lover of wisdom” vague without more clarity. Broadly speaking, a philosophy is any system of values and beliefs that directs one’s every action. However, more narrowly, as one method for justifying one’s faith, philosophy is a discipline that seeks answers to questions by using only thought and logic.

Heart. The source of thought, imagination, belief, reason, and understanding. A primary problem with western philosophy is its failure to acknowledge the heart as the most important faculty of man. The mind is not the center of intellect, but is the conscience which determines good and evil. Of course, all of this academic if you do not believe the Bible.

Assumption. A core belief that cannot be proven or disproved logically. An example of an assumption is believing the universe is the result of a huge explosion, which is opposed by the assumption that the universe is the result of intelligent design.

Objective and subjective. Anything that is objective has existence apart from and is not influenced by human reason. For an example, the fact that a circle is a plane curve equidistant from its center is true whether I believe it or not, or whether I am alive or not. This fact is independent of my mind and is therefore objective. On the other hand, if I create a fictional character, the character is dependent upon my mind for its existence, which makes it subjective.

Personalities to know.

Sophia. Called Wisdom or the Mother of All. This goddess is invoked in most of the feminist writings. Sophia is the creation of the Gnostics who claim that she is the grandmother of Jehovah. Sophia was born of Silence and gave birth to Male and Female, who in turn created the material universe. Then apparently Female gave birth to Jehovah and Ildabaoth, who was the Son of Darkness. It is the spirit of Female who supposedly comes to the garden of Eden as a serpent in order to teach



The Garden of Eden

the humans to disobey the envious Jehovah and his brother, Ildabaoth, who had forbidden humans to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why were they envious? Because Sophia loved humans more than her grandchildren. Later the tale states Sophia comes to earth as a dove and is therefore today the Holy Spirit. All of this is very interesting, but where is the evidence for this conjecture?

Reading assignment: *Sophie's World*, The Garden of Eden

Open-book questions about the reading

1. What is the occupation of Sophie's father?
2. After school, Sophie finds two envelopes inside the mailbox within two hours of each other. What are the messages found in the envelopes?
3. Would you describe Sophie as a vain girl? Why or why not?
4. According to Sophie, one cannot fully appreciate being alive unless he fully appreciates what fact as well?
5. What is "the den"?
6. Why does Sophie reject the idea that God has always existed?
7. Besides the two white envelopes, what else does Sophie receive in the mailbox, and to whom is it addressed?
8. Philosophically, why does Gaarder use the third-person viewpoint in the novel instead of using the viewpoint of Sophie (first-person)?

Supplemental material

The weakness of philosophy. Already Sophie has revealed the central problem with philosophical inquiry. Even though being very capable of posing thousands of questions, the human heart is unable to answer most of them. For example, the questions "Who am I?" and "Where does the world come from?" are impossible to answer with just the heart alone. When faced with the only sensible conclusion about the origin of the universe, Sophie has to rely on God, a concept that cannot be proven logically. Indeed, Sophie "logically" concludes that since everything has a beginning, God must have always existed, or else He created Himself. However, to Sophie, neither alternative seems acceptable, and then she stops thinking at this point. All people are motivated occasionally to think philosophically for a moment or two, but when the inquiry hits a brick wall, the would-be philosophers quit their ponderings and resume their daily activities like Sophie does. Unfortunately, most people like Sophie fail to consider that there could be another authority besides their own subjective reasoning.



Justifying one’s faith. Oftentimes the question, “Does he have faith?” is offered to inquire whether an individual has a relationship with God. However, the question is not entirely correct. The truth is all men live by faith. For this reason everyone leaves his house during the day having a confident belief in the idea that he will return safely. Everyone has assumptions about the world, about God, and about one’s purpose in life. Therefore, the question is not whether anyone has faith, but rather “How does one justify his faith?” Note the paradigm below.

Ways to justify faith	Realm	Awareness of	Concerns the	Primary Quality	
				Spiritual	Carnal
Philosophy	Heart	God	Imagination	Humble	Proud
Leisure	Soul	Self	Appetites	Satisfied	Empty
Law	Mind	Good & Evil	Conscience	Pure	Defiled
Science	Body	Physical reality	Senses	Immortal	Corruptible

Individuals get themselves into trouble by trying to justify their faith with just one of the above areas of life. With different ways of justifying faith, one would think life is a free-for-all. However, as usual, the Bible helps make sense of this apparent brawl between subjective preferences. The Lord Jesus Christ states, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment” (Mark 12.30). Therefore, these four faculties of human beings are all necessary for loving God completely. When used in isolation and apart from a love for God and a knowledge about Him, the above human endeavors will fail to discover truth and will lead to carnality.

Sophie’s garden and den. Note the significance of Sophie’s garden. This allusion points to the garden of Eden where the Bible says human history began. Gaarder is also trying to make the point that the Garden is where knowledge first began as well. But is this true? Did Adam have no knowledge before the fall? The garden will become more significant as a symbol as the novel progresses. Also, Gaarder creates a small “hideout” for Sophie in a thicket of bushes. Here the author makes an allusion to Plato’s allegory of the cave found in *The Republic*. This concept will be explained completely in lesson nine. However, for now, understand that the cave is a place of shadows and illusions. According to Plato, only by leaving the cave can one be fully enlightened to the truth. In order to receive instruction, Sophie is forced most of the time to leave her den.



The Garden of Eden

Philosophical questions raised in *Sophie's World*

Is man more than just a robot?

What is life?

Why is life not fair?

Is there life after death?

Is there a God and when did He begin?

How did the universe begin?

Mysteries found in *Sophie's World*

Who put the notes in Sophie's mailbox?

Who is Hilde Møller Knag?



This is a portion of Michelangelo's famous painting in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican in Rome, Italy. Notice the woman around whom Jehovah has His arm. No one can be sure, but many art critics claim the woman is Sophia, the supposed grandmother of Jehovah.



Developing a Biblical Response

Reading and questions

The garden of Eden

Genesis 2.8-3.24

- 8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.
- 9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
- 10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.
- 11 The name of the first *is* Pison: that *is* it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold;
- 12 And the gold of that land *is* good: there *is* bdellium and the onyx stone.
- 13 And the name of the second river *is* Gihon: the same *is* it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.
- 14 And the name of the third river *is* Hiddekel: that *is* it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river *is* Euphrates.
- 15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.
- 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:
- 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.
- 18 And the LORD God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.
- 19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof.
- 20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.
- 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;
- 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.
- 23 And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.
- 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.
- 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.
 - 1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?
 - 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:
 - 3 But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.
 - 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:
 - 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.
 - 6 And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.
 - 7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.



The Garden of Eden

- 8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.
- 9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?
- 10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.
- 11 And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?
- 12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.
- 13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What *is* this *that* thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.
- 14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:
- 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.
- 16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.
- 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of it* all the days of thy life;
- 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;
- 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.
- 20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.
- 21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.
- 22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:
- 23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.
- 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

1. What two trees were planted in the midst of the garden, and which of the two trees was the fruit forbidden to be eaten?
2. Does the Lord God prohibit all knowledge to Adam? Why or why not?
3. If you have a knowledge of good and evil, what does this suggest about the world in which you live?
4. How does the Serpent cast doubt upon the Lord God's commandment?
5. When eating the forbidden fruit, how does Eve commit the three sins found in 1 John 2.16?
6. Why do you suppose Gaarder starts *Sophie's World* with the chapter, "The Garden of Eden"?
7. Why do you suppose Gaarder has a major character in his novel named "Sophie"? Do you think the use of this name was an accident? [review note about Sophia.]
8. Why does Adam call his wife, "Eve"? Could this be Sophia?



Philosophy

Colossians 2.8; Ephesians 4.17–18

Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Eph 4.17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

Eph 4.18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.

9. What should be the Christian's attitude toward philosophy?
10. Why is philosophy and "vain deceit" linked together? (Eph. 4.17–18)

The origin of God and of the world

Genesis 1.1; Hebrews 11.3, 6

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Heb 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Heb 11.6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

11. Do these verses try to "prove" there is a God? What is the assumption about God that is found in these verses?
12. Sophie states that "nobody really *knows*" where the world comes from. Is Sophie correct? If knowledge is gained by observation, does Hebrews 11.3 offer verifiable evidence about how the universe began?
13. Apparently not all knowledge comes through observation only. In what way do we understand how the universe came into being?
14. What material did the world come from?

The agency of creation

Colossians 1:12–18

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:



The Garden of Eden

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

15. To whom does “firstborn” refer to in verse 15? Could the expression refer to “the invisible God,” which would give evidence of the Gnostics claim for Sophia?

16. What does “firstborn” mean in verse 15? Refer to verse 18 above in order to draw your conclusion.

17. How did God the Father create the universe?

18. How does the creation maintain its order and stability?

Two different kinds of wisdom

1 Corinthians 2.6–7

2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

James 3.13–17

13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

19. According to these verses, why does simply referring to someone as a “lover of wisdom,” or as a philosopher, fail to mean much for someone who is searching for truth?

20. How does James describe the wisdom that does not come from God?

21. What are the results of “earthly wisdom”?

Supplemental Readings

Psycho-Cybernetics by Dr. Maxwell Maltz. An interesting theory about human beings being essentially complex servo units, which require proper programming.

Christian History & Biography, Issue 96, Fall 2007. This issue focuses on the doctrines and current influence of the Gnostics.