

Dexter And Philosophy Mind Over Spatter Popular Culture And Philosophy

Twenty-four nocturnal philosophers stake out and vivisect Dracula from many angles, unearthing evidence from numerous movies and shows—macabre, terrifying, tragic, and comic. Altmann decides whether Dracula can really be blamed for his crimes, since it's his nature as a vampire to behave a certain way. Arp argues that Dracula's addiction to live human blood dooms him to perpetual misery. Karavitis sees Dracula as a Randian individual pitted against the Marxist collective. Ketcham contrives a meeting between Dracula and the Jewish theologian Maimonides. Littmann maintains that if we disapprove of Dracula's behavior, we ought to be vegetarians. Mahon uses the example of Dracula to resolve nagging problems about the desirability of immortality. McCrossin and Wolfe, disinter some of the re-interpretations of this now-mythical character, and asks whether we can identify an essential Dracula. Pramik shows how the Dracula tale embodies Kierkegaard's three stages of life. Barkman and Versteeg ponder what it would really feel like to be Dracula. The Greens publish some previous unknown letters between Dracula and Camus's Meursault. Vuckovich looks at the sexual morality of characters in the Dracula saga. De Waal explains that "Dragula" is scary because every time this being appears, it causes "gender trouble."

Batman or Superman? Which of these heroic figures is morally superior? Which is more dramatically effective? Which is more democratic? Which shows us the better way to fight crime? Who is a morally better person? Whose actions lead to the better outcomes? Superman vs. Batman and Philosophy tries to decide "for" and "against" these two superheroes by comparing their contrasting approaches to a wide range of issues. Twenty-six philosophers evaluate Superman vs. Batman in order to decide which of them "wins" by various different criteria. Some of the writers say that Superman wins, others say Batman, and others give the result as a tie. Since both Batman, the megalomaniacal industrialist, and Superman, the darling of the media, sometimes operate outside the law, which of them makes the better vigilante—and how do they compare with Robin Hood, the anonymous donor, the Ninja, and the KKK? Which of them comes out better in terms of evolutionary biology? Which of the heroes works more effectively to resist oppression? Does Superman or Batman function better as a force for embodied intelligence? Who does more to really uphold the law? Which one is better for the environment? Which of these two supernormal guys makes a better model and inspiring myth to define our culture and our society? Is Batman or Superman the more admirable person? Who conforms more closely to Nietzsche's Übermensch? Which one makes the more rational choices? Who makes the better god? Who is more self-sacrificing in pursuit of other people's welfare? Who goes beyond the call of duty? Which one does better at defining himself by resolving his internal conflicts? Whose explicit code of morality is superior? Which superhero gives us more satisfying dramatic conflict? (And why does a battle between the two make such a compelling drama?) Which of our two candidates comes closer to Christ? Which has the sounder psychological health? Whose overall consequences are better for the world? Which one more perfectly exemplifies C.S. Lewis's concept of chivalry? What's the deeper reason Batman is so successful in videogames whereas Superman isn't? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having the two extraordinary heroes work together? Is either superhero logically or metaphysically possible? How can each of them be diagnosed as psychotic? How do they compare in masking their real identity? Whose motives are more worthy? Which one is more self-aware? Superman vs. Batman and Philosophy comes out at the same time as the movie Batman v Superman. The book cannot discuss what goes on in the movie, yet it also can't avoid doing so, since by sheer probability, many of the controversial issues between the two superheroes will be the same in both. The book will therefore naturally fit in with the numerous raging controversies that the movie unleashes.

In Peanuts and Philosophy, twenty philosophers, from a diverse range of perspectives, look at different aspects of the Peanuts canon. How can the thoughts of children, who have yet to become grown-up, help us to become more grown up ourselves? Do we get good results from believing in something like the Great Pumpkin, even though we're disappointed every time? What can Linus's reactions to the leukemia of his friend Janice tell us about the stages of grief? Why don't we settle what's right and what's wrong by the simple method of asking Lucy? Is true happiness attainable without a warm puppy? Do some people's kites have a natural affinity for trees? Is Sally an anarchist, a nihilist, or just a contrarian? Does Linus's reliance on his blanket help him or hurt him? Is Charlie Brown's philosophy of life pathetic or inspirational? Other topics include: how the way children think carries general lessons about transcending our limitations; the Utopian quest as illustrated by Charlie's devotion to the Little Red-Haired Girl; Snoopy's Red Baron and history as selective memory; the Head Beagle as Big Brother. And, as we would expect, Lucy's repeated cruel removal of Charlie's football has several philosophical applications.

The Good Place is a fantasy-comedy TV show about the afterlife. Eleanor dies and finds herself in the Good Place, which she understands must be mistake, since she has been anything but good. In the surprise twist ending to Season One, it is revealed that this is really the Bad Place, but the demon who planned it was frustrated, because the characters didn't torture each other mentally as planned, but managed to learn how to live together. In ,i>The Good Place and Philosophy, twenty-one philosophers analyze different aspects of the ethical and metaphysical issues raised in the show, including: ? Indefinitely long punishment can only be justified as a method of ultimately improving vicious characters, not as retribution. ? Can individuals retain their identity after hundreds of reboots? ? Comparing Hinduism with The Good Place, we can conclude that Hinduism gets things five percent correct. ? Looking at all the events in the show, it follows that humans don't have free will, and so people are being punished and rewarded unjustly. ? Is it a problem that the show depicts torture as hilarious? This problem can be resolved by considering the limited perspective of humans, compared with the eternal perspective of the demons. ? The Good Place implies that even demons can develop morally. ? The only way to explain how the characters remain the same people after death is to suppose that their actual bodies are transported to the afterlife. ? Since Chidi knows all the moral theories but can never decide what to do, it must follow that

there is something missing in all these theories. ? The show depicts an afterlife which is bureaucratic, therefore unchangeable, therefore deeply unjust. ? Eleanor acts on instinct, without thinking, whereas Chidi tries to think everything through and never gets around to acting; together these two characters can truly act morally. ? The Good Place shows us that authenticity means living for others. ? The Good Place is based on Sartre's play No Exit, with its famous line "Hell is other people," but in fact both No Exit and The Good Place inform us that human relationships can redeem us. ? In The Good Place, everything the humans do is impermanent since it can be rebooted, so humans cannot accomplish anything good. ? Kant's moral precepts are supposed to be universal, but The Good Place shows us it can be right to lie to demons. ? The show raises the question whether we can ever be good except by being part of a virtuous community. In The X-Files and Philosophy, thirty-six fearless philosophers seek for the truth which is out there, in here, at least somewhere, or (as the postmodernists claim) nowhere. One big issue is whether the weird and unexplained happenings, including the existence of entities unknown to traditional science, might really exist. And if they did, what would be the proper way to behave towards them? Some of these entities seem to flout conventional laws of nature—but perhaps we need to allow for different, as yet undiscovered, laws. If such fabulous entities really exist, what do we owe them? And if they don't exist, why do we imagine they do? In The X-Files, regular science is represented by Scully and usually turns out to be wrong, while open-minded credulity or pseudoscience is represented by Mulder and usually turns out to be right, or at least somehow on the right track. Scully demands objective, repeatable evidence, and she usually gets it, with Mulder's help, in astounding and unwelcome ways. What lessons should we take from the finding of The X-Files that respectable science is nearly always wrong and outrageous speculative imagination nearly always right?

In The Twilight Zone and Philosophy, philosophers probe into the meaning of the classic TV series, The Twilight Zone. Some of the chapters look at single episodes of the show, while others analyze several or many episodes. Though acknowledging the spinoffs and reboots, the volume concentrates heavily on the classic 1959–1964 series. Among the questions raised and answered are: ? What's the meaning of personal identity in The Twilight Zone? ("Number 12 Looks Just Like You," "Person or Persons Unknown"). ? As the distinction between person and machine becomes less clear, how do we handle our intimacy with machines? (A question posed in the very first episode of The Twilight Zone, "The Lonely"). ? Why do our beliefs always become uncertain in The Twilight Zone? ("Where Is Everybody?") ? Just where is the Twilight Zone? (Sometimes it's a supernatural realm but sometimes it's the everyday world of reality.) ? What does the background music of The Twilight Zone teach us about dreams and imagination? ? Is it better to lose the war than to be damned? ("Still Valley") ? How far should we trust those benevolent aliens? ("To Serve Man") ? Where's the harm in media addiction? ("Time Enough at Last") ? Is there something objective about beauty? ("The Eye of the Beholder") ? Have we already been conquered? ("The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street") ? Are there hidden costs to knowing more about other people? ("A Penny for Your Thoughts")

The sharp-shooting authors in Justified and Philosophy take aim at many of the same philosophical problems that the Justified TV series grapples with. For instance, is Tim Olyphant's character, Deputy U.S. Marshal Raylan Givens, morally justified in using his Wild-Wild-West-style vigilante tactics to clean up Harlan County, Kentucky? After all, the meth dealers, thieves, murderers, and other low-life scumbags all deserve what's coming to them, right? Not so fast, Quick-Draw McGraw! What about the law? What about a thorough and complete investigation of matters before dispensing so-called "justice"? What about the idea of the punishment fitting the crime? Deputy Marshal Givens wears a white hat and fights the "bad guys" so he must be a "good guy," right? His opponents are violent drug dealers, white supremacists, and thieves. Givens carries a badge, but when he shoots or kills people, is it always justified? What other choice does he have? Would any other method be as effective in rural eastern Kentucky where criminal activity is one of the few viable options for making a living? The coal-mining culture of Harlan County, Kentucky is an important backdrop to Justified, and the issues surrounding the coal industry are addressed in some chapters. Some of them include health problems like black lung, the dissolution of communities, the reduction in employment alternatives, the destruction of the environment with mountain-top removal and fracking, and the increase in crime and poverty. If Boyd Crowder robs the coal company responsible for exploiting his community, is that justified? The relationship between Boyd and Raylan dates back to a childhood friendship. Then when they older, they worked in the mines together. One chapter explores the character and motivation of both men and argues that each follows a different moral compass. Another chapter discusses the importance of family to the character of Mags Bennett and how that guides her actions and sense of duty. Another topic of discussion is whether the end justifies the means when Boyd and his gang destroy a meth lab and end up killing one of the meth cooks. Other chapters delve into a variety of fascinating philosophical themes that emerge in this modern-day cowboy show.

Courtland Lewis has scoured the planet to bring together the most talented faction members, factionless, and even a few from the Bureau to discuss the philosophy of Divergent. Divergent and Philosophy begins by examining the personal struggles that all people face at some time: What sort of person should I be? What if I find out my life is a lie? What do I owe my parents? Am I normal? Once readers have finished answering these questions they're ready for the "choosing ceremony." Part two examines each faction, looking at its virtues, vices, and other features that will help readers pick the "right" faction. This part gives readers a glimpse into what it's like to be faced with the most important decision of our lives, the one that will forever determine who we are. Part three takes a step takes a step back, in order to question Chicago's ordering of society. Chicago is on the verge of revolution, but is this the result of the faction system itself, or is it the people within the factions that are behind the social discord? Part four shifts the focus individuals and those who hold power. Part five tells us how to recognize injustice.

From the early years, when he morphed from celebrated poet to provocative singer-songwriter, to his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Leonard Cohen has endured as one of the most enigmatic and profound figures—with a uniquely compelling

voice and unparalleled depth of artistic vision—in all of popular music. The aesthetic quality and intellectual merit of Cohen's work are above dispute; here, for the first time, a team of philosophers takes an in-depth look at its real significance. Want to know what Cohen and Kierkegaard have in common? Or whether Cohen rivals the great philosophical pessimist Schopenhauer? Then this book is for you. It provides the first thorough analysis of Cohen from various (philosophical) positions. It is intended not only for Cohen fans but also undergraduates in philosophy and other areas. It explores important neglected aspects of Cohen's work without attempting to reduce them to academic tropes, yet nonetheless will also be useful to academics—or anyone—beguiled by the enigma that is Leonard Cohen.

Philosophy is not a closed club or a secret society. It's for anyone who thinks big questions are worth talking about. To get us started, Douglas Groothuis unpacks seven pivotal sentences from the history of western philosophy—a few famous, all short, none trivial. Included are: Socrates—The unexamined life is not worth living. Augustine—You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Descartes—I think, therefore I am. Pascal—The heart has reasons, that reason knows nothing of. Protagoras, Aristotle and Kierkegaard round out this quick tour. Since every philosopher has a story, not just a series of ideas, Groothuis also offers a bit of each one's life to set the stage. The seven sterling sentences themselves, while they can't tell us all there is to know, offer bridges into other lands of thought which can spark new ideas and adventures. And who knows where they might lead?

The Man in the High Castle is an Amazon TV show, based on the Philip K. Dick novel, about an “alternate present” (beginning in the 1960s) in which Germany and Japan won World War II, with the former Western US occupied by Japan, the former Eastern US occupied by Nazi Germany, and a small “neutral zone” between them. A theme of the story is that in this alternative world there is eager speculation, fueled by the illicit newsreel, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, about how the world would have been different if America had won the war. In *The Man in the High Castle and Philosophy*, twenty-two professional thinkers look at philosophical issues raised by this ongoing enterprise in “alternative history.” One question is whether it really made a profound difference that the Allies won the war, and exactly what differences in everyday life we may expect to arise from an apparent historical turning point. Could it be that some dramatic historical events have only superficial consequences, while some unnoticed occurrences lead to catastrophic results? Another topic is the quest for truth in a world of government misinformation, and how dissenting organizations can make headway.

The Ultimate Game of Thrones and Philosophy treats fans to dozens of new essays by experts who examine philosophical questions raised by the *Game of Thrones* story. This ultimate analysis provides the most comprehensive discussion to date and engages the *Game of Thrones* universe through the end of Season Six of the HBO series. Ned Stark, Tyrion Lannister, Jon Snow, Joffrey, Cersei, Brienne, Arya, Stannis, and many other characters are used to apply the traditional philosophical questions that everyone faces. How should political leaders be chosen in Westeros and beyond? Is power merely an illusion? Is it immoral to enjoy overly violent and sexual stories like *Game of Thrones*? How should morally ambiguous individuals such as Jamie Lannister: The Kingslayer and Savior of King's Landing be evaluated? Can anyone be trusted in a society like Westeros? What rules should govern sexual relationships in a world of love, incest, rape, and arranged marriage? How does disability shape identity for individuals like Tyrion, Bran, and others? How would one know whether there is a God in the *Game of Thrones* universe and what he is like?

Mr. Robot has been hailed, not only as one of the most haunting and unnerving dramas ever to appear on television, but also as the first accurate popular presentation of how computer hacking and cyberterrorism actually work. *Mr. Robot and Philosophy* is aimed at thoughtful fans of this addictive show who will welcome the opportunity to explore Elliot Alderson's world from a philosophical perspective. The developing story of *Mr. Robot* constantly raises ethical and metaphysical issues. What happens to our personal identity when it's extended into cyberspace and an array of electronic devices? Are we in control of our online lives or are we being controlled? What does our right to privacy mean in a world where millions of people can observe what we're doing and saying? Is a virtual currency true money and could it replace traditional money? Can there be healthy forms of drug addiction? Can some types of so-called mental illness be useful and beneficial? Does it make any sense to unleash destruction upon the existing corporate economic structures, and can we expect something better to emerge from the ruins of a digital meltdown? In *Dexter and Philosophy*, an elite team of philosophers don their rubber gloves and put *Dexter's* deeds under the microscope.

Dexter and Philosophy Mind Over Spatter Open Court Publishing

As cartoonist, author, public speaker, blogger, and periscoper, Scott Adams has had best-sellers in several different fields: his *Dilbert* cartoons, his meditations on the philosophy of *Dilbert*, his works on how to achieve success in business and all other areas of life, his two remarkable books on religion, and now his controversial work on political persuasion. Adams's two most recent best-sellers are *How to Fail at Almost Everything and Still Win Big: Kind of the Story of My Life* (2014) and *Win Bigly: Persuasion in a World Where Facts Don't Matter* (2017). Adams predicted Donald Trump's election victory (on August 13th 2016) and has explained then and more recently how Trump operates as a Master Persuader, using “weapons-grade” persuasive techniques to defeat his opponents and often to stay several moves ahead of them. Adams has provocative ideas in many areas, for example his outrageous claim that 30 percent of the population have absolutely no sense of humor, and take their cue from conventional opinion in deciding whether something is a joke, since they have no way of deciding this for themselves. In *Scott Adams and Philosophy*, an elite cadre of people who think for a living put Scott Adams's ideas under scrutiny. Every aspect of Adams's fascinating and infuriating system of ideas is explained and tested. Among the key topics: Does humor inform us about reality? Do religious extremists know something the rest of us don't? What are facts and how can they not matter? What happens when confirmation bias meets cognitive dissonance? How can we tell whether President Trump is a genius or just dumb-lucky? Does the *Dilbert* philosophy discourage the struggle for better workplace conditions? How sound is Adams's claim that “systems” thinking beats goal-directed thinking? Does *Dilbert* exhibit a Nietzschean or a Kierkegaardian sense of life? Or is it Sisyphian in Camus's sense? Can truth be over-rated? “The political side that is out of power is the side that hallucinates the most.” If there's a serious chance we're living in a *Matrix*-type simulation, how should we change our behavior? Are most public policy issues just too complex and technical for most people to have an opinion about? In politics, says Adams, it's as if different people watch the same movie at the same time, some thinking it's a romantic comedy and others thinking it's a horror picture. How is that possible? Does logic play any part in persuasion?

In *Hamilton and Philosophy*, professional thinkers expose, examine, and ponder the deep and controversial implications of this runaway hit Broadway musical. One cluster of questions relates to the matter of historical accuracy in relation to entertainment. To what extent is

Hamilton genuine history, or is it more a reflection of America today than in the eighteenth century? What happens when history becomes dramatic art, and is some falsification of history unavoidable? One point of view is that the real Alexander Hamilton was an outsider, and any objective approach to Hamilton has to be that of an outsider. Politics always involves a debate over who is on the margins and who is allowed into the center. Then there is the question of emphasizing Hamilton's revolutionary aspect, when he was autocratic and not truly democratic. But this can be defended as presenting a contradictory personality in a unique historical moment. Hamilton's character is also one that blends ambition, thirst for fame, and concern for his immortal legacy, with inability to see his own limitations, yet combined with devotion to honor and the cultivation of virtue. Hamilton's evident ambition led him to be likened to Macbeth and Shakespearean tragedy can explain much of his life.

Adventure Time and Philosophy is a monster-beating, wild ride of philosophical mayhem. The authors have come together to understand and explore one of the deepest and most thoughtful television shows ever to assault human brain waves. Where Adventure Time shows us what the world could be like, this book screws open our cranial lids, mucks about in the mess that is our heads, and attempts to come to some answers about the nature of reality. Adventure Time challenges everything we know about life, meaning, heroism, and even burritos. And it's time to give the show some serious thought. Adventure Time and Philosophy is a chance to put down your broadsword, put your exhausted monster-slaying feet up, and try to figure out why you spend your time rescuing people in distress and fighting for justice. What is justice anyway? If you don't happen to have your pocket edition of the Enchiridion on hand, and Billy the Hero *wicked guitar solo* hasn't been returning your calls, pick up Adventure Time and Philosophy and learn what it means to be a real hero! The authors of the chapters will prove that Adventure Time is much more than a cartoon, it's a way of life. . . . It's also the future!—a post-apocalyptic future 10,000 years after the Great Mushroom War, actually. Who better to have as companions than Finn and Jake when taking on Plato, Nietzsche, and Baudrillard or encountering the Slime Princess, the Ice King, and Marceline the Vampire Queen. In a review of the show in Entertainment Weekly, Darren Franich characterized Adventure Time as a “hybrid sci-fi/fantasy/horror/musical/fairy tale, with echoes of Calvin and Hobbes, Hayao Miyazaki, Final Fantasy, Richard Linklater, Where the Wild Things Are, and the music video you made with your high school garage band.” This book is filled with chapters written by a colorful cast of characters who enlighten us about the profound and life-affirming spiritual subtext and dark comedic elements of an awesomely fantastic show.

Stranger Things and Philosophy is an important book, the first of its kind to examine the fantastical world of this award-winning, widely beloved, phenomenal show with a philosophical lens. This is important precisely because the show rests so heavily on a complex and thought-provoking mythos based around secretive government experiments and a parallel dimension that darkly reflects readers' own. The series as a whole has asked more questions than it has delivered answers, and the chapters in this volume will explore these topics. From the deepest recesses of the Upside Down, its tunnels snaking beneath the local bookstores of Hawkins, Indiana and who knows where else, this collection of philosophical musings on the world of Stranger Things promises to enlighten readers. This volume considers many of the philosophically related ideas that that come up in the show such as: What are the moral implications of secret government projects? What is the nature of friendship? Does scientific research need to be concerned with ethics? What might it be like to experience the world from the perspective of the Mind Flayer? Is it possible to understand the metaphysics of the Upside Down?

In 1933 the crime writer Erle Stanley Gardner, himself a practicing lawyer, unleashed the character Perry Mason in the novel *The Case of the Velvet Claws*. Perry Mason entered into public consciousness as a new conception of the role of the defense lawyer, so that millions of Americans came to expect every criminal trial to have its “Perry Mason moment.” In the 1950s the Perry Mason TV show had a phenomenal success, and Mason came to be identified with Raymond Burr. Now Perry Mason has again been restored to life in the HBO series starring Matthew Rhys and John Lithgow. Meanwhile, the eighty-two original Erle Stanley Gardner novels continue to sell thousands of copies each week. Perry Mason gave America a new conception of the trial lawyer, as someone who was always loyal to his client and always prepared to use dirty tricks such as misdirection and withholding of evidence to protect the innocent and secure the ends of Justice. The Mason of the novels is less scrupulous than the Raymond Burr Mason, and would sometimes be in danger of going to jail if the trial didn't turn out right—which it always did, largely because of Mason's cleverness. The Perry Mason icon raises many philosophical issues explored by seventeen different philosophers in this book, including: ? Can we defend Paul Drake's claim (*The Case of the Blonde Bonanza*) that Mason is “a paragon of righteous virtue” despite his predilection for skating on thin legal ice? ? Can complex murder cases be solved by facts alone—or do we also need empathy? ? The most convincing way to give a TV episode a surprise ending is by the guilty person suddenly confessing. But in reality, is a confession necessarily so convincing? ? Does Perry Mason represent the Messiah? ? How does the Raymond Burr Perry Mason compare with the more recent TV character Saul Goodman (*Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul*)? ? Is it morally okay to mislead the police if this helps your client and your client is innocent? ? How does Perry Mason help us understand the distinction between natural law and positive law? ? Do the Perry Mason stories comply with Aristotle's recipe for a good work of fiction? ? Does life imitate art, when Perry Mason is cited in real-life courtroom arguments? ? How much trickery can be justified by loyalty to one's client? ? Can evidence in murder trials be evaluated by probability theory? ? Perry Mason is officially a lawyer and unofficially a detective. But isn't he really a historian and a psychoanalyst? ? Della Street is a competent legal secretary, but is she something more? ? Mason often says that “Eye-witness testimony is the worst kind of evidence” and occasionally that “Circumstantial evidence is the best evidence we have.” Can these claims be defended?

KISS is the most outrageous and yet the most enduring of rock bands, with an unparalleled, almost religious level of devotion from millions of die-hard fans. In *KISS and Philosophy*, professional thinkers of diverse outlooks provide much-needed insights into the motivating ideas and metaphysical foundations of the KISS take on life. According to some, the true message of KISS is self-actualization through the hard work of following your dreams. Others focus on the existential aspect of KISS thinking, drawing upon Camus and Sartre to show that KISS is preoccupied with empowering the individual to achieve self-greatness. By contrast, there is a view of KISS which identifies a “destroyer” attitude, leading some listeners to reject KISS outright, while encouraging others to become the most dedicated of followers. Yet another view sees KISS's “letting loose” as essentially Dionysian. Some chapters gain access to KISS thinking by tracing the band's cultural and historical impact, finding meaning in the way generations of fans make sense of KISS's always evolving output, the changing line-up, and the archetypal characters represented by the band's use of make-up and presentation. Other chapters look at the aesthetic quality of the band's output, especially their most controversial album, *Music from “The Elder.”* Several chapters examine KISS's orientation to bodily pleasures, notably sex, extracting the band's philosophy of sex and love from different clues and indications. How does KISS's unashamed indulgence relate to various pleasure-governed ethical systems throughout history? Is getting the most out of pleasure key to living the good life? And does a life of gratifying one's body ultimately yield fulfillment? What are the limitations and hazards of a pleasure-oriented lifestyle? The biography of band members also provides material for reflection, looking at the nature of forgiveness through the lens of KISS's notorious feuds, and determining how to reconcile the apparently conflicting accounts of some famous squabbles. The changing line-up of the band raises questions about the meaning of “KISS” and whether KISS could last forever

Among the topics explored in *David Bowie and Philosophy* are the nature of Bowie as an institution; Bowie's work in many platforms, including movies and TV; Bowie's spanning of low and high art, and his relation to Warhol; the influence of Buddhism and Kabuki theater; the recurring theme of Bowie as a space alien, including “Space Oddity” and *The Man Who Fell to Earth*; the dystopian element in Bowie's thinking, displayed in “1984” and the album *Outside*; the role of fashion in Bowie's creativity; personal identity as preserved over various

divergent personae; the aesthetics of theatrical rock and glam rock; Bowie's public identification with bisexuality and his influence within the LGBTQ community. Pervasive themes in Bowie's output include change, time, apocalypse, dancing, mind-body dualism, and spirituality. In the dualistic universe that undergirds his lyrics, body consistently wins over mind, but body is nevertheless on the hook of moral responsibility. There is thus an inherent tension: the overwhelming desires of bodily drives versus the repressive institutions such as church and the omnipresent "They" who would have us do otherwise than our body want. The emergent paradox in Bowie is that for all his alleged sexual indulgences, in the end mind trumps body.

In *Orphan Black*, several apparently unconnected women discover that they are exact physical doubles, that there are more of them out there, that they are all illegally produced clones, and that someone is having them killed. They find themselves in the midst of a secret and violent struggle between a fundamentalist religious group, a fanatical cult of superhuman biological enhancement, a clandestine department of the military, and a giant biotech corporation. Law enforcement is powerless and easily manipulated by these sinister forces. The clones are forced to form their own Clone Club, led by the resourceful Sarah Manning, to defend themselves against their numerous enemies and to find out exactly where they came from and why. *Orphan Black* continually raises philosophical issues, as well as ethical and policy questions deserving philosophical analysis. What makes a person a unique individual? Why is it so important for us to know where we came from? Should we have a say in whether a clone is made of us? Is it immoral to generate clones with built-in health problems or personality defects — and if so, does that mean that producers of clones must practice eugenic selection? What light does the behavior of members of the Clone Club shed on the nature-nurture debate? Is it relevant that most are heterosexual, one is a lesbian, and one is a transgendered male? This TV show shows us problems of biotechnology which will soon be vital everyday issues. But what kind of a future faces us when human clones are commonplace? Will groups of human clones have a tight bond of solidarity making them a threat to democracy? If the world is going to be taken over by an evil conspiracy, would it better be a scientific cult like Neolution or a religious cult like the Prolethians? Should biotech corporations be able to own the copyright on human DNA sequences? What rules of morality apply when you can't trust the police and powerful groups are ready to murder you?

Blade Runner 2049 is a 2017 sequel to the 1982 movie *Blade Runner*, about a world in which some human-looking replicants have become dangerous, so that other human-looking replicants, as well as humans, have the job of hunting down the dangerous models and "retiring" (destroying) them. Both films have been widely hailed as among the greatest science-fiction movies of all time, and Ridley Scott, director of the original *Blade Runner*, has announced that there will be a third *Blade Runner* movie. *Blade Runner 2049 and Philosophy* is a collection of entertaining articles on both *Blade Runner* movies (and on the spin-off short films and *Blade Runner* novels) by twenty philosophers representing diverse backgrounds and philosophical perspectives. Among the issues addressed in the book: What does *Blade Runner 2049* tell us about the interactions of state power and corporate power? Can machines ever become truly conscious, or will they always lack some essential human qualities? The most popular theory of personhood says that a person is defined by their memories, so what happens when memories can be manufactured and inserted at will? We already interact with non-human decision-makers via the Internet. When embodied AI becomes reality, how can we know what is human and what is simulation? Does it matter? Do AI-endowed human-looking replicants have civil and political rights, or can they be destroyed whenever "real" humans decide they are inconvenient? The *Blade Runner* Deckard (Harrison Ford) appears in both movies, and is generally assumed to be human, but some claim he may be a replicant. What's the evidence on both sides? Is Niander Wallace (the-mad-scientist-cum-evil-corporate-CEO in *Blade Runner 2049*) himself a replicant? What motivates him? What are the impacts of decision-making AI entities on the world of business? Both *Blade Runner* and *Blade Runner 2049* have been praised for their hauntingly beautiful depictions of a bleak future, but the two futures are very different (and the 2019 future imagined in the original *Blade Runner* is considerably different from the actual world of 2019). How have our expectations and visions of the future changed between the two movies? The "dream maker" character Ana Stelline in *Blade Runner 2049* has a small but pivotal role. What are the implications of a person whose dedicated mission and task is to invent and install false memories? What are the social and psychological implications of human-AI sexual relations?

For the first time, serious thinkers explore the work of this towering genius of rock music. For fans of Tom Petty, this volume is an eye-opener, with fourteen music-savvy philosophers looking at different facets of Petty's artistic contribution. They examine not only Tom Petty's thoughts but also the thoughts we have while we listen. The authors, all Petty fans, come from every philosophical viewpoint: classical, analytic, postmodernist, phenomenological, and Nietzschean. Tom Petty's body of work exists on a continuum between Folk and Rock, between New Wave and Americana, between Southern simplicity and West Coast chic. There is the legacy left to his main backing band, the Heartbreakers, but also bookended by Mudcrutch and his collaborations with his elders, such as Bob Dylan, George Harrison, Roy Orbison, and Johnny Cash. Tom Petty's songs hook and they captivate, but they are often profound in their understatement, their stark minimalism. His insight into the human condition conveys a powerful philosophical anthropology with a metaphysics of tragedy, gravity, and levity. Tom Petty's ethics focuses on dilemmas of the outcast, downtrodden, and heartbroken with a view to the fallen and the sinful as our redeemable antiheroes of the everyday. His political thinking is that of the artist, enlivened by Southern hostilities and Californian futilities, culminating in a personal ethic that puts duty to the fans first. Petty's theory of knowledge is psychological and interpersonal, both deeply meditative and delightfully skeptical. The dialectic of love and hate, abuse and recovery, poverty and power, triumph and loss provide the genuine objects of knowledge. Above all, Petty's songs are the confessions of a poetic mind interpreting a wounded soul. Petty lived his life the way he wrote and the way he played. It was grit, drive, and just enough finesse, to make things nice, where they need to be nice. On stage, he put the schau in *Anschauung*. Petty stood up to corporate assholes in a number of precedent-setting legal maneuvers and album concepts, risking his career and fortune, but never backing down. He was the center of a musical community that endured over four decades. His ability to cultivate new generations of listeners while connecting himself backward to the heroes of his own youth have made him universally respected by the widest range of music fans.

In *Discworld*, unlike our own frustrating *Roundworld*, everything makes sense. The world is held up by elephants standing on the back of a swimming turtle who knows where he's going, the sun goes round the world every day, so it doesn't have to be very hot, and things always happen because someone intends them to happen. Millions of fans are addicted to Pratchett's *Discworld*, and the interest has only intensified since Pratchett's recent death and the release of his final *Discworld* novel, *The Shepherd's Crown*, in September 2015. The philosophical riches of *Discworld* are inexhaustible, yet the brave explorers of *Discworld and Philosophy* cover a lot of ground. From discussion of Moist von Lipwig's con artistry showing the essential con of the financial system, to the examination of everyone's favorite *Discworld* character,

the murderous luggage, to the lawless Mac Nac Feegles and what they tell us about civil government, to the character Death as he appears in several Discworld novels, Discworld and Philosophy gives us an in-depth treatment of Pratchett's magical universe. Other chapters look at the power of Discworld's witches, the moral viewpoint of the golems, how William de Worde's newspaper illuminates the issue of censorship, how fate and luck interact to shape our lives, and why the more simple and straightforward Discworld characters are so much better at seeing the truth than those with enormous intellects but little common sense.

Although the year 1984 is hurtling back into the distant past, Orwell's novel Nineteen Eighty-Four continues to have a huge readership and to help shape the world of 2084. Sales of Orwell's terrifying tale have recently spiked because of current worries about alternate facts, post-truth, and fake news. 1984 and Philosophy brings together brand new, up-to-the-minute thinking by philosophers about Nineteen Eighty-Four as it relates to today's culture, politics, and everyday life. Some of the thinking amounts to thoughtcrime, but we managed to sneak it past the agents of the Ministry of Truth, so this is a book to be read quickly before the words on the page mysteriously transform into something different. Who's controlling our lives and are they getting even more levers to control us? Is truth objective or just made up? What did Orwell get right—and did he get some things wrong? Are social media opportunities for liberation or instruments of oppression? How can we fight back against totalitarian control? Can Big Brother compel us to love him? How does the language we use affect the way we think? Do we really need the unifying power of hate? Why did Orwell make Nineteen Eighty-Four so desperately hopeless? Can science be protected from poisonous ideology? Can we really believe two contradictory things at once? Who surveils the surveillers?

Peek inside the mind of Dexter Morgan—police forensic analyst, family man, serial killer, and the star of Showtime's most-watched series—with essays from seventeen psychologists and avid fans. Aimed at Dexter devotees and armchair psychologists, The Psychology of Dexter takes on the psychological complexities of the popular series with an eye towards insight and accessibility. It analyzes not just the title character, but his family, coworkers, and even his viewers. What makes Dexter tick? What makes a show about a serial killer so appealing to those of us at home. And do we need to be worried about our own Dark Passengers? From the implications of faking normalcy (could it be behind Dexter's still-in-progress emotional growth?) to where the show weighs in on the psychological debate between nature and nurture, this book gives fans a peek inside Dexter's psyche. Think you know Dexter? The Psychology of Dexter will make you think again.

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, which began as The Children's Corner in 1953 and terminated in 2001, left its mark on America. The show's message of kindness, simplicity, and individual uniqueness made Rogers a beloved personality, while also provoking some criticism because, by arguing that everyone was special without having to do anything to earn it, the show supposedly created an entitled generation. In Mister Rogers and Philosophy, thirty philosophers give their very different takes on the Neighborhood phenomenon. ? Rogers's way of communicating with children has a Socratic dimension, and is compared with other attempts to cultivate philosophy in children. ? Wonder is the origin of philosophy and science, and Mister Rogers always looked for wonder. ? Did Mister Rogers unwittingly create the Millennials by his message that everyone is special? ? What Martin Buber's I-Thou philosophy can tell us about Fred Rogers's attempt to rehabilitate children's television. ? X the Owl obsesses, Daniel Tiger regresses, Lady Elaine displaces anger, King Friday controls—how puppets can be used to teach us about feelings. ? Fred Rogers's indirect communication is key to the show, and most evident in the land of make-believe, where he doesn't make himself known. ? How Mister Rogers helps us see that the ordinary world is extraordinary, if we're willing to open ourselves up to it. ? How does Mister Rogers's method of teaching compare with Maria Montessori's? ? Fred Rogers and Carl Rogers have a lot in common: The Neighborhood is observed in the light of Rogerian therapy. ? Mister Rogers's view of evil is closer to Rousseau than to Voltaire. ? Fred Rogers gave a non-philosophical interpretation of the philosophical approach known as personalism. ? Daoism helps us understand how Fred Rogers, the antithesis of a stereotypical male, could achieve such success as a TV star. ? In the show and in his life, we can see how Rogers lived "the ethics of care." ? Puppets help children understand that persons are not isolated, but interconnected. ? Mister Rogers showed us that talking and singing about our feelings makes them more manageable.

In Steve Jobs and Philosophy sixteen philosophers take a close look at the inspiring yet often baffling world of Steve Jobs. What can we learn about business ethics from the example of Jobs? What are the major virtues of a creative innovator? How could Jobs successfully defy and challenge conventional business practices? How did Jobs combine values and attitudes previously believed to be unmixable? What does it really mean to "think different"? Can entrepreneurs be made or are they just born? If Jobs didn't make any major inventions, just what was his contribution? How is Jobs's life illuminated by Buddhism? How does a counter-culture transform mainstream culture? What does Jobs teach us about the notions of simplicity and functionality in design? How do Jobs's achievements alter the way we think about technology in relation to human life? The chapters cover vital issues in ethics, business, aesthetics, and technology. They are followed by a fascinating appendix listing all the philosophers mentioned in the book, along with explanations of their lives and key themes in their thoughts. Steve Jobs and Philosophy is aimed at readers interested Jobs himself, in entrepreneurship, in technology, culture, and values.

In The Devil and Philosophy, 34 philosophers explore questions about one of the most recognizable and influential characters (villains?) of all time. From Roman Polanski's The Ninth Gate to J.R.R. Tolkien's The Silmarillion to Bram Stoker's Dracula to Darth Vader to Al Pacino's iconic performance in The Devil's Advocate, this book demonstrates that a little devil goes a long way. From humorous appearances, as in Kevin Smith's film Dogma and Chuck Palahniuk's novels Damned and its sequel Doomed, to more villainous appearances, such as Gabriel Byrne's cold outing as Satan in End of Days, The Devil in Philosophy proves that the Devil comes in many forms. Through the lenses of Jung, Kant, Kundera,

Balkan, Plato, Bradwardine, Aristotle, Hume, Blackburn, Descartes, Lavey, Thoreau, and Aquinas, *The Devil and Philosophy* take a philosophical look at one of time's greatest characters. Are there any good arguments for the actual existence of the Devil? Does demonic evil thrive in Gotham City? Can humans really be accountable for all evil? Which truths about the Devil are actual facts? Is Milton correct, in that the Devil believes he is doing good?

Why read a book about Amy Schumer and philosophy? After all, Amy Schumer is primarily known as a comedian, though she is also an actor, writer, and producer. One reason is that it will be enlightening. Amy Schumer is one of a handful of contemporary comedians filling the role of public philosopher. To be clear, Amy herself does not claim to be offering wisdom. This volume contains seventeen fun-filled chapters. One author makes the case that Amy uses humor to encourage her audience to consider important questions, for example, she does this when she discusses the trial of Bill Cosby while evoking fond memories of *The Cosby Show*. She essentially asks her audience to consider whether they give priority to unconflicted entertainment over justice for rape victims. In another chapter, the author casts a philosophical eye toward the action-comedy film *Snatched* and finds that it raises questions about responsibility: Is Schumer's character, Emily, responsible for getting kidnapped in Ecuador? Is Emily responsible for the death of one of her kidnappers? Another author asks whether *Snatched* can be a great comedy and still get negative reviews? What is the role of art and who determines whether a work of art is good or beautiful? What do Amy Schumer and Friedrich Nietzsche have in common? Is Amy a "sex comic" or an "issue comic"? With her typical self-deprecating comedic style, Amy makes jokes by highlighting the absurd, the illogical, and the hypocritical in gender relations, notions of masculinity and femininity, and superficial values. But the main reason to read *Amy Schumer and Philosophy* is that it a pretty awesome read and laughter will most definitely ensue.

In *The Walking Dead*, human beings are pushed to their limits by a zombie apocalypse and have to decide what really matters. Good and evil, freedom and slavery, when one life has to be sacrificed for another, even the nature of religion—all the ultimate questions of human existence are posed afresh as the old society crumbles away and a new form of society emerges, with new beliefs and new rules. *The Ultimate Walking Dead and Philosophy* brings together twenty philosophers with different perspectives on the imagined world of this addictive TV show. How can we keep our humanity when faced with such extreme life-or-death choices? Did Dr. Jenner do the right thing in committing suicide, when all hope seemed to be lost? Does the Governor, as the new Machiavelli, prove that willingness to repeatedly commit murder is the best technique for getting and keeping political power? Why do most characters place such importance on keeping particular individuals alive, especially children? What can we learn about reality from Rick's haunting hallucinations?

Philosophers wittily and expertly uncover amazing philosophical insights from the endlessly fascinating TV show, *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*. Littmann shows how the values of the gang are the same as those of Homeric heroes. Ketcham argues that the Church should make Charlie a saint, partly because *It's Always Sunny* is "all about free will." Hamer shows how closely the gang's activities comply with the scientific method. Alkema and Barkman analyze the way the gang perceives happiness and how they try to get it. Leonard proves beyond doubt that the game of *Chardee MacDennis* reveals everyone's unconscious desires. King examines the morality of the gang's behavior by the standard of how they respond to extreme suffering. Chambers agrees that each of the five central characters is a terrible person, but argues that, given their circumstances, they are not truly to blame for their actions. Tanswell demonstrates that many of the gang's wrong actions result not from immoral motives but from illogical thinking. Aylesworth uses examples from *It's Always Sunny* to bring out some of the moral problems with real consent to sex. Jones reveals that Nietzsche foresaw everything the gang at Paddy's Pub would do.

The Princess Bride is the 1987 satirical adventure movie that had to wait for the Internet and DVDs to become the most quoted of all cult classics. *The Princess Bride and Philosophy* is for all those who have wondered about the true meaning of "Inconceivable!," why the name "Roberts" uniquely inspires fear, and whether it's truly a miracle to restore life to someone who is dead, but not necessarily completely dead. *The Princess Bride* is filled with people trying to persuade each other of various things, and invites us to examine the best methods of persuasion. It's filled with promises, some kept and some broken, and cries out for philosophical analysis of what makes a promise and why promises should be kept. It's filled with beliefs which go beyond the evidence, and philosophy can help us to decide when such beliefs can be justified. It's filled with political violence, both by and against the recognized government, and therefore raises all the issues of political philosophy. Westley, Buttercup, Prince Humperdinck, Inigo Montoya, the giant Fezzik, and the Sicilian Vizzini keep on re-appearing in these pages, as examples of philosophical ideas. Is it right for Montoya to kill the six-fingered man, even though there is no money in the revenge business? What's the best way to deceive someone who knows you're trying to deceive him? Are good manners a kind of moral virtue? Could the actions of the masked man in black truly be inconceivable even though real? What does ethics have to say about Miracle Max's pricing policy? How many shades of meaning can be conveyed by "As You Wish"?

Charlie Rose has called Louis C.K. "the philosopher-king of comedy," and many have detected philosophical profundity in Louis's comedy, some of which has been watched tens of millions of times on YouTube and elsewhere. *Louis C.K. and Philosophy* is designed to help Louis's fans connect the dots between his pronouncements and living philosophical themes. Twenty-five philosophers examine the wisdom of Louis C.K. from a variety of philosophical perspectives. The chapters draw upon C.K.'s standup comedy, the show *Louie*, and C.K.'s other writings. There is no attempt to fit Louis into one philosophical school; instead the authors bring out the diverse aspects of the thought of Louis C.K. One writer looks at the different meanings of C.K.'s statement, "You're gonna be dead way longer than you were alive." Another explores how Louis knows when he's awake and when he's dreaming, taking a few tips from Descartes. One chapter shows the affinity of C.K.'s "sick of living this bullshit life" with Kierkegaard's "sickness unto death." Another pursues Louis's thought that we may by our lack of moral concern "live a really evil life without thinking about it." C.K.'s religion is "apathetic agnostic," conveyed in his thought experiment that God began work in 1982.

As RuPaul has said, this is the Golden Age of Drag—and that's chiefly the achievement of RuPaul's *Drag Race*, which in its eleventh year is more popular than ever, and has now become fully mainstream in its appeal. The show has an irresistible allure for folks of all persuasions and proclivities. Yet serious or philosophical discussion of its exponential success has been rare. Now at last we have *RuPaul's Drag Race and Philosophy*, shining the light on all dimensions of this amazing phenomenon: theories of

gender construction and identity, interpretations of RuPaul's famous quotes and phrases, the paradoxes of reality shows, the phenomenology of the drag queen, and how the fake becomes the truly authentic. Among the thought-provoking issues examined in this path-breaking and innovative volume: ? What Should a Queen Do? Marta Sznajder looks at RuPaul's Drag Race from the perspective of rationality. Where contestants have to eliminate each other, the prisoner's dilemma and other well-known situations emerge. ? Reading Is Fundamental! Lucy McAdams analyzes two different, important speech acts that regularly appear on Drag Race—reading and throwing shade. ? The Values of Drag Race. Guilel Treiber observes two competing sets of values being presented in Drag Race. The more openly advertised “charisma, uniqueness, nerve, and talent,” advancing the skills of every single contender, are opposed by the fading set of “acceptance, support, solidarity, and empowerment,” which has historically been the cornerstone of the LGBTI+ community. ? The Importance of Being Fabulous. Holly Onclin challenges the preconceived notion that drag queens are mainly about female impersonation and instead proposes to understand drag queens as impersonators of celebrity. ? RuPaul Is a Better Warhol. Megan Volpert compares RuPaul and Andy Warhol in their shared pursuit of realness. ? Is Reading Someone to Filth Allowed? Rutger Birnie asks whether there are ethical restrictions on reading someone, since reads are ultimately insults and could cause harm. ? Serving Realness? Dawn Gilpin and Peter Nagy approach the concept of realness in Drag Race, to discuss the differences between realness, authenticity and the nature of being. ? Death Becomes Her. Hendrik Kempt explores the topic of death both in philosophy and in Drag Race, starting from the claim that “Philosophy is training for death.” ? We're All Born Naked. Oliver Norman follows up on Ru's mantra, “We are all born naked and the rest is drag.” ? Fire Werk with Me. Carolina Are looks into the fan-subcultures of Drag Race and Twin Peaks, which have come together to form a unique sub-subculture, in which members of both fan-subcultures create memes and idiosyncrasies. ? Towards a Healthier Subjectivity? Ben Glaister looks at the way Drag Race contestants adopt their drag personae almost as second selves, without finding themselves violating their other self. ? RuPaul versus Zarathustra. Julie and Alice van der Wielen ask the question, Who would win an intellectual lip-sync battle—RuPaul or Nietzsche's Zarathustra? ? Playing with Glitter? Fernando Pagnoni and pals explore the game and play elements of Drag Race. ? The Origins of Self-Love. Anna Fennell expounds upon RuPaul's question, “If you can't love yourself, how in the hell you gonna love somebody else?” ? The Sublime. Sandra Ryan thinks about Kant's concept of the sublime and explores how we find its applications in Drag Race. ? You Want to Be Anonymous? You Better Work! Alice Fox watches Drag Race through the lens of criminal law and the problem of decreasing anonymity through ubiquitous data surveillance. Drag Race can teach us how to create misleading patterns of online behavior and public presentation to render the blackbox persona useless. ? Drag and Vulnerability. Anneliese Cooper contrasts Drag Race's demand for vulnerability and perceived authenticity with the inherent inauthenticity of creating a new persona.

In *The Handmaid's Tale and Philosophy*, philosophers give their insights into the blockbuster best-selling novel and record-breaking TV series, *The Handmaid's Tale*. The story involves a future breakaway state in New England, beset by environmental disaster and a plummeting birth rate, in which the few remaining fertile women are conscripted to have sex and bear children to the most powerful men, all justified and rationalized by religious fundamentalism. Among the questions raised by this riveting and harrowing story: ? *The Handmaid's Tale* displays the connection between sex and power. What light does this story shed on sex and power in our own society? ? The divinity of the feminine is associated with the female capacity to give birth. Is this association inherently exploitative? ? In the story, the revolution rapidly rebranded people by changing their names and placing them into functional groups with specific titles. How important is change in language to the suppression of individual freedom? ? *The Handmaid's Tale* sees everything through the eyes of one character. How is it possible to construct a self and an identity at odds with the definition which the culture attempts to impose? ? In oppressive societies, even the most oppressed do show some freedom of choice. What is the limit of autonomy in a repressive society ruled by a fanatical ideology? ? Our present ethics of sex relies heavily on the notion of consent, but in the world of *The Handmaid's Tale* there is little scope for consent. How is the power of consent constricted by the broader social conditions? ? The feminist idea of Care Ethics can be used to critique various gender relationships. How does Care Ethics evaluate our own society and the society depicted in *The Handmaid's Tale*? ? The society portrayed in the story is marked by fierce religiosity, yet the Christian God presumably disapproves of its brutal exploitation and oppression. What is the relation between a loving Deity and the literal interpretation of scriptural passages? ? Among many dystopian stories, what makes *The Handmaid's Tale* particularly memorable, and what purpose is served by the contemplation of imaginary dystopias? ? Suicide is common in *The Handmaid's Tale*, and contemplating the possibility of suicide is even more common. Can life be worth living if the political and religious structure is thoroughly malign? ? Beneath the theocratic preaching, there is the practical suggestion that everything is being arranged for the good of society and therefore of everyone. Who gets to decide and enforce what is in society's best interests?

In *Downton Abbey and Philosophy*, twenty-two professional thinkers uncover the deeper significance of this hugely popular TV saga. Millions of viewers throughout the world have been enthralled by this enactment of a vanished world of decorum and propriety, because it presents us with emotional and interpersonal problems that remain urgent for people in the twenty-first century. Why do we attach such importance to our memories and to particular places? What do war and epidemics tell us about life in peacetime and in good health? Is it healthy or harmful for people to feel that they know their place? What does *Downton Abbey* teach us about the changes in women's roles since 1912? Do good manners always agree with good morals? How can everybody know what no one will talk about? What's the justification for a class of people who pride themselves on not having a job? Should we sometimes just accept the reality of social barriers to love, and abandon the pursuit? What happens when community reinforces oppression? All of these and many other issues are discussed through a detailed examination of the actual characters and situations in *Downton Abbey*.

The Americans, a dark, tense, action thriller with comic touches, has been hailed by many critics as currently the best show on television. The story, created by a former CIA spy, centers on two Soviet agents posing as an ordinary American couple, Philip and Elizabeth Jennings, in 1980s Washington DC. They have two teenage children who know nothing of their clandestine occupation and function as part of their cover story. *The Americans and Philosophy* brings together diverse philosophers who take a close look at the metaphysical and ethical aspects of the *The Americans*. The Jenningses believe they are living in a decadent capitalist society and draw emotional uplift from their dedication to a higher ideal. Just one step ahead of the FBI, they practice murder and seduction as instruments to further the goals of Communist subversion. This gives their lives more meaning and more excitement than those of the other people around them, and serious questions arise as to whether their lives can be truly fulfilling and ennobled. Quaint-looking 1980s culture plays a conspicuous role in *The Americans*, an example being the psychotherapeutic

self-awareness cult known as est, which features in the story and also serves as an allegory of espionage, as est (along with ancient philosophy) asks the question, Do our secret, inner lives truly align with how we act? The gadgetry of espionage, including the poorly adapted but actually historically accurate “mail robot” of the 1980s FBI, prompt speculations about the interaction of humans with artificial intelligence. Philip and Elizabeth’s genuine horror when they find that one of their children is praying and attending church brings out the ambiguities in the popular notion of brainwashing and indoctrination. Since the Jenningses’ children enjoy a comfortable life with many opportunities, can it be true that they are immorally exploited? Knowing that all weapons of war are intended to kill and maim, can we uniquely stigmatize some weapons (such as the biological weapon called “Glanders” in Season Four) as unacceptable? All governments practice the duplicity and deception of espionage, but special problems arise when continual lying invades personal relationships. Is it true that in the modern world, devotion to the state has become a “sacred fiction,” like a religion? Lying is everywhere in *The Americans*, but much of the lying is very similar to everyday deception: parents often withhold from their children facts about the parents’ jobs which might cause needless anxiety, and tell their children apparently harmless fibs like saying that Santa Claus exists. The boundary between criminal lying and everyday lying is a continual irony in the script of *The Americans*. Can the demands of a lofty cause, even the survival of freedom or justice in the world, justify the deliberate killing of an innocent individual? Such questions continually bombard the show’s protagonists, while existentialist philosophy poses the question: Is Elizabeth truly free to quit being a spy?

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