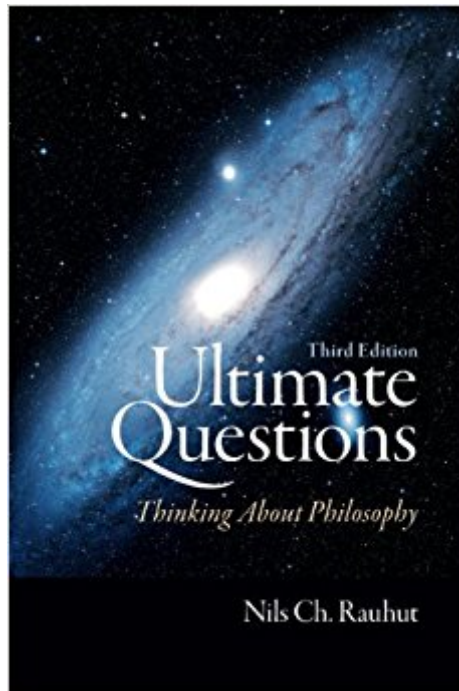




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# Ultimate Questions: Thinking About Philosophy (3rd Edition)



## Synopsis

This inexpensive and brief text examines the main problems in contemporary philosophy and uses more than 100 "Food for Thought" • exercises to promote critical thinking and help students become active learners of philosophy. The book is intended for use by professors teaching a problems-oriented course, but is structured to appeal to any reader willing to explore subjects such as free will, personal identity, existence of God, and more. Ultimate Questions explores how the timeless problems of Western philosophy are located inside our ordinary ways of thinking and being. It encourages readers to think about philosophy first-hand by using vivid and engaging examples. It also introduces readers to prominent up-to-date theories being applied to the same problems encountered by contemporary analytic philosophers. After reading this text, students will gain a better sense of how mysterious their own natures really are.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In This Section: I. Author Bio II. Author Letter I. Author Bio Nils Ch. Rauhut studied philosophy and history at the University of Regensburg (Germany). He received an M.A. degree in philosophy from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Washington in Seattle. He taught at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah, and he is currently teaching at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, South Carolina.

Website: <http://ww2.coastal.edu/nrauhut/> II. Author Letter Dear Colleague, I have taught Introduction to Philosophy in various class sizes and at various academic institutions for more than fifteen years. I enjoy it tremendously but I also know that teaching the course is challenging. A genuine introduction to philosophy requires a conversation between us, the

students, and the content. However, students are often reluctant to engage in genuine conversations about great ideas. Why think, argue, or speak in class if listening to lectures seems so much more convenient? My textbook, *Ultimate Questions: Thinking about Philosophy 3e*, is constructed to get students actively engaged in doing philosophy together with you in the classroom. More than 100 Food for Thought Exercises in the text are designed to generate lively classroom discussions and sharpen critical thinking. The exercises are designed to make the philosophy classroom more interactive and they help students realize whether they have grasped important concepts clearly. ^ My text does not presuppose that students already have a natural curiosity to think and talk about great philosophical questions. Instead, it is designed to awaken such curiosity by showing them how the great questions arise naturally in our ordinary ways of being. The book is an invitation for students to realize that the great questions of philosophy are invariably intertwined with the way all of us live every day. To study the great questions then, is ultimately an attempt to get to know ourselves. ^ Students read much less than we instructors hope. I have tried to write *Ultimate Questions* such that students are seduced into reading. I have tried to write clearly without oversimplifying any philosophical position or problem. My hope is that the book can provide for students partly what a lecture normally provides, so that instructors have more freedom to use class time for discussions, group work, role play or any other form of active learning. ^ I would be delighted to hear from anyone using this book in their classes, and would especially value any suggestions for improvement, my e-mail is [nrauhut@coastal.edu](mailto:nrauhut@coastal.edu). ^ Sincerely, ^ Nils Rauhut ^ Coastal Carolina University

I've really had a difficult time finding decent books to use in teaching my introductory philosophy courses. Given all the approaches one could take to a first introduction to philosophy, e.g., historical, secondary-literary synopsis, excerpts of works on big issues, and a survey of the most important texts in philosophy, I think Rauhut's books are some of the better ones I've found. In the way that I just phrased that last remark I hope it is clear that I have reservations. Let me say what's good about this book, first, then I'll remark on a few of its shortcomings. One of the things this book has going for it is that Rauhut covered some of the big issues in philosophy, and has a correlated text with excerpts from all the best papers pertaining to the subject. That is, the individual topics in this book, which constitute its chapters' focuses (e.g., morality, the god question, the basic question of epistemology, namely, how can we know anything, etc.) has a sort of companion text (*Readings on the Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy*), in which the chapters are filled with portions of text written by

great philosophers in history, as well as contemporary scholars in philosophy departments, sometimes referred to as *philosophers*. Taken together, the potency of this text (and the other one, too), *Ultimate Questions* triple their value. This text is clearly written and reasonably well thought out. One of the things it does more, which I think other texts need to do, is include diagrams, such as flow diagrams. Being a secondary text, whose function is, primarily, to explain the big issues in a somewhat thorough, yet quick way, requires a great deal of organization. I think this book achieves this with its setup and clear communication. The most valuable part of this book is, without a question, the part that finds no correlating chapter in the *Readings on the Ultimate Questions*, namely, the chapter on *philosophical tools*. I cannot express how much I would have liked to have known of and had access to this chapter when I taught from the *Readings* text. Most students come into a philosophy class without the slightest clue about what reason is, what constitutes an argument, and how to evaluate an argument – “an unfortunate consequence of the American K-12 system and its obsession with standards, process, and memorization, rather than understanding. Even if *Rauhut* doesn’t do as thoroughgoing of a job as *I* like, the content contained is basically priceless and lifts a great burden from both teacher and student (or layperson) when it comes to trying to gain some traction in the area of reason and other philosophical tools (e.g., methods of inquiry). The bad in this book is really the bad that exists in the *Readings*: what was chosen as subjects aren’t really the most important subjects in philosophy. They may be some of the more approachable and more interesting, depending on your background. In some places, *Rauhut* certainly tries to tie in important issues. For example, there is no chapter on metaphysics or, say, metaphysical monism versus dualism; but *Rauhut* does draw Descartes’ dualism into a chapter on the nature of personal identity. In essence, the issue I have with this text and the other is that the reader could come away from the text, having read it fairly carefully, and come away not knowing what metaphysics is. Another example: not really having said anything about philosophy’s relation to science is a deficiency. Finally, I don’t like that there is much in the way of historical reference to the development of the ideas presented; the history informs us well of philosophical developments, how they developed, why, and what motivating/influential forces were in play. There are some portion of philosophical history (e.g., medieval) and major branches of philosophy (e.g., aesthetics) that aren’t even covered, maybe not even mentioned! This is not to say that other texts are as comprehensive as *I* like – “in fact, I have not found a completely satisfactory text, but merely that this is as good as the best I’ve found so far, and certainly sufficient in many respects. If you want a

big-issues approach in an introduction to philosophy, I can recommend reading this book and its companion, *Readings on the Ultimate Questions*. If you want some of the more important issues in philosophy, I can make some recommendations, including Bertrand Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy* for one. If you want a historical approach, Enoch Stumpf's text is very readable and gentle.

Great service from , as expected. This book is very interesting. Despite the fact that it was a required textbook for a philosophy and religion course, I enjoyed reading it. The different subjects forced my critical thinking to a level I have not reached prior. Highly recommend.

Boring

Quick shipment and received as described

Much more beaten up copy than expected. Disappointed especially considering the price that was paid.

I bought this book for an Intro to Philosophy class at my local collage. Required reading or not, I found that this book was unbearably boring. I like philosophy. I like to think about things. This book breaks various viewpoints down in a way that is aimed at helping readers understand the content with more ease. Unfortunately, you seem to sort of lose the essence of the viewpoints in the process. While the writer takes great care to explain things in "layman's" terms, it often becomes more confusing. Also, the writer seems to like to blather on. There are points in the book where he gets straight to the point, and does so clearly. There are other points in the book which make you have to follow his convoluted train of thought. All in all, the book is just okay. Not good, not bad. Just okay.

A basic intro to philosophy college level book.

Some theories are explained more than others, but the book does a great job at getting you thinking about philosophy. Make sure to read all of the "Food for Thought" parts!

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