ABOUT PHILOSOPHY

NINTH EDITION

Robert Paul Wolff
Professor of Afro-American Studies and Philosophy
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

with the assistance of

R. Eugene Bales
Emeritus Professor of Philosophy
Menlo College, Atherton, California

Pearson
Prentice Hall
Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458
To Susie,

whose courage in the face of adversity

is the manifestation of a true

philosophic spirit.
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It is now fully thirty years since About Philosophy first made its appearance. Over the years, a great many young men and women have encountered philosophy for the first time in its pages. Indeed, it is just possible that several of you are the children of students who used this text back in the late 1970’s. My own father was the author of a high school biology text from which, in time, I studied. As a boy, I watched it go through a number of editions.

My father was fortunate to have a co-author with whom he shared the burdens and responsibilities of doing justice to biology as it grew and changed. Until now, I have made the periodic revisions and changes in About Philosophy myself, always guided by the suggestions of those students and Professors who actually use the text in their classes. For this edition, however, I have called on the assistance of a distinguished Professor of Philosophy, R. Eugene Bales, who has been teaching almost as long as I have. Gene made his career in California, on the West Coast, as I have made mine in the East. Between us, we bridge the nation, and perhaps the field of philosophy as well.

Gene has contributed a number of valuable new sections to this edition, including, among other things, discussions of new directions in the theory of knowledge and the philosophy of science, new (and, dare I say, better?) materials on feminist philosophy, and a fuller discussion of the problem of evil in the philosophy of religion. Both he and I are especially eager to hear from you about these revisions and additions, for the success of About Philosophy is due principally to the willingness of its readers to tell us what they like, what they don’t like, and what they would like us to add.

Textbooks have changed a good deal since I started teaching, most notably in the use of a wide variety of supplementary materials from many media. We continue, with this edition, the practice of providing ABCNEWS videos of televised discussions of contemporary issues through which it is possible to explore the immediate importance of timeless philosophical issues. There are also study guides and a website to help you in mastering the philosophical themes and arguments of the text. For this edition, we have introduced an entirely new feature—a series of examples drawn from popular culture to illustrate and deepen your understanding of philosophy. You may not have realized it, but there is a great deal to think about in The Matrix or The Simpsons.
Teaching and Learning Resources

The print and media supplements that accompany About Philosophy provide instructors and students with resources that combine sound scholarship, engaging content, and a variety of pedagogical tools to enrich the classroom experience and students’ understanding of philosophy.

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PREFACE

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Acknowledgments

Over the years, a number of men and women have served as Philosophy Editors at Prentice Hall, the publisher of this book. The former editor, Ross Miller, played a larger than usual role in developing ideas for the ninth edition, and both Gene Bales and I are very grateful to him for his thoughtful assistance. Our thanks also to Carla Worner, editorial assistant, who has been endlessly available and responsive to our sometimes incoherent requests.

The authors would like to thank the reviewers of the ninth edition of About Philosophy: Hugh J. Matlack, County College of Morris; Charles Cassini, Barry University; Robert Ferrell, University of Texas, El Paso; William H. Bruening, Indiana University, Purdue University Fort Wayne; Ronald L. Massanara, Alma College; Vincent Luizzi, Southwest Texas State University; Jeffrey P. Fry, Ball State University; and Jose Lopez-Gonzalez, Towson University.

One final word of a purely personal nature. In an earlier edition, I used an ABCNEWS video of my older son, Patrick, playing chess (Patrick twice won the United States chess championship). In this edition, I am delighted to be able to use a video of my younger son, Tobias, who is a law professor, debating the issue of same-sex marriage. In the immortal words of Jackie Gleason from a television show popular many years ago, “How sweet it is!”

Robert Paul Wolff
Pelham, Massachusetts
Robert Paul Wolff was born in New York City in 1933. He was educated at
Harvard University, where he was awarded a doctorate in Philosophy in 1957.
He has taught at Harvard, the University of Chicago, and Columbia University,
and, since 1971, at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Wolff is the au-
thor or editor of twenty books on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, social
and political philosophy, the philosophy of education, the philosophy of law,
the philosophy of David Hume, and the economic theories of Karl Marx. He
has taught political science at Chicago, Boston University, and Yale, and mi-
croeconomics at the University of Massachusetts. Wolff’s books have been
translated into more than a dozen languages, and have sold more than three-
quarters of a million copies. They have been assigned as required reading for
the Moral Tripos at Cambridge University, and have been read by students in
Soweto, South Africa.

In 1990, Wolff founded University Scholarships for South African Stu-
dents, Inc. (USSAS), which he runs as a volunteer charitable organization.
USSAS currently supports 110 black students at universities in South Africa.

In 1992, Wolff was invited to join the W. E. B. DuBois Department of Afro-
American Studies at the University of Massachusetts. He is currently professor
of Afro-American Studies and Philosophy, and serves as Director of Graduate
Studies in the doctoral program in Afro-American Studies.

Robert Paul Wolff is married to his childhood sweetheart, Susan, and
has two sons, Patrick, 32, and Tobias, 30. Asked to describe himself suc-
cinctly, he said, “In religion, I am an atheist; in politics, I am an anarchist; in
economics, I am a Marxist.” A former editor, Ted Bolen, suggested that he not
go around saying things like that.
ABOUT PHILOSOPHY