

“Sophie’s World” book chapters:

1. Who am I? We normally don’t ask the question and remain throughout our lives in deep sleep. On the other hand bad circumstances are often a good occasion to ask this fundamental question. (Ch. 1)
2. Philosophy: Love of wisdom. The faculty of wondering. (CH. 2)
3. Moving from myth and the supernatural to natural explanations. (Ch. 3)
4. The natural philosophers (can be divided over the group so as to allow varied discussion) (Ch. 4). Democritus and atomism. (Ch.5)
5. Fate (*fatum* = that which has been spoken.) But spoken by who? Does predestination leave room for a relative freedom? (Ch. 6)
6. Who is Socrates? (Through the mouthpiece of Plato). The wisdom of realizing one’s limitation in knowledge, whether outward through the screen of the senses and agnostic mind, or inward due to the very limited field of waking consciousness. (Ch. 7 & 8) This subject later known under the name epistemology is discussed at length in Plato’s dialogue “Theaetetus”, and will be the subject of a future HYC program.
7. Plato and elucidating the Theory of Ideas – Archetypes, with play on beauty, scent, etc. Ch. 9 & 10)
8. Aristotle’s logic & science and the start of the rift between the metaphysical and the physical, or in other words between the divine and the material, which was to continue throughout Christianity. (Ch. 11) Make mention of Art – The School of Athens by Rafael.
9. Hellenism and story (follow text Ch. 12 & 13).
10. Two cultures Indo Aryan and Semitic. Expand on the miracle of Christianity: one man in a remote district of a remote part of the Roman Empire changes the world with a completely unheard of message “to love one’s enemy”. Here it is understood that in the previous era of Moses “An eye for an eye” signifies that the state of the human psyche was tyrannical and chaotic and Moses tried to bring it under control, that is to make it more just, but with Jesus the demand is far higher. These topics can be studied within the deeper Christian philosophic teachings. But going deeply into that, one must first learn more about the human structure: A psyche between body and Spirit, and moreover this psyche itself tripartite: Intellectual, emotive and motor/instinctive. (Ch. 14)
11. The middle ages, preceded by the early Fathers adopting Platonism as the handmaiden of Religion. On the other hand, Aristotelian philosophy remains and rapidly gains ground, even while religion tries to contain it yet it can’t stand against the unending demands of reason. With this vehement march of rational thought, the first formula of Saint Augustine “Believe in order to understand” is quickly forgotten. (Ch. 15)
12. The Renaissance and “Humanism”. The printing press v.s. Church information, the gun v.s. the sword, the compass v.s. reading the sky, on the one hand, and the unbearable repression of the individual by the Vatican on the other, exacerbate the need for release, the consequence is a great inflation of the ego, and repulsion of Church

dictates. With this comes the valuation of the Human above all else and his new discoveries insist on experimentation and proof rather than blind acceptance. The two antagonistic extremes led to disaster, whereas the older wisdom was tolerant to the coexistence and espousal of both visions in a complimentary manner. Following the Renaissance comes the Baroque era displaying both extremes in a flagrant way between excess ornament and excess privation. (CH. 16 & 17)

13. Descartes gives a clear and definite voice to the prevailing atmosphere with his “I think therefore I am”, preceded by the precept “Doubt everything that cannot be proved” and with these he provided the bankruptcy of religion. It makes no difference that he professes belief in God, his roundabout way of retrieving God cannot make up for the destruction. There is an error at base, which was realized three centuries later. Another thing that Descartes introduces and is followed thereafter by western philosophers is that he creates an independent philosophical system, completely uninterested in building on what preceded him, and with this he and all his successors go overboard with a pride/self esteem that exceeds all bounds. (Ch. 18) Spinoza then comes and also he sets a novel system, with a first premise therein doubting the inspiration of the Bible by God. (Ch. 19)
14. The three English Empiricists go against the rationalists; the senses as opposed to the reason as our source of knowledge, and pushing it to the absolute extreme envision our experience as dreams or motions in the mind of God (follow text Ch. 20, 21 & 22).
15. SUMMARY all previous to remind and fix ideas (follow text Ch. 23).
16. The French Enlightenment and opposition to all authority, culminating in the French revolution of 1789. Here the word enlightenment is of the human “Reason” in the presence of education and the encyclopedia. The call of revolt being “Liberty – Equality – Fraternity”. Let us discuss these and see their significance apart from a call to revolt. Can they be our call today? In discussing Global Issues we will see their true significance then, and how they can be used now in a new formula applicable to the time. (Ch. 24)
17. With Kant’s Time, Space and Causality as the forms and limitation of knowledge, we reach an impasse: whatever exceeds these is unknowable through the mind and therefore nothing worthwhile can be said about it. God is classed within this category of unknowable, then is smuggled back in through the back door by some moral categorical imperatives. These limitations set by Kant impoverish us to no end, because the whole world of life after death, dreams, God and all metaphysics and our heart’s greatest aspirations are condemned to remain in this unknowable area and hence not worthy of serious interest. In his explanation he says that he cannot deny the existence of noumena, but of those noumena nothing whatsoever can be said because they transcend the limits of Time, Space and Causality and so we must remain utterly ignorant of them, and the most we can do in relation to them is to say I feel such and such. It is worth noting that it is not until the twentieth century that a new discipline called Phenomenology managed to expose the fault in his principal assertion regarding the relation between noumena and phenomena (Ch. 25).

18. The Romantics, tired of all these constraints of reason, yearned for the beautiful and the unattainable, in a way they yearned for the middle ages for a return to the emotions. (follow text Ch. 26). Culminating in Hegel, but with his brilliance of shifting from analytical thought to synthetic thought, with his thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The instructor can expand on historicity but for the greater eras and not short periods; thus the era of the Father, and that of the Son and that of the Holy Spirit. Or the era of contemplative philosophy, then the religious era and finally an era encompassing both. Or still another, blind faith, denial of faith, and a third of matured or enlightened faith. (Ch. 26 & 27).
19. Kierkegaard's Christian existential sincerity is the wake up call to all lip service Sunday Christians and their equivalents in other religions. He cannot live by Hegel's abstractness and historical perspectives, devoid of personal responsibility, and criticizing Hegel in this regard, even though he takes the Hegelian system but in order to apply it to one's own life; a life with a purposeful struggle (Ch. 28). With Marx many Global Issues are brought to our attention (work, alienation, slave labor, exploitation, unemployment, automation, wage cutting, etc...), evoking the reality of social injustice. In his dialectical materialism, which like Kierkegaard takes the Hegelian system for method but in an opposite direction, that of society, he gives the logical reasoning for revolution. In our Global Issues Group, this topic will be greatly elucidated, with the possibilities of solutions adequate to our time and culture. (Ch. 29)
20. Darwin's theory remains a "theory" meaning that it could not for all the scientific development of our era reach the status of proved fact. The reason is that it is missing something... What is this something? Can you sincerely conceive of the lower giving birth to the higher? Can you conceive of an Einstein or a Shakespeare being the result of some dumb electromagnetic reactions? In all the esoteric teachings from India to the Middle East, and also the west of the Middle ages, it is advocated that for there to be evolution, there must first be an involution, and that what evolves through time is the soul. This will be a central topic to the second phase Philosophy group. (Ch. 30)
21. Freud's psychology with the Id-wish, ego-restrain, superego-social constrain, along with the sub-conscious and sexual repression, open a new chapter in healing for the modern man, analogous in some ways to the confession to a priest in the era before our rational faculties became so developed. In fact we can say that for most of us who do not suffer from organic lesions, psychology should be considered the greatest medicine, as it aims to treat the causes rather than the effects, since most sicknesses are psychosomatic. But modern psychology deals with the psyche almost exclusively from an experimental standpoint, whereas Traditional "psychology" from Plato and even before onwards through the ages to our time, consider the soul or psyche in its tripartite structure Intellectual, Emotive and Motor/Instinctive and are capable of prescribing the necessary ways of curing its lesions and traumas, whether through the Yogas of the Indians and other Eastern Traditions, or through their equivalents in the Orthodox Tradition, and yet

others. This as with the previous section will be amply discussed in the second phase of the Philosophy gatherings. (Ch. 31)

22. After tracing a full circle, Existentialism brings us again to face the question of Being. Being first of all as we hinted while discussing Descartes is what is central, and Descartes should have rather said “I am therefore I think” and not the other way around. Being, with J. P. Sartre, is presented as opposed to Appearance, and as opposed to Nothingness. In the post-world wars era Europe was devastated, and the question of the meaning of life was very much in the foreground, and with it came - for those who have been imbibed whether consciously or unconsciously with the philosophies that prevailed since Descartes – a sense of the Absurd. Devoid of religious belief, the world situation overwhelmed them with fear, anxiety, uncertainty, etc... Sartre identified the very structure of the human being who is a consciousness and who has to remain such so as to take responsibility for his own life, rather than go on sleeping with the herd and accepting its fate passively. The greatness of Sartre, is that despite his atheism, his sincerity brings us to face our own grim truth. If we maintain that we do not believe in anything but Kant’s Time, Space and Causality, we are condemned to live in the absurd. Nihilism, which is a branch of philosophy that came around the same time, says this in few words. Such as for example in the writings of Dostoyevsky: If God does not exist then logically everything is permitted, and also suicide is permitted in the face of any suffering. But on the other hand if we come to the belief that “Reason” may not be the highest and sole mode of knowledge, and that there could be other supra-rational ways of apprehending Truth (truth of the world and ourselves), then we might listen to those Eastern and Orthodox teachings, that ask us to give them a chance by learning them, and see what experience may follow. In our time, with all the exposure to media etc..., it is natural to wonder whether our world as we know it is coming to an end, and what is the nature of the new world that may or may not come about, and who are its forerunners. Most New Age books are rubbish, because they lack any genuine experience, and in this regard one must be careful not to waste one’s life over nonsense. In the second phase of Philosophy we may address some of these grand issues and inquire as to the ways to identify the genuine Traditions, from the myriad of hoax. (Ch. 32)
23. Are we held inside a Matrix, much like the film with Keanu Reeves, a Matrix of Illusion, ego and attachment to trivial mundane things, that keep us hypnotized until we die in the same condition as we began? (Ch. 33). What are the possibilities of escape? (Ch. 34). Outlook on our little place in the great Universe (Follow the text Ch. 35). Does Tradition have an answer, and explanation of this status and what needs to be done to be in harmony with it?