This collection of key terms with their meanings is drawn from *The Elements of Philosophy: Readings from Past and Present*, edited by Tamar Szabo Gendler (Yale University), Susanna Siegel (Harvard University), and Steven M. Cahn (City University of New York Graduate Center), published by Oxford University Press, 2008.

**A priori/a posteriori** (Latin) Something can be known a priori if it can be known independently of—or prior to—experience; something can be known only a posteriori if it can be known only on the basis of—or posterior to—experience.

**Ad hominem** (Latin, “to the man”) Attacking the character or outlook of one’s opponent, rather than replying to one’s opponent’s argument.

**Analytic/synthetic** According to Immanuel Kant, who introduced the expression, an analytic proposition is one whose predicate is “contained in” its subject. Alternatively: an analytic proposition is one that can be transformed into a tautology merely by substituting synonymous terms for its constituent expressions. Statements such as “all bachelors are male” and “if something is a square then it is a rectangle” are often held to express true analytic propositions. A proposition is synthetic if it is not analytic. Statements such as “Kant was born on April 22” and “some apples are red” express synthetic propositions.

**Argument/premise/conclusion** A set of considerations presented in support of some claim. The statement that one is trying to prove is called the conclusion; the statements that are meant to support that conclusion are called the premises. The premises and conclusion together form an argument.

**Begging the question** Circular reasoning; taking as one of your assumptions that which you are seeking to establish.

**Categorical/hypothetical imperative** A distinction made by Immanuel Kant between two sorts of imperatives, that is, commands that you have reason to obey. A hypothetical imperative is one that you have reason to obey only if (on the hypothesis that) you have some particular preexisting desire; for example, “get out of the kitchen” (...if you can’t stand the heat). A categorical imperative is one that you have reason to obey categorically, regardless of your own inclinations, for example (according to Kant), “don’t lie.”

**Ceteris paribus** (Latin) All other things being equal; with all other factors held constant.

**Consequentialism/utilitarianism** The view that what makes an act right or wrong is the goodness or badness of the act’s consequences; utilitarianism is a particular form of consequentialism that restricts its attention to consequences involving the welfare of sentient beings. Among the most famous advocates of utilitarianism is John Stuart Mill. Consequentialism/utilitarianism is often contrasted with deontology and virtue ethics. See also deontology, virtue ethics.

**Consistent** A set of propositions is consistent if it does not entail a contradiction; a set of propositions is inconsistent otherwise. See also contradiction.

**Contradiction** A proposition that is false by virtue of its form alone; a false but empty claim.

**Counterexample** An example that shows the falsity of some theory or claim.

**Deontology** An ethical view based on the notion of duty or rights. The most famous advocate of deontological ethics was Immanuel Kant. Deontology is often contrasted with consequentialism and virtue ethics. See also consequentialism, virtue ethics.

**Determinism** The doctrine that every event has a cause and that if the cause occurs, the event must also occur.

**Empiricism/rationalism** A distinction between two general philosophical outlooks. Whereas empiricists stress the role of sense experience in the acquisition of knowledge, rationalists stress the role of reason unaided by the senses.

**Epiphenomenal/epiphenomenalism** A feature of a situation is epiphenomenal if it occurs as a side effect of the main phenomenon. In philosophy of mind, epiphenomenalism is
the view that mental events are caused by physical events but have no effects upon physical events.

**Functionalism** In philosophy of mind, the view that mental states can be fully characterized by the role they play: by specifying what external conditions and other mental states typically cause them and what behaviors and other mental states they typically cause.

**Identity theory of mind** The view that states and processes of the mind are identical to states and processes of the brain.

**Intuitionism** The view that knowledge in a certain domain can be acquired through *intuition*, a process of direct non-sensory apprehension of the truth and falsity of certain claims.

**Materialism** The view that everything that exists is composed entirely of matter, so that nothing nonmaterial exists. Materialism is often contrasted with *idealism* or *dualism*, and is roughly synonymous with *physicalism*.

**Metaphysics** The branch of philosophy concerned with exploring the fundamental nature of reality.

**Necessary/sufficient** If A is necessary for B, then it is not possible for B to hold without A holding. (This means that the absence of A guarantees the absence of B.) If A is sufficient for B, then if A holds, B must also hold. (This means that the absence of B guarantees the absence of A.) Being over thirty years old is necessary but not sufficient for being a senator (since all senators are over thirty, but there are people over thirty who are not senators); being a senator from Montana is sufficient but not necessary for being a senator (since all senators from Montana are senators, but there are senators who are not senators from Montana). Note that A is necessary for B if and only if B is sufficient for A. (Since being a senator from Montana is sufficient for being a senator, being a senator is necessary for being a senator from Montana.) Philosophers are often concerned with finding necessary and sufficient conditions for particular concepts. For example, being a rectangle with four equal sides is necessary and sufficient for being a square; being an instance of justified true belief is (it might be thought) necessary and sufficient for being an instance of knowledge.

**Physicalism** The view that everything that exists is entirely physical. Physicalism is often contrasted with *idealism*—the view that everything that exists is entirely nonphysical—and *dualism*—the view that some things that exist are physical and other things that exist are nonphysical. Physicalism is roughly synonymous with *materialism*—the view that everything that exists is made of matter.

**Problem of evil** The challenge of reconciling the existence of a perfectly omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent deity with the manifest presence of evil in the world.

**Qualia** The introspectively accessible felt qualities that are associated with an experience, such as the feeling of a pain or the smell of a rose. The singular of *qualia* is * quale*.

**Sound/valid/entail** A deductive argument is valid if the premises entail the conclusion, so that it is not possible for the argument’s premises to be true while the argument’s conclusion is false; a deductive argument is sound if it is valid and all its premises are true. An argument that is not valid is invalid; an argument that is not sound is unsound. All invalid arguments are unsound, but not all unsound arguments are invalid.

**Reductio ad absurdum** (Latin, “reduction to absurdity”) A mode of reasoning that involves validly deriving a contradiction from a set of premises, thereby showing that at least one of the set’s members must be rejected.

**Tautology** A proposition that is true by virtue of its form alone; a true but empty claim.

**Virtue ethics** An ethical view that gives a central role to the idea of virtuous character. The most famous advocate of virtue ethics is Aristotle. Virtue ethics is often contrasted with consequentialism and deontology. See also *consequentialism*, *deontology*. 