

PLATO IN HYPERSPACE

Submitted by: Amanda Jane PR

Tuesday, 28 July 2009

How Philosophy will be helping us understand 'the Final Frontier'?

London, 28 July 2009: Join The Philosophy Shop (www.thephilosophyshop.co.uk) on a special upcoming 6-evening programme of philosophical discussions, debates and exploration on the serious philosophical questions and themes behind much modern Science Fiction literature, movies and television dramas (SF).

That can be The Matrix's entertaining opening up of the question of 'how do we know what is real?' to issues around Personal Identity in a film like Bladerunner to much more complex issues around ethics and epistemology in movies like Solaris or 2001: a Space Odyssey, as well as the many TV shows and literature in the genre. After all, as acknowledged Grand Master SF writer Philip K. Dick once said, "The true protagonist in an SF story is an idea, not a person."

The course is led by Peter Worley, a London-based philosopher, science fiction writer and teacher at www.thephilosophyshop.co.uk a social enterprise which is responsible for teaching philosophy to school children. The Philosophy Shop also runs adult philosophy groups and residential courses in philosophy.

The programme, bound to be highly thought-provoking as well as entertaining, starts with a general introduction to philosophy, how it is done and links Science Fiction with the key concept of the thought experiment. Dating as far back as Plato, the thought experiment is an imagined scenario in which the philosopher is able to consider the various implications of an idea – which is almost a definition of the SF of the 19th, 20th and now 21st centuries.

"This course is an introduction to philosophical themes through SF," says The Philosophy Shop's founder and Director, Peter Worley. "We'll look at how the greatest Science Fiction stories work as entertainment but on a deeper level explore topics such as the philosophy of time, free will, personal identity, mind and knowledge of the external world. We think the course will be suitable for all levels of SF knowledge and philosophy ability!"

The course will cover via a resource list, special handouts, presentations and discussions such issues as:

- Introduction to Philosophy: The Thought Experiment: what Science Fiction owes to philosophy, and what philosophy owes to science fiction
- Personal Identity: Bladerunner, The Prestige, Memento, Solaris, Dr Jeckyll and Mr Hyde
- Free Will: Gattaca, Groundhog Day, Minority Report, The Truman Show
- Knowledge / The external world: Total Recall, Abre Los Ojos, The Electric Ant (short story)
- Space Time / time travel: Terminator, The Time Machine, Dr Who, 12 Monkeys, Back to the Future

•Philosophy of Mind: I Robot, Colossus: The Forbin Project, 2001: a Space Odyssey, A.I.

Worley regularly writes and blogs on Philosophy and Science Fiction. His 'Only Human,' a short story exploring the links between AI (artificial intelligence) and the philosophy of mind was published in Philosophy Now, while an article, 'Timey-Wimey Stuff' – a journey in time, space and philosophy – is to be published in the special Doctor Who and Philosophy volume as part of Open Court Press's successful Popular Culture and Philosophy Series.

The course costs £85 for the six evenings, which will be run on consecutive Wednesdays from 16th September to 21st October from 7 to 9pm at a convenient Central London venue.

Space is limited, so pre-booking essential: to book your tickets please email emma@thephilosophyshop.co.uk or phone 020 8699 9314.

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Notes to Editors:

The Philosophy Shop promotes the practical application of philosophy in the community. It supports and promotes the teaching of philosophy in primary school children, as well as philosophy summer schools, philosophy groups and philosophical counselling. The Philosophy Shop is committed to the fact that through the rational investigation of existence, ethics and knowledge children are able to realise lots of benefits, including raised IQ, raised self-confidence and improved emotional intelligence. The company provides training for qualified philosophers on how to practically employ philosophical methods in a classroom situation. The programme brings philosophy to bear on the national curriculum and teaches classes of primary school children to think critically and ethically about themes raised there. The Philosophy Shop also offers teachers training in how to enhance their teaching methods through philosophical techniques. <http://www.thephilosophyshop.co.uk> (<http://www.thephilosophyshop.co.uk>)