Is there a difference between philosophy and literature?
1. Is this a ‘Big Question’ in Philosophy?
Where is the Department of Mental and Moral Science?
‘English Studies’ in the nineteenth century

- Oratory: the art of eloquence and public speaking.

- Rhetoric: the art of effective and persuasive speech or writing.

- Grammar: the set of structural rules governing the composition of clauses, phrases, and words in any given natural language.

- Literary appreciation (of poetry, fiction and drama).
'There have been various attempts to define literature. You can define it, for example, as 'imaginative' writing in the sense of fiction-writing which is not literally true. But even the briefest reflection on what people commonly include under the heading of literature suggests that this will not do. Seventeenth-century English literature includes Shakespeare, Webster, Marvell and Milton; but it also stretches to the essays of Francis Bacon, the sermons of John Donne, Bunyan’s spiritual autobiography and whatever it was that Sir Thomas Browne wrote. It might even at a pinch be taken to encompass Hobbes’s Leviathan or Clarendon’s History of the Rebellion. French seventeenth-century literature contains, along with Corneille and Racine, La Rochefoucauld’s maxims, Bossuet’s funeral speeches, Boileau’s treatise on poetry, Madame de Sévigné’s letters to her daughter and the philosophy of Descartes and Pascal. Nineteenth-century English literature usually includes Lamb (though not Bentham), Macaulay (but not Marx), Mill (but not Darwin or Herbert Spencer).'}
'literature does not exist in the sense that insects do, and [...] the value-judgements by which it is constituted are historically variable, but [...] these value-judgements themselves have a close relation to social ideologies. They refer in the end not simply to private taste, but to the assumptions by which certain social groups exercise and maintain power over others.'
2. Can we think of works of ‘Philosophy’ as ‘Literature’?
Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)
The Nobel Prize in Literature 1950

Earl (Bertrand Arthur William) Russell
Price share: ½

The Nobel Prize in Literature 1950 was awarded to Bertrand Russell "in recognition of his varied and significant writings in which he champions humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought".

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Satan in the Suburbs (1953)
The definitions of \( \neg p, p \land q, p \lor q, p \rightarrow q \) are to be taken over unchanged. Thus

\[\neg (p \land q) \equiv \neg p \lor \neg q, \quad \neg (p \lor q) \equiv \neg p \land \neg q, \quad \neg (p \rightarrow q) \equiv p \land \neg q, \quad \neg (p \leftarrow q) \equiv \neg p \lor q.\]

\[p \land \neg (q \lor r) = \neg p \lor \neg (q \lor r) = \neg p \lor \neg q \lor \neg r = (\neg p \lor \neg q) \lor \neg r = (p \land \neg q) \lor \neg r.
\]

\[p \lor \neg (q \land r) = p \lor \neg q \lor \neg r = \neg q \lor \neg r \lor p = (\neg q \lor \neg r) \lor p = (q \land r) \lor p = p \lor q \lor r.
\]

\[p \rightarrow q = \neg p \lor q = (p \land q) \lor q = p \lor q \lor q = p \lor q.
\]

\[p \leftarrow q = p \lor \neg q = (p \land \neg q) \lor q = \neg p \lor q = p \rightarrow q.
\]

It will be seen that the above two sentences agree where only one might have been expected. We shall find, before long, that the two variables can be reduced to one, i.e., we shall have:

\[(p \land q) \lor \neg (q \lor r) = (p \land q) \lor (\neg q \lor \neg r) = p \land (q \lor \neg r).
\]

These reduce to:

\[\neg p \lor \neg (q \lor r) = \neg p \lor (\neg q \lor \neg r) = \neg p \lor (q \land r).
\]

But we cannot prove these propositions at our present stage; but, if we could, would they be of much use to us, since we have just shown that, when two general propositions are equal, either may be substituted for the other as part of a certain proposition without changing its truth-value.

For the present, therefore, suppose we have a stroke function in which \( p \) occurs several times, say \( p \lor q; r \), and we wish to replace \( p \) by \( (x \lor s) \), we shall have to write the second occurrence of \( p \) \((x \lor s)\) and the third \((x \lor s)\) as well. Then the resulting proposition will contain as many successive variables as there are occurrences of \( p \).

The positive propositions required, which have been already mentioned, are four in number. They are as follows:

1. \((x \lor s) \lor \neg (x \lor s)\) to \((x \lor s) \lor \neg (x \lor s)\).
2. \((x \lor s) \lor (x \lor s)\) to \((x \lor s) \lor (x \lor s)\).
3. \((x \lor s) \lor \neg (x \lor s)\) to \((x \lor s) \lor \neg (x \lor s)\).
4. If all the occurrences of \( x \) are replaced from all the occurrences of \( y \) by a certain stroke, the order of \( x \) and \( y \) can be changed in the predicate, i.e.
Parmenides of Elea
'On Nature'

[5] ἀρμα τυπαίνουσαι, κοθραί δ᾿ ὅδιν Ἡγεμόνειν. Ἀξιων δ᾿ ἐν χόρησιν ἵει σύργως αὐτὴν 
αἰθόμενος· δοσιος γὰρ ἐπειγετο διαφορέσσιν 
κύκλος ἀμφοτέρωθεν, ὅτι σπερχομάτο πέμπειν 
Ἡλιάδες κοθραί, προλιποῦσαι ἰδώματα Νυκτός,

The steeds that bear me carried me as far as ever my heart
Desired, since they brought me and set me on the renowned
Way of the goddess, who with her own hands conducts the man
who knows through all things. On what way was I borne

5 along; for on it did the wise steeds carry me, drawing my car, 
and maidens showed the way. And the axle, glowing in the socket
– for it was urged round by the whirling wheels at each
end - gave forth a sound as of a pipe, when the daughters of the
Sun, hasting to convey me into the light, threw back their veils


From off their faces and left the abode of Night.

The sun rose; the rays of the sun of Night and Day fitted...
Plato
George Berkeley (1685-1753)
Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713)
Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623-73)
A Worlde Made of Atomes

Small Atomes of themselves a World may make,
As being subtle, and of every shape:
And as they dance about, fit places finde,
Such Formes as best agree, make every kinde.
For when we build a house of Bricke, and Stone,
We lay them even, every one by one:
And when we finde a gap that’s big, or small,
We seeke out Stones, to fit that place withall.
For when not fit, too big, or little be,
They fall away, and cannot stay we see.
So Atomes, as they dance, finde places fit,
They there remaine, lye close, and fast will sticke.
Those that unfit, the rest that rove about,
Do never leave, untill they thrust them out.
Thus by their severall Motions, and their Formes,
As severall work-men serve each others turnes.
And thus, by chance, may a New World create:
Or else predestinated to worke my Fate.
Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)
When Zarathustra was thirty years old, he left his home and the lake of his home, and went into the mountains. There he enjoyed his spirit and solitude, and for ten years did not weary of it. But at last his heart changed,—and rising one morning with the rosy dawn, he went before the sun, and spake thus unto it:

Thou great star! What would be thy happiness if thou hadst not those for whom thou shinest!

For ten years hast thou climbed hither unto my cave: thou wouldst have wearied of thy light and of the journey, had it not been for me, mine eagle, and my serpent. But we awaited thee every morning, took from thee thine overflow and blessed thee for it.

Lo! I am weary of my wisdom, like the bee that hath gathered too much honey; I need hands outstretched to take it. I would fain bestow and distribute, until the wise have once more become joyous in their folly, and the poor happy in their riches. Therefore must I descend into the deep: as thou doest in the evening, when thou goest behind the sea, and givest light also to the nether-world, thou exuberant star!

Like thee must I GO DOWN, as men say, to whom I shall descend. Bless me, then, thou tranquil eye, that canst behold even the greatest happiness without envy!

Bless the cup that is about to overflow, that the water may flow golden out of it, and carry everywhere the reflection of thy bliss!

Lo! This cup is again going to empty itself, and Zarathustra is again going to be a man. Thus began Zarathustra’s down-going.
‘The first thing a reader of Thus Spoke Zarathustra will notice, even before he/she notices what is being said, is the manner of saying it: or rather, the excess of manner.’

R.J. Hollingdale
3. Can we think of works of ‘Literature’ as ‘Philosophy’?
'To be, or not to be; that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And, by opposing, end them? To die, to sleep—  
No more—and by a sleep to say we end  
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to—'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep.  
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil  
Must give us pause. There's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life....'

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 3, scene 1
'There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence – depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse – our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life that give
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master – outward sense
The obedient servant of her will. Such moments
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood.'

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1850), Book XII
Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir
Albert Camus (1913-60)
La nausée (1938) / Nausea
'I lean all my weight on the porcelain ledge, I draw my face closer until it touches the mirror. The eyes, nose and mouth disappear: nothing human is left. Brown wrinkles show on each side of the feverish swelled lips, crevices, mole holes. A silky white down covers the great slopes of the cheeks, two hairs protrude from the nostrils: it is a geological embossed map. And, in spite of everything, this lunar world is familiar to me. I cannot say I recognize the details. But the whole thing gives me an impression of something seen before which stupefies me: I slip quietly off to sleep.'

Sartre, *Nausea*
4. What about the Philosophy of Literature?
Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought* (2001)
Áine Mahon
RICHARD RORTY

PHILOSOPHY as POETRY

Introduction by Michael Bérubé | Afterword by Mary V. Rorty
6. Conclusion: ‘so much depends / upon...’
so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

William Carlos Williams
Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (1921)
‘to harmonize two different tendencies, one in psychology, the other in physics, with both of which I find myself in sympathy, although at first sight they might seem inconsistent. On the one hand, many psychologists, especially those of the behaviourist school, tend to adopt what is essentially a materialistic position, as a matter of method if not of metaphysics. They make psychology increasingly dependent on physiology and external observation, and tend to think of matter as something much more solid and indubitable than mind. Meanwhile the physicists, especially Einstein and other exponents of the theory of relativity, have been making ‘matter’ less and less material.’

Russell, The Analysis of Mind (1921)
'A person ‘understands’ a word when (a) suitable circumstances make him use it, (b) the hearing of it causes suitable behavior in him. We may call these two active and passive understanding respectively. Dogs often have passive understanding of some words, but not active understanding.

It is not necessary, in order that a man should ‘understand’ a word, that he should ‘know what it means,’ in the sense of being able to say ‘this word means so–and–so’.

Understanding words does not consist in knowing their dictionary definitions, or in being able to specify the objects to which they are appropriate. [...] Understanding language is more like understanding cricket: it is a matter of habits, acquired in oneself and rightly presumed in others. To say that a word has a meaning is not to say that those who use the word correctly have ever thought out what the meaning is: the use of the word comes first, and the meaning is to be distilled out of it by observation and analysis. Moreover, the meaning of a word is not absolutely definite: there is always a greater or lesser degree of vagueness. The meaning is an area like a target: it may have a bull’s eye, but the outlying parts of the target are still more or less within the meaning, in a gradually diminishing degree as we travel further from the bull’s eye, and the bull’s eye itself grows smaller and smaller; but the bull’s eye never shrinks to a point, and there is always a doubtful region, however small, surrounding it.'

Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (1921)
Thanks for listening!