Philosophical Concepts in Star Trek: Using Star Trek as a curriculum guide introducing fans to the subject of Philosophy

By Victor Grech

Abstract

Star Trek is a popular cultural phenomenon and each series reinvents cast and plot, providing a unique backdrop with which to study the evolution of philosophy as a curricular subject. This paper identifies philosophical concepts explored through the various series and movies set in the Star Trek universe, which are deontological and invoke Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Kant and Regan. Since characters care about the consequences of their actions, existentialist concepts arise, as expounded by Kierkegaard and Sartre. Humanism is the guiding principle in the Star Trek Federation, embracing diversity and social justice. Numerous episodes are morality plays set against the exotic backdrop of outer space, rewarding audiences by encouraging them to believe that they and their descendants may mature into the wise personages that constitute the main protagonists of the Federation. This paper will introduce readers to inexplicit key philosophical concepts in hopes of stimulating students to further engage with philosophy as a subject of inherent interest.

Introduction

Star Trek (ST) has been with us since 1966, with a total of 735 hours of viewing time. Each series necessitates a reinvention of the cast, both human and extraterrestrial, and the resulting intermix provides a unique opportunity to examine the evolution of the philosophies embraced by a diverse set of human and aliens.

This paper will review common philosophical themes in ST in hope that such a discussion may stimulate readers to engage with philosophy since this has everyday implications and impinges on our entire way of life.

Review of Basic Philosophical Concepts Using Star Trek as Exemplars
Gene Rodenberry, Humanism and Nietzsche

The ST series was created by Gene Rodenberry (1921-1991), a member of the American Humanist Association. This self-professed philosopher referred to ST as "my social philosophy, my racial philosophy, my overview on life and the human condition" (Alexander, 1991). He correctly believed that he could reach far more people through the media than a conventional philosopher (Alexander, 1991). Rodenberry's values are expressed repeatedly in ST and emphasize the notions of voluntary cooperation, attempts at non-violent conflict

resolution while retaining the right to self-defense, dignity and respect for all life forms, the absence of the imposition of dogmas and doctrines while respecting personal beliefs, and the reliance on science and reason in the search for truths, while enjoying human emotions, spirituality and intuition (Alexander, 1991). Rodenberry hoped that this quest for enlightenment would lead to the banishment of racism, superstition, conflict and poverty, not only in ST, but also in the real world (Alexander, 1991).

Humanism also believes that reliance on religion is incorrect and inappropriate, echoing the Nietzschean claim that "God is dead." Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) insisted that humanity must rely on its own resources and not expect supernatural guidance or intervention (Nietzsche, 1882).

Anthropocentrism in ST

It is far easier and cheaper to make up humans as aliens rather than create truly alien beings. Thus, SF in general and ST in particular unwittingly impart an unwarranted sense of anthropocentrism, as virtually all protagonists are bilaterally symmetrical bipedal humanoids played by human actors. Anthropocentrism implies that humans are the most significant extant species, an unjustifiable humanocentric assumption.

In ST, nature's seeming predilection for the humanoid form is accounted for by an ancient race known as "The Progenitors" who seeded life throughout the galaxy billions of years ago with spores that were somehow genetically programmed to evolve into humanoid form in the image of the seeding race (Star Trek – Next Generation, "The Chase"), a directed form of exogenesis.

The reliance on human actors may change with the evolution of computer generated (CGI) imagery, such that CGI actors/aliens may eventually become cheaper than real actors and ancillary costs related to costumes and elaborate alien appearing make-up.

Manichaeism and Lévi-Strauss

Manichaeism is a dualistic philosophy that recognizes the universe as being divided by principles that are either intrinsically good or evil. Manichaeism is omnipresent in ST manifest both inexplicitly and implicitly as a binary structural opposition between good and evil. This comprises a dyadism that is Lévi-Straussian in its symmetry, and ubiquitous in almost every episode. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) claimed that myths constitute frameworks in which human societies encode certain universal issues, including oppositions. Dualisms such as mind/matter and good/evil are another version of myth and it has been cogently argued that SF is modern myth (Kappell, 2010).

Descartes and Locke

Yet another common dyadism encountered in ST is a Cartesian mind-body dualism. René Descartes (1596-1650) believed that the machine-like body has a controlling and nonmaterial mind/soul. Many species, most notably the Vulcans, appear to have a "katra," a soul that can be divorced from the body, carried by another, possibly alien body or even a mechanical receptacle or a computer, and reimplanted in a new body. (Star Trek Movie, "Star Trek III: The Search for Spock"). In this way, the *tabula rasa* of such a new physical agent is replaced by a katra containing the personality and memory of the original being.

John Locke (1632-1704) maintained that a new mind (such as a newborn infant or a newly created body) is a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) with no innate ideas. He was also the first philosopher to define self through an uninterrupted set of long term memories that constitute a continuity of consciousness, an issue that resurfaces when the instantaneous matter transporter is utilized. Indeed, in a previous paper, it was shown that consciousness is continuously maintained through the transportation process, thereby achieving Lockian continuity (Grech, 2011b).

Science and Empiricism: Democritus, Aristotle, Bacon, Locke, Hume and Galileo.

SF purports to be the handmaiden of science, and is "arguably the last metanarrative with any significant cachet in the post-postmodern condition" (Grech, 2011a). For this reason, ST generally reflects science as accurately as possible, nodding to immutable physical laws while gently sidestepping them through technobabble and other semi-scientific legerdemain.

ST thus reflects the atomistic thinking of Democritus (c. 460 BC-c. 370 BC), the pre-Socratic philosopher who maintained that matter is comprised of discrete particles. Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC) is often called the father of empirical science and is credited with developing the scientific method of investigation. He also proposed the concept of teleology or purpose, believing that all behavior, both animate and inanimate, leads to a final *telos*, a purpose, and that everything has a preordained and natural function, which it strives to fulfill. Man's function, according to Aristotle, is to reason, and that this should be according to virtue ethics, which will be expanded later (Aristotle, 1955).

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) also championed empiricism, the concept that knowledge is gained primarily from sensory experiences, with planned experiments that investigate all branches of science, the *modus operandi* of science now, and in the ST future. Locke backed this view and proposed that all human knowledge is *a posteriori*, based upon previous experience and imposed on a *tabula rasa*(Locke, 1690). David Hume (1711–1776) further raised empiricism to a higher level of skepticism by propounding there is no certainty that the future can be predicted through the simple observation of past events (Hume, 1748).

In the ST universe, scientific observations are made through "sensors," a generic term that invokes an instrumental, artificial and unspecified extension of the natural senses. Moreover, science in ST, as in the real world, is couched in and described by mathematics, as Galileo affirmed: "Philosophy is written in this grand book, the universe, which stands continually open to our gaze. But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and read the characters in which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics, […] without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these one is wandering in a dark labyrinth (Galileo, 1623)."

UFP principles, Technocracy and Socrates

In the Star Trek universe, the United Federation of Planets (UFP) was co-founded in 2161 AD by Humans, Vulcans, Andorrians and other races, through an enlightened group of "humanitarians and statesmen, and they had a dream that became a reality and spread throughout the stars" (Star Trek – Original Series, "Whom Gods Destroy"). The grouping comprises a federal interstellar polity within this galaxy, with over 150 member planets and several thousand colonies spread across 8000 light years. The UFP is best described as a liberal, post-capitalist, almost perfectly socialist utopian democracy that embraces a

constitutional republic based on an almost Socratic model, as described by Captain Picard, "The economics of the future are somewhat different [...] money doesn't exist in the twenty-fourth century […] the acquisition of wealth is no longer the driving force in our lives. We work to better ourselves and the rest of humanity." (Star Trek – Next Generation, "First Contact").

In "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield," the Federation is described as a stabilizing force in "this part of the galaxy […]. We live in peace with full exercise of individual rights. The need to resort to violence and force has long since passed."

As such, the UFP consistently espouses liberty, equality, justice, peace, and universal cooperation as summarized by Picard, "With the first link, the chain is forged. The first speech censured, the first thought forbidden, the first freedom denied, chains us all irrevocably. […] The first time any man's freedom is trodden on, we're all damaged." (Star Trek – Next Generation, "Drumhead").

The UFP has an exploratory/militaristic arm, the Starfleet, which is only deployed in self-defence, and is tasked more toward missions of diplomacy and scientific inquiry. Starfleet operates in strict naval tradition and in response to the question posed by Juvenal: "*quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*" (Who will guard the guardians?), the UFP internally polices itself through its Judge Advocate General and a Department of Internal Affairs (Iuvenalis, 100). This stance was promoted by Socrates who warned of the dangers of the uncritical acceptance of orthodoxy, a hazard that could be allayed through a continuous process of internal analytical reflection.

Starfleet is predominantly run by scientists, a technocracy as envisaged in early 20th century by Edward Bellamy, Thorstein Veblen, William H. Smyth (who coined the term) and others. Technocrats proposed the replacement of politicians with scientists and engineers who had the technical expertise to manage market economies (Aikin, 1977).

Socrates realized that the more we learn, the more we learn how little we know, and scientists in the real world and in ST are eminently Socratic, constantly endeavoring to understand the universe in full cognizance of the incompleteness of their understanding of natural processes. This is also reflected in Starfleet Academy's Latin motto "*Ex Astris Scientia*" (from the stars knowledge), a concept that is encapsulated by the traditional introductory sequence, "Space: the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before."

UFP: Aristotle, Kant, Westphalian Peace and Regan

The moral philosophical underpinnings of the UFP are Aristotlean and Kantian, partially modified by Regan's "subjects-of-a-life" and "respect principle."

Aristotle advocated moral virtue ethics. A virtuous action comes about through the rational control over the irrational part of the psyche and arises from the avoidance of extremes. This leads individual agents and groups of individuals to act around a so-called golden mean, a concept based on Aristotle' work *The Nicomachean Ethics*, which is considered to be one of the most important extant historical philosophical works. For an act to be virtuous: the agent must know the quality of the act; the agent must not only know what he/she is doing but that

he/she is doing that which is good; the act is a result of choice and not coerced; and the act should be consistent with previous actions and not simply a one-off event.

The Nicomachean Ethics had an incalculable impact in the Middle Ages in Europe and on the subsequent development of modern philosophy, law and Christian theology. In ST, virtue ethics are overlain with Kantian deontological principles. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) claimed that his Categorical Imperative was a universal moral law. This states that behaviour should be based on deontology (Greek *deon*, "obligation and duty"). Specifically after consideration of one's duties and the rights of others, morality should be rooted in humanity's rational capacities, thus asserting specific and inviolable moral laws. One of its inferences is that individuals should act by that maxim, which can at the same time, be willed as a universal law, that is: "what if everybody did that?" Actions may be: inconsistent with duty, according to duty, or from duty and performed with pure intentions simply because it is the right thing to do (Kant, 1785).

According to Kant, actions should not acquiesce to consequentialism, that is, as a result of consequentialist thinking, as such reasoning is by rational autonomy, whereby actions are carried out according to hypothetical imperatives, i.e. what will result if an action is carried out. Kant insisted that acts should be carried on principle with full autonomy according to categorical imperatives, such that actions are carried out that are good in themselves and therefore morally worthy. Such decisions and actions occur regularly in ST (Barad and Robertson, 2000), and a simple example includes the ultimate refusal of Picard and his crew to contaminate a Borg drone who had regained individuality with a virus that could potentially decimate the entire Borg collective (Star Trek – Next Generation, "I Borg"), one of the UFP's most deadly opponents.

Kant also believed that national peace could only be achieved by a supranational "league of nations" (Kant, 1785) that would mediate internal international relations while defending itself against external threats, a structure exactly replicated by the UFP (Blackman and Utzinger, 2009).

The Prime Directive and Westphalian Peace

Starfleet's ethical underpinnings are evident in "the Prime Directive […]. No identification of self or mission. No interference with the social development of said planet. No references to space, or the fact that there are other worlds, or more advanced civilizations" (Star Trek – Original Series, "Bread and Circus"). Picard explains the reason for this, "The Prime Directive is not just a set of rules; it is a philosophy and a very correct one. History has proved again and again that whenever mankind interferes with a less developed civilization, no matter how well intentioned that interference may be, the results are invariably disastrous." (Star Trek – Next Generation, "Symbiosis").

Captain Janeway concurs, "The Prime Directive has many different functions, not the least of which is to protect us, to prevent us from allowing our emotions to overwhelm our judgement" (Star Trek – Voyager, "Caretaker").

The Prime Directive is compatible with a vital concept in political philosophy known as Westphalian sovereignty. The Peace of Westphalia (1648), which ended 80 years of European war, initiated the notion of the modern nation-state. Westphalian sovereignty incorporates three concepts: (1) the right of political self-determination, (2) the tenet of legal

equality between states, and (3) the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states (Gross, 1948).

The Prime Directive is particularly important in dealings with less advanced races, allowing them to progress at individual paces, unguided by any external interventions. This is succinctly summarised by Picard: "Who the hell are we to determine the next course of evolution for these people?" (Star Trek Movie, "Insurrection").

Nevertheless, throughout the various series, members of Starfleet are frequently faced with dilemmas that put them in unpleasant positions when having to uphold the Prime Directive and thereby withhold humanitarian aid and intervention (Eberl and Decker, 2008). Matters are further complicated when the UFP itself suborns its own directive, for example, when the UFP attempts the forced relocation of six hundred people called the "Ba'ku." Picard remonstrates with his ranking admiral, "We are betraying the principles upon which the Federation was founded. It's an attack upon its very soul. And it will destroy the Ba'ku just as cultures have been destroyed in every other forced relocation throughout history […] How many people does it take, Admiral, before it becomes wrong? A thousand? Fifty thousand? A million? How many people does it take, Admiral?" (Star Trek Movie, "Insurrection").

Regan's subjects-of-a-life and respect principle

In addition, Kantian ethics suggest that only rational beings have intrinsic worth, but we routinely attribute value, and therefore the right for respectful treatment, to humans who are not wholly rational, and this includes infants and the severely mentally impaired. We also extend respect, when possible, to animals, a philosophy espoused by the modern philosopher Tom Regan (1938-) who argues that life matters to the individual, whether human or otherwise, and for the sake of consistency, we should also respect non-human life. The UFP champions this attitude, with both rational and non-rational beings, earthly or alien, treated with Regan's "respect principle" as "subjects-of-a-life," never treated merely as means to the ends of others (Regan, 2004).

Platonism

Kirk, Spock and McCoy comprise a platonic troika closely modeled on classical Greek lines. Plato (c.427-c.348 BC) argued that when we repress irrational desires, we acquire the virtue of temperance. When our impulsive spirit is kept under leash, avoiding rash actions, we attain courage. And when our reason remains largely unaffected by everyday experiences, and we adhere to our ideals, we gain wisdom. When these three virtues are present, we attain a fourth virtue, that of justice, which describes the balanced individual. Thus, Captain Kirk, through his decision-making skills, represents spirit, reconciling the utilitarian, logical and unemotional arguments that Science Officer Spock, representing reason that he uses to counteract Dr. McCoy. McCoy, on the other hand, compellingly embodies compassion with arguments that deontologically argue in favor of the individual, irrespective of the consequences. In the *Original Series*, we therefore "regularly see the tensions between Spock (as reason) and McCoy (emotion) reconciled by Kirk (spirit)" (Barad and Robertson, 2000).

Plato also held that a utopian society would be led by guardians, an elite class trained from birth for the task of ruling with absolute control. The rest of society would be rigidly controlled, comprised of soldiers and the common masses wherein the ideal citizen works unerringly and unstintingly for the best of society with no regard for personal freedoms and

rights (Plato, 380 BC). This is not so in the UFP. However, the command crews in ST exhibit behavior that Plato believed leaders should exemplify in order to discourage corruption:

1. Possess few personal items, and this is manifestly so in ST ship crews.
2. Should not dine in luxury and should do so at a common table. This is also evident with meals taken in common rooms (such as "Ten Forward" in *The Next Generation*)
3. Should not own or even touch silver or gold, and indeed, in the ST future, currency and money are obsolete (Star Trek Movie, "Insurrection").
4. Live together as a family in one house, and a starship actually comprises a variably large but ultimately limited space.

This is in contrast with the Ferengi species who exhibit a number of topoi that signify primitiveness and satire current capitalist society. Their main signifier is avarice, and although the Federation tolerates them, they are viewed as unevolved and unenlightened. This is displayed in their first, face-to-face encounter with the Federation. With the *Enterprise* and an equivalent Ferengi ship trapped by an unknown civilization, the Ferengi captain insists on pursuing the most profitable course, and when the issue of mutual trust and cooperation is raised in order to save both ships, he balks "Ridiculous. How will we know you will not withhold information? […] Amusing, human. Trust each other? […] And what profit is in this?" For this reason, he is compared to a "Yankee trader […] who […] sail the galaxy in search of mercantile and territorial opportunity" (Star Trek – Next Generation, "The Last Outpost").

Aristotelian friendship

Aristotle's *Nichomachaen Ethics* muses, "Friendship is a thing most necessary to life, since without friends no one would choose to live, though possessed of all other advantages." Aristotle defined three levels of friendship: of utility — we are obliged to take care of those who take care of us; of pleasure — individuals who provide an almost natural delight when one is in their company, and of goodness — when one strives to help another to live the best possible life.

The latter best describes the abiding friendship and loyalty that is evidenced in ST. For example, when Picard exercises his privilege as ship's master and marries his first officer (Riker) to his ship's counselor (Troi), he orates, "Will Riker, you have been my trusted right arm for fifteen years. You have kept my course true and steady. …Deanna Troi, you've been my guide …and my conscience. You have helped me recognize the better parts of myself. You are my family. …And in best maritime tradition …I wish you both clear horizons. …My good friends, …make it so. … the bride and groom." (Star Trek Movie, "Nemesis").

Such friendship runs deep, even to the extent of risking all, such as when Spock risks execution, when he returns his severely disabled former Captain Pike to Talos so that he would be able to live out life in a relatively comfortable fantasy (Star Trek – Original Series, "The Menagerie").

Epicurus

Individuals in the UFP closely follow the beliefs of Epicurus (341-271 BC) whose teachings advocated the pursuit of happiness including the elimination of pain, both physical and mental, with the latter being considered the worse. A promiscuous or decadent lifestyle was not advised, as many of the bodily pleasures are transient with painful consequences.

Epicurus was a hedonist who taught that temperance and prudence are crucial, and wisdom is a virtue to be cultivated as this teaches us which pleasures to seek and which to avoid. He divided desires into three types: natural and necessary and therefore should be sought and quenched; natural and unnecessary such as sex, love and respect, which should be less sought; and unnatural and unnecessary which are better forgone as this expends excessive effort with poor return and possibly undesirable outcomes. Thus, Starfleet crews consistently seek sensible rest and recreation on planets or in holosuites.

Epicurus was not an atheist but he rejected the existence of Homeric anthropomorphic gods who interfere with human affairs. Thales of Miletus (c.624-c.546 BC) and Xenophanes of Colophon (c.570-c.475 BC) similarly rejected this concept since these gods evidently had all of humanity's flaws. This is reified, for example, in the Enterprise crew's rejection of the god Apollo, who turns out to be a long-lived alien being with superhuman powers (Star Trek – Original Series, "Who Mourns for Adonais").

These Greek philosophers conceptualized an early form of cultural relativism, a term coined by Alain Locke (1886-1954) to denote the anthropological principle that an individual's beliefs and activities are interpreted by others in terms of that individual's own culture (Locke 1944).

Existentialism in the UFP

Existentialism proposes that the starting point for the individual is a sense of disorientation and outright confusion in the face of an apparently meaningless, absurd or at best uncaring universe. The two series, *Deep Space 9* (DS9) and *Voyager* are both predicated on the broad concept of existentialism, the perception that philosophical thinking begins with the acting, feeling and thinking human subject.

This is apparent even on an individual level. For example, Garak, a former Cardassia secret agent reminisces with an ex-colleague and is told "you had quite a vicious streak in those days. […] You had a gift. I never met anyone else who relished a good interrogation as much as you did." But when he is asked to torture and extract information from a friend, he experiences significant difficulty. His victim taunts him "what's the matter […]? You don't look very happy. Aren't you enjoying yourself?" Garak pleads with his victim, "There's no pleasure in this for me, […] I assure you. I am simply doing my job […] Just tell me what I need to know and this will end. […] You have information that I need. Information that it's my duty to extract from you. It's not personal. […] Talk to me. Tell me something. Anything! Lie if you have to, but say it now. Please. […] As soon as this is all over, I promise I'll take you back." And indeed, at the first excuse, he terminates the interrogation (Star Trek – DS9, "The Die is Cast").

Kierkegaard in DS9

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is regarded as the father of existentialism. He maintained that the responsibility of searching for and giving meaning to one's life is solely that of the individual since the meaning of life cannot be determined by reasoning processes. Moreover, this search is done in the face of legions of existential impediments that include life's absurdities, despair, angst, alienation and simple boredom. To Kierkegaard, ethics is only a prelude to religious belief, the second of three stages of existence: an aesthetic level of the simple enjoyment of life; an ethical level motivated by existential despair, wherein the code

of one's conduct is formulated through reason; and a religious level that requires a true leap of faith since reason can only ever undermine faith, and never justify it.

All of these levels are seen in the principal protagonist of DS9, Benjamin Sisko. The very first episode of DS9 commences with the arrival of Starfleet Commander Sisko at space station Deep Space Nine, which orbits the extrasolar planet Bajor. This command is accepted three years after the death of his beloved wife, and he immediately and accidentally discovers the first known stable Einstein-Rosen bridge (wormhole) a valuable shortcut that crosses seventy thousand light years right across the galaxy. The wormhole is inhabited by intelligent, non-corporeal beings who do not experience linear time and who therefore have almost godlike powers. To the deeply religious Bajorans, the aliens are their rediscovered gods, known as the Prophets, and the wormhole is the Prophets' dwelling place, the long-prophesied "Celestial Temple." Sisko is hailed by the Bajorans as the Emissary of the Prophets, their speaker.

This provides the basis for all of DS9. Specifically, Sisko has a wife and son. The former dies and Sisko moves on to Existential despair at the loss of his wife and love, and considers his role as the emissary with skepticism and open discomfort. He considers the wormhole inhabitants to be simple aliens and attempts to evade any obligations that may have religious connotations. He also attempts to ignore the enigmatic visions that the aliens send him, which is their only way of communicating with him. Over the course of the series, he begins to accept the role of emissary but keeps this separate from his command position.

However, the experience of various crises leads him to openly embrace his role as emissary, choosing to act in the absence of reason and accepting the risks that accrue with such actions. Sisko also accepts the visions that the prophets send to him and trust them implicitly, to Starfleet's discomfort (Barad and Robertson, 2000).

In Sisko's own words, "You might say it came to me in a vision […] I know it's hard to understand, but it really was a vision. For the past few days, I've had these moments of insight, flashes of understanding. I can't go back […] I just need a little more time […] for answers. There's clarity here. I wish I could explain it better, but I can't." (Star Trek – DS9, "Rapture")

In this way, through a Kierkegaardian leap of faith, Sisko experiences a transition from agnosticism to a deeply held, almost theistic belief.

Sartre in Voyager

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) claimed that existence precedes essence, an existentialist belief meaning that man is initially purposeless, and in reaction to life's experiences, seeks to give meaning to life. This is the converse view to Aristotle who believed that man was created with a purpose, and that fulfillment could be found in striving to achieve that purpose. Existentialism does not preclude theistic beliefs as such convictions are personal choices but this is only one of the choices that man must make throughout life. Any resulting consequences simply do not exempt one from making a particular choice and we are thus ultimately responsible for everything that we do. Man is therefore the sum of his actions, rejecting deterministic excuses for any actions (Sartre 1943).

Existentialist philosophy refers to authentic behavior, that is, the degree to which one is true in action to one's nature, spirit, personality and character in the face of opposing external pressures and influences. Furthermore, there can be no excuses or any deferral of responsibility to divine beings, to others or even to human nature. Moreover, refusing to take a decision is also, in itself, a decision with its own outcomes. Sartrean angst arises from the weight of responsibility for our choices, a sense of abandonment due to the revelation that God does not necessarily exist and therefore cannot guide, and a sense of despair in that we must act without hope in external intervention by providence. The positive aspect is that man's destiny is in his own hands. The entire Voyager series is founded on a sense of Sartrean angst. The starship Voyager is almost instantaneously displaced 70,000 light-years away from Earth by alien technology, and the return journey would require at least 75 years by Voyager's conventional warp drive. Captain Janeway has two options: to investigate and utilize the exotic transportation device and return the ship back to Earth. But this would leave the device in the hands of another set of unscrupulous aliens who would destroy a third set of innocent aliens; or to destroy the device as per Kantian Categorical Imperative and condemn her 200 crew to attempt the long journey back to Earth. Janeway acts as a platonic guardian, seizes the second option (Star Trek – Voyager, "Caretaker"), and spends the rest of the series in angst, wondering whether she made the right choice.

This is particularly evident in the episode "Night" (Livingston) when Voyager enters a starless area of space that is 2,500 light years across, a "void" that will take two years to cross. The crew are unhappy, bored and tense and Janeway reflects on her decision, isolating herself away from the crew in her darkened quarters. She also vocalizes her guilt and despair, "I almost long for the days when we were under constant attack. No time to stop and think about how we got stranded in the Delta quadrant. How did we end up here? […] I decided to stay. I made that choice for everyone […] I made an error in judgment […]. It was short-sighted and it was selfish, and now all of us are paying for my mistake." During the episode, a "Malon" alien offers Janeway a rapid shortcut out of the void in exchange for a "night alien" stowaway of a different species on Voyager. The Malon is contaminating the latter alien's planet with radioactive waste. Janeway has an option to destroy the shortcut, save the night aliens and lose the two-year shortcut across the void. She decides to send Voyager through the shortcut and stay behind to destroy the shortcut. However, the crew flatly refuse and this leads her to finally understand that her crew does not harbor any resentment or blame her in any way for the initial decision that strands them so far away from home since this was the right thing to do. Fortunately, a backup plan allows the complete crew to traverse the shortcut while simultaneously causing its destruction.

Table 1 summarizes key philosophical concepts and episodes wherein said concepts are paramount.

Philosophical Concept	Episode
Anthropocentrism	Star Trek - Next Generation, "The Chase"
Cartesian mind-body dualism	Star Trek Movie, "Star Trek III: The Search for Spock"
Socratic quest for knowledge	Opening statement of all series except Enterprise
Kantian deontology	Star Trek - Next Generation, "I Borg"
Westphalian Peace	Star Trek - Original Series, "Bread and Circus"
	Star Trek - Next Generation, "Symbiosis"
	StarTrek - Voyager, "Caretaker"
	Star Trek Movie, "Insurrection"
Platonic Republic	Star Trek Movie, "Insurrection"
Aristotlean Nichomachaen Ethics	Star Trek Movie, "Nemesis"
	Star Trek - Original Series, "The Menagerie"
Epicurean rejection of anthropomorphic gods	Star Trek - Original Series, "Who Mourns for Adonais"
Kierkegaardian existentialism	Star Trek - DS9, "Rapture"
Sartrean existentialism	Star Trek - Voyager, "Caretaker"
	Star Trek - Voyager, "Night"
Humanism	Star Trek - Original Series, "Return to Tomorrow"
Antropic Principle	Star Trek - Next Generation, "Where Silence has Lease"
Embracing diversity	Star Trek - Original Series, "Is There in Truth No Beauty"
	Star Trek - Next Generation, "Q Who"

Discussion

Science, SF and philosophy are characterized by the same fundamental purpose: that of exploration, and this permits readers to contemplate issues that deal not only with space travel, but also with those that look inward and examine the human condition.

The creators and writers of ST certainly made no deliberate effort to base any ST series on any single ethical system. Indeed, the franchise comprises a vast anthology of stories and was not designed to form a cohesive philosophical or ethical treatise. However, philosophical topoi are deeply intertwined in ST, albeit concealed by the novi posited within each episode. The UFP strongly encourages deontological topoi of loyalty, courage, leadership and team effort, unconsciously evoking a plethora of thinkers, most notably Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and Kant. ST characters care about the consequences of their actions, invoking existentialist concepts as expounded by Kierkegaard and Sartre. It is for all of these reasons that the UFP are the good guys, with the right stuff, with which readers readily identify.

For example, as Roberts and Ross (1995) state, "Who are familiar with the character Captain Picard, already know him to be the leader that we all wish we worked for, whose leadership gives us confidence and comfort in meeting the challenges we face each and every day, and the type of leader that we should strive to become.

Humanism is the principal ideology that shines through in the UFP, a secular, non-theistic attitude that discards the supernatural and all religious dogmas, replacing them with rationalism, such that even the individual's essence, the very soul, is somehow quantifiable and can be captured and stored in a material receptacle (Star Trek – Original Series, "Return to Tomorrow"), potentially permitting a limited continuation of existence after death. Any god-like beings that the UFP encounters are explained away as aliens or beings evolved beyond the capabilities of mere humanity. In this way, mysteries in ST become merely unsolved scientific challenges, which are tackled through the twin agencies of science and technology, acceding to the scientific method. Creationism is conspicuous by its absence, and even humanity along with all of the other humanoid species encountered in ST, are shown to have been seeded by aliens. The inexplicit assumption is that any extant supreme being is impalpable and intangible, and therefore irrelevant. Indeed, religious practices in the UFP seem to promote meditation and self-actualization and not theistic worship.

However, this extreme attitude is doubted by important characters in ST, such as Picard, who alludes to the antropic principle, the concept that the universe must be compatible with the intelligent and conscious life that observes it, "Considering the marvelous complexity of our universe, its clockwork perfection, its balances of this against that, […] I believe that our existence must be more […] That what we are goes beyond Euclidian and other practical measuring systems and that our existence is part of a reality beyond what we understand now as reality." (Star Trek – Next Generation, "Where Silence has Lease").

The UFP also promotes ethics and social justice while simultaneously advocating open societies with participatory democracies, empathy and creativity. Indeed, this society could almost embrace the Wiccan Rede, a statement that encapsulates the key moral systems of witchcraft-based faiths: "An it harm none, do as thou wilt." Thus, rest, recreation and personal amusement are actively encouraged as long as they do not pose physical or mental risky to one's self or to others.

The Federation is also imbued with the "IDIC" attitude, embracing infinite diversity in infinite combinations (Star Trek – Original Series, "Is There in Truth No Beauty"), a crucial adaptation, as the universe is "wondrous, with treasures to satiate desires both subtle and gross; […] it's not for the timid" (Star Trek – Next Generation, "Q Who"). Thus, aliens and their differences are welcome.

Thus, many episodes become morality plays set against the exotic backdrop of outer space while providing entertainment through action, adventure and conflict, acceding to viewers' disdain with petty nationalism and other tired old ways of thinking. ST rewards audiences by encouraging them to believe that they, as proxies and voyeurs of a future humanity, will mature and attain sufficient wisdom that will not only permit tolerance of new technologies and diversity, but also delight in these novi as central characters in the UFP do.

Filmography

Aroeste, Jean Lisette (Writer) & Senensky, Ralph (Director). (October 1968). Is There in Truth
No Beauty? [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Original Series*.
Hollywood: Paramount.
Bennett, Harve (Producer), & Nimoy, Leonard (Director). (June 1984). *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock.*USA: Paramount.
Berman, Rick (Producer), & Baird, Stuart (Director). (December 2002). *Star Trek: Nemesis.*USA: Paramount.
Berman, Rick (Producer), & Frakes, Jonathan (Director). (December 1998). *Star Trek: Insurrection.* USA: Paramount.
Berman, Rick and Hornstein, Marty and Lauritson, Peter (Producers), & Frakes, Jonathan (Director). (November 1986). *Star Trek: First Contact.*USA: Paramount.
Braga, Brannon and Menosky, Joe (Writers), & Kolbe, Winrich (Director). (October 1998). Night [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Voyager*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Cronin, Lee (Writer), & Taylor, Jud (Director). (January 1969). Let That Be Your Last Battlefield [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Original Series*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Echevarria, René (Writer), & Robert, Lederman (Director). (May 1992). I Borg [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Next Generation*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Erwin, Lee and Sohl, Jerry (Writers), & Wallerstein, Herb (Director). (January 1969). Whom Gods Destroy [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Original Series*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Hurley, Maurice (Writer), & Bowman, Rob (Director). (May 1989). Q Who [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Next Generation*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Kingsbridge, John (Writer), & Senensky, Ralph (Director). (February 1968). Return to Tomorrow [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Original Series*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Krzemien, Richard (Writer), & Colla, Richard (Director). (October 1987). The Last Outpost [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Next Generation*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Lewin, Robert (Writer), & Phelps, Win (Director). (April 1988). Symbiosis [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Next Generation*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Moore, Ronald D. (Writer), & Livingston, David (Director). (May 1995). The Die is Cast [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Deep Space 9*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Moore, Ronald D. and Menosky, Joe (Writers), & Frakes, Jonathan (Director). (April 1993). The Chase [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Next Generation*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Piller, Michael and Taylor, Jeri (Writers), & Livingston, David (Director). (January 1995). Caretaker [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Voyager*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Ralston, Gilbert (Writer), & Daniels, Marc (Director). (September 1967). Who Mourns for Adonais [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Original Series*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Roddenberry, Gene and Coon, Gene L. (Writers), & Senensky, Ralph (Director). (March 1968). Bread and Circuses [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Original Series*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Roddenberry, Gene (Writer), & Daniels, Marc (Director). (November 1966). The Menagerie [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Original Series*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Shearer, Hannah Louise (Writer), & Kolbe, Winrich (Director). (May 1989). Pen Pals [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Next Generation*. Hollywood: Paramount.
Sowards, Jack B. (Writer), & Kolbe, Winrich (Director). (November 1988). Where Silence has Lease [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Next Generation*. Hollywood: Paramount.

Strom L.J. (Writer), & West, Jonathan (Director). (December 1996). Rapture [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Deep Space Nine*. Hollywood: Paramount.

Taylor, Jeri (Writer), & Frakes, Jonathan (Director). (April 1991). The Drumhead [Television series episode]. In, *Star Trek Next Generation*. Hollywood: Paramount.

Bibliography

Aikin, W. E. (1977) *Technocracy and the American Dream: The Technocracy Movement 1900-1941.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Alexander, D. (1991) "The Roddenberry Interview". *The Humanist, 51*(2), 5–30, 38.

Aristotle. (1955) *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nichomachaen Ethics*. (J. K. Thomson trans). New York: Viking.

Barad, J and E. Robertson. (2000) *The Ethics of Star Trek*. New York: HarperCollins.

Blackman, R. H. and J. M. Utzinger. (2009) "A Post-Roddenberry Star Trek." *The Cresset*, *73*(1), 36-39.

Eberl J. T. and K. S. Decker. (2008) *Star Trek and Philosophy*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co.

Galilei, Galileo. (1623) *The Assayer*.

Grech, V. (2011). *Infertility in Science Fiction*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Malta, Malta.

Grech, V. (2011) "The Trick of Hard SF is to Minimize Cheating Not Just Disguise It With Fancy Footwork: The Transporter in Star Trek: Can It Work?" *Foundation 111*(1), 52-67.

Gross, L. (1948) "The Peace of Westphalia." *The American Journal of International Law 42*(1), 20–41.

Hume, D. (1748). "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding." In *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*. 1748.

Iuvenalis, Decimus Iunius (100AD). *Satire*. VI, lines 347–8.

Kant, Immanuel. (1785). *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Kant, Immanuel (1963). *On History*. In L. White Beck (Ed.). Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing.

Kapell, MW. (2010). *Star Trek as Myth. Essays on Symbol and Archetype at the Final Frontier.* London: McFarland & Company, Inc.

Kierkegaard S. (1843). *Either/Or*. Kjobenhavn: C.A. Reitzel.

Kierkegaard, S. (1967). *Journals*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lé vi-Strauss, C. (1955). "The Structural Study of Myth." *Journal of American Folklore 68*(270), 428–444.

Locke, A. (1944). "Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace." In *Approaches to World Peace.*

L. Bryson, L. Finfelstein, and R. M. MacIver (Eds). New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944. Pp. 609–618

Locke, J. (1690). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. London: Tho. Basset.

Nietzsche, F. (1882)"The Madman." *The Gay Science.* Chemnitz, Verlag.

Plato. *The Republic*. 380 BC.

Regan, T. (2004). *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Roberts W and B. Ross. (1995). *Make It So: Leadership Lessons from Star Trek, The Next Generation.*New York: Pocket Books.

Sartre, JP. (1943). *Being and Nothingness*. Paris: Librairie Gallimard.

Sartre, JP. (1946). *Existentialism and Humanism*. Paris: Editions Nagel.

"Star Trek began as one of the TV productions in town where actors, as fellow professionals, were not only listened to but actually invited to bring their script and series comments to the production office. When small problems and pettiness begins to happen as it happens on all shows, I instructed our people that it should be overlooked where possible because we should all understand the enormous physical and emotional task of your job....The result of Gene Roddenberry's policy of happy partnership? He uses the Star Trek future as a launching pad to discuss the forefront of modern physics today. From Newton to Hawking, from Einstein to Feynman, from Kirk to Picard, Krauss leads you on a voyage to the world of physics as we now know it and as it might one day be. Wouldn't it be great fun to look back at the carefully created philosophical constraints that guide all Federation behavior, except this time do so through the eyes of a trained philosopher? Well, fasten your seat belts and hang on tight as The Metaphysics of Star Trek takes you on a fascinating journey through what Trekkers have rightfully called "the greatest thirty-year thought experiment ever undertaken." The Metaphysics of Star Trek is sure to become a treasured addition to any fan's Star Trek library.