



Louis C.K. and Philosophy

You Don't Get to Be Bored

Edited by Mark Ralkowski

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Edited by
MARK RALKOWSKI



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VII

**Take Some
Responsibility
for the
Shitty Words
You Want
to Say**

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The Playful Thought Experiments of Louis C.K.

CHRIS A. KRAMER

If you don't think it's great being white you're an asshole!

—Louis C.K.

In what world is it possible that the assholes Louis C.K. is addressing would not only continue listening to and *enjoying* his apparent verbal violence directed at them, but also accept his accusation as true? In what world could this lead to attitude change among the “assholes” in the audience?

That world is this one—the real world. In much of Louis's humor, he creates a fictional *joke-world*, but one in which he intends to convey something as actually being true in the real world. So, what he's saying is, in one sense, *serious*. As a comedian, he is of course being playful in his performance, because he truly intends to get people to laugh, but he also wants them to follow him to his punchline or “conclusion.”

Louis is using a persuasive device that is a ready-to-hand weapon in the philosopher's arsenal (and the scientist's too): the thought experiment. This is a tool for testing ideas in the workshop of our minds, sometimes to bring to our attention an important concept, or to convince us that something is true. Usually, a thought experiment is a fantastic account that “hooks” us in a way that straightforward arguments rarely do, and induces us to shift perspectives and see what has always been right beneath our noses but we have failed to notice, often because we wished not to.