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Breaking Bad and Philosophy: Badder Living through Chemistry (Popular Culture and Philosophy)

By Robert Arp, David R. Koepsell

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Breaking Bad, hailed by Stephen King, Chuck Klosterman, and many others as the best of all TV dramas, tells the story of a man whose life changes because of the medical death sentence of an advanced cancer diagnosis. The show depicts his metamorphosis from inoffensive chemistry teacher to feared drug lord and remorseless killer. Driven at first by the desire to save his family from destitution, he risks losing his family altogether because of his new life of crime.

In defiance of the tradition that viewers demand a TV character who never changes, *Breaking Bad* is all about the process of change, with each scene carrying forward the morphing of Walter White into the terrible Heisenberg.

Can a person be transformed as the result of a few key life choices? Does everyone have the potential to be a ruthless criminal? How will we respond to the knowledge that we will be dead in six months? Is human life subject to laws as remorseless as chemical equations? When does injustice validate brutal retaliation? Why are drug addicts unsuitable for operating the illegal drug business? How can TV viewers remain loyal to a series where the hero becomes the villain? Does Heisenberg's Principle of Uncertainty rule our destinies?

In *Breaking Bad and Philosophy*, a hand-picked squad of professional thinkers investigate the crimes of Walter White, showing how this story relates to the major themes of philosophy and the major life decisions facing all of us.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

David R. Koepsell is Associate Professor of Philosophy, Values and Technology Section, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands. He is the author of numerous books, including *Who Owns You? The Corporate Gold Rush to Patent Your Genes* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) and *Science and Ethics* (Prometheus, 2007).

Robert Arp is a philosopher with a doctorate from Saint Louis University. He is the co-author with Jamie Watson of *What's Good on TV: Understanding Ethics through Television* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) and *Philosophy DeMYSTiFied* (McGraw-Hill, 2011). He is co-editor with Mark White of *Batman and Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008). He is author of *Scenario Visualization* (MIT Press, 2008) and author or editor of many other works.

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