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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part I
Ancient Philosophy and Faith: From Athens to Jerusalem

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COURSE GUIDE

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**Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part I**

**Ancient Philosophy and Faith: From Athens to Jerusalem**

**Scope:** These twelve lectures introduce the student to some of the most important concepts, topics, and problems that have shaped the development of the Western philosophical tradition from ancient Greece to the present. The first lecture outlines these concepts and problems, and it distinguishes between the dual philosophical traditions identified with Athens and Jerusalem. Lectures Two through Four deal with the “Jerusalem tradition,” as contained in the sacred scriptures of Judaism and Christianity. Next we consider the origins of rational scientific speculation with the Presocratic philosophers, and we examine in-depth Plato’s famous dialogue about right conduct and governance, *The Republic*. Lectures Nine and Ten examine the metaphysical and political teachings of Plato’s pupil Aristotle, focusing on Aristotle’s critique of his teacher’s realism—i.e., Plato’s conviction that essences have real existence independent of individual sensible objects. In Lecture Eleven we examine the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius as an offshoot of Socratic thought, and in Lecture Twelve we study St. Augustine’s use of Platonic concepts to elucidate the nature of triune God and describe the ultimate purpose of human existence.
Lecture One
Introduction to the Problems and Scope of Philosophy

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: We begin this introductory lecture by defining the key philosophical concepts and topics that will appear throughout this series of lectures. The fundamental philosophical questions that shape this series include the nature of being (i.e., what exists, and in what respects does it exist?); the problem of knowledge (i.e., how do we know what we think that we know?); and problems of ethical conduct and governance. In reference to the question of "what exists?", we will contrast the naturalistic or "one-world" answer offered by the sophists and pre-Socratic metaphysicians with the "two worlds" or "nature-plus" answers offered by Plato and the Judeo-Christian tradition. We will also assess the complementarity in Western thought of the traditions associated with Athens and Jerusalem. Finally, we will consider the contribution of the ancient Greek thinkers to Western civilization, especially regarding scientific and technological development.

Outline

I. This lecture series will focus on the history of Western thought from its origins to the present.
   A. The word "philosophy" comes from Greek words which signify the love of wisdom.
   B. We will use the following key philosophical concepts in these lectures:
      1. Physics—the "theory of nature"; the study of the material world of space and time.
      2. Metaphysics—"above or beyond nature"; the study of things independent of space and time (e.g., pure ideas and spiritual essences).
      3. Ontology—"speech about beings"; the study of the kind of existence that a thing has.
      4. Logic—a system of rules for deriving true inferences.
      5. Epistemology—"speech about knowledge"; the study of what human beings can know, and what kinds of knowledge they can possess.
   C. We will examine the following topics:
      1. Aesthetics—i.e., the reasoned and rigorous examination of beauty and in what beauty consists.
      2. Ethics—the study of moral obligation, which is concerned with the will, judgment, and the evaluation of human behavior. Ethics involves the study of the good at the individual level.
      3. Politics—classical political philosophers drew an analogy between the city and the individual, and thus they perceived a close connection between politics and ethics. Politics involves the study of the good at the social level.

II. What distinguishes "nature" from "nature plus," or ontological naturalism from metaphysical ontology?
   A. The Greek intellectual tradition offers two differing approaches to the question, "what is?"
      1. The "one world" approach, characteristic of the sophists and pre-Socratic physicists, holds that the world is essentially natural. All that exists are the objects of sense perception: atoms and void.
      2. The "two worlds" approach, typified by Plato, holds that there also exists a second realm of metaphysical abstractions that transcends space and time.
   B. In the Western tradition, Athens represents secular knowledge of a purely natural ontology, while Jerusalem represents divine revelation and a "nature plus" metaphysical ontology.

III. Athens and Jerusalem represent distinct but intertwining strands in the braid of Western philosophy.
   A. Jerusalem provides the mythical component of the Western philosophical tradition, while Athens provides the rational element.
   B. Athens and Jerusalem understand logos in very different terms.
      1. Athens views logos as free, unfettered human reason and discourse, without any necessary connection to myth.
      2. Jerusalem understands logos as the Word, the divine and authoritative revelation of God.
   C. Athens and Jerusalem use myth in different ways to represent the archetypical stance of each tradition toward being.
      1. Mythos or "story" refers in this context to universally applicable stories that convey fundamental moral truths, although in an indirect and ambiguous fashion.
      2. For Athens, Prometheus provides the archetype of heroism. He represents defiance of the gods, viewed as anthropomorphized forces of nature. Prometheus embodies the desire to be more than what one is by nature—i.e., to be more than human.
      3. For Jerusalem, Job provides the archetype of faith. He represents resignation to the will of God, viewed as the inscrutable Creator. The story of Job emphasizes the need for faith and for submission to God's will.
   D. Much of the Western intellectual tradition is concerned with attempting to reconcile Jerusalem with Athens.
IV. The traditions represented by Athens and Jerusalem are not mutually exclusive.

A. The human psyche or soul is composed of heterogeneous rational and emotional elements which derive different sorts of satisfaction from different philosophical texts.

B. Thinkers with differing assumptions and conclusions offer differing kinds of edifying discourses.

C. Jerusalem and Athens—mythos and logos—form a kind of braid in Western thought, like the snakes of the caduceus.

V. The ancient Greek philosophers made essential contributions to the rise and flourishing of Western civilization.

A. The pre-Socratic search for secular physical knowledge led ultimately to the modern scientific revolution.

B. The development of Newtonian physics and its application to nature made possible the technology of the industrial revolution.

C. Technology gave the West unprecedented power over nature and other human beings as well.

D. Modern physics was a necessary condition for the rise of the West to global domination during the last five centuries.

E. A vast increase in wealth and global changes in society resulted from the rise of modern science. Social science and the rise of modern political theory are also consequences of physics.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the difference between the “one world” and “two worlds” traditions? Is this distinction equivalent to that between “Athens” and “Jerusalem”?

2. How do Job and Prometheus exemplify the traditions of Jerusalem and Athens, respectively?

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:


Lecture Two
Introduction to the Old Testament

Dr. Robert Oden, Ph.D.

Scope: We examine first the “nature-plus” tradition in Western thought associated with Jerusalem. This lecture will review briefly the political and religious context in which the Jewish religion and the Hebrew Bible emerged, and the various stages of development through which they passed. The Hebrew Bible encompasses an extraordinary number of themes, events, and ideas. It offers an account of the creation of the universe and describes the relationship between man and nature, a theodicy of evil in a monotheistic universe, and a history of the ancient Jewish people. This lecture will conclude with a brief discussion of the authorship, dating, and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and a capsule history of ancient Israel.

Outline

I. The development of the Jewish religion was shaped by the political and religious context of the ancient Near East.
   A. Israel was a minor power surrounded by the great powers of Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria.
   B. Much of the Israelite religion was derivative from the religions of these neighboring states.
   C. Poetic techniques of the Phoenicians allow us to date Biblical texts.

II. The religion of Israel and the Hebrew Bible passed through several stages of historical development.
   A. An entity called Israel began to emerge during the Tribal League period, although tribal loyalties still predominated.
   B. Israel was ruled by kings during the Monarchy period.
   C. Israel’s “Epic” consists of the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Numbers.
      1. The Book of Exodus is the heart of the Old Testament.
      2. The role of the prophets in the religion of Israel was to condemn breaches of the Covenant and to exhort the people to behave ethically.
   D. The people of Israel responded in various ways to their exile from the Land.
   E. The religion of Israel was reconstructed and transformed following the exile.

III. What is the Old Testament (i.e., the Hebrew Bible)?
   A. The Old Testament is a collection of once-independent documents written by many hands over a thousand-year span of time (c. 1200 BCE to c 200 BCE).
   B. Accurate dating of the individual documents is essential if we are to know when, by whom, and why something was written.
   C. What did the religion of Israel mean to the people who experienced it?
   D. The growth of the Old Testament is illustrated by the two varying accounts of the Epic in Deuteronomy 26:5-9 and Nehemiah 9:6-37.

IV. The following is an outline history of Israel.
   A. During the Patriarchal Period (c.1750-1400 BCE), the Israelites followed a semi-nomadic way of life, wandering from Mesopotamia to Canaan and Egypt.
   B. There followed the period of exodus from Egypt and conquest of the land of Canaan (1300-1200 BCE).
   C. During the period of the Tribal League/Judges (1200-1022 BCE), Israel was united but had no king.
   D. Israel was united under one king between 1022 and 922 BCE. Its first three kings were Saul, David, and Solomon.
   E. Formerly united, Israel was divided in two between 922 and 722 BCE. The southern kingdom was called Judah and the northern kingdom was called Israel or Ephraim.
   F. The period of exile began in 587/586 BCE.

Essential Reading:
The Holy Bible: Genesis, Exodus, and Isaiah 40-55.

Supplementary Reading:
Questions to Consider:

1. How does the account of the Jewish "Epic" contained in Deuteronomy differ from that in Nehemiah? What have scripture scholars learned from the differences between these two accounts?

2. Describe the impact of the Babylonian exile upon the development of the religion of Israel.

Lecture Three

The New Testament: The Gospels of Mark and Matthew

Elizabeth McNamer, Ph.D.

Scope: The New Testament is the sacred text of Christianity. It details the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, describing his many miraculous deeds and his doctrines of faith and love. The New Testament consists of 27 books, of which the first three—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—are called the synoptic Gospels. These three Gospels describe in detail the life and teachings of Jesus. This lecture will examine the meaning, purposes, composition, and themes of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.

Outline

I. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the synoptic Gospels.
   A. All the Gospels attempt to tell who Jesus is.
   B. The word "Gospel" means "good news," and "evangelist" means "one who spreads the good news." The Gospel as a literary narrative seems to have been invented by Mark. Luke and Matthew are believed to have used Mark's gospel as a source.
   C. The Gospels were written in the post-Apostolic age to preserve the stories about Jesus that had been circulating orally (although other purported sources such as "Q" and the "sayings of the Lord" written by Matthew may have been written down).

II. The composition and themes of Mark's Gospel.
   A. The identity of Mark is not known. He may have been a follower and interpreter of Peter, or the John Mark of Acts 12:12 and 25. Some have suggested that Mark may have been the young man in the garden, described in Mark 14:51.
   B. Mark's Gospel dates from c. 70 C.E. Some scholars date it to c. 63 CE, since it alludes to persecutions that occurred in the early 60s CE.
   C. The Gospel is addressed to Christians (probably Gentiles) who were being persecuted in Rome. Its purpose is to give these Christians encouragement and a fuller explanation of Jesus.
   D. The Gospel's main theme is that Jesus is the expected Messiah of the Jews and the Son of God, and that he is a suffering Messiah.
      1. As described by Mark, Jesus knows that he must suffer and does not relish the prospect. He seeks to hide his messiahship.
      2. Mark's Jesus is misunderstood, rejected, persecuted, unjustly condemned, and executed. He is also authoritative and prevails over evil by the faithful, loving way in which he endures suffering and apparent failure.
3. Mark's Jesus is constantly on the move and intent upon spreading his message.

III. The composition and themes of Matthew's Gospel.

A. The composition, dating, and sources of Matthew's Gospel.
1. The author of Matthew's Gospel was probably a second- or third-generation Christian and not an eyewitness to the events portrayed. It is unlikely that he was an apostle, although he may have used the purported "Sayings of the Lord," written by the apostle Matthew, as a source.
2. Matthew's Gospel is dated in the 80s.
3. Its sources were probably Mark's Gospel, his own particular source ("M"), and a source in common with Luke (the "Q" source).

B. Matthew's Gospel was written largely for Jewish Christians who were ostracized by other Jews and who were having second thoughts about Christianity. Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed by the Romans under Titus. Judaism was taking a new direction under the leadership of the Pharisees at Jamnia.

C. The major themes of Matthew's Gospel are that Jesus is the fulfillment of Jewish expectations, and that the Good News must now be offered more earnestly to all Gentiles.
1. "Messiah" means "the anointed one." Jesus combines the anointed offices of king, priest, and prophet.
2. Matthew's Gospel portrays the Gentiles in a more positive light than it does the Pharisees.
3. Matthew presents Jesus as fully rooted in Judaism. Matthew quotes extensively from the Old Testament and he presents a Jesus who reenacts the Jewish experience in his own life. Jesus' genealogy is traced back to Abraham. Jesus is a great teacher in the line of Moses, but one who redefines the law as an internal attitude.

Essential Reading:
The Holy Bible: The Gospels According to Matthew and Mark

Supplementary Reading:


Lecture Four
The New Testament: The World of Paul

Elizabeth McNamer, Ph.D.

Scope: Christianity was founded upon the teachings of Jesus Christ. Like Socrates, however, Jesus never wrote down his teachings. We know Christ's preachings only through the dedicated work of his disciples, the most important of whom was St. Paul. Though he never met Christ, he nevertheless became the premier proselytizer (teacher) of Christianity. Almost half of the books of the New Testament are attributed to St. Paul. This lecture will review the ancient Near East religious context from which Christianity emerged, and it will review the life, ministry, and teachings of St. Paul.

Outline

I. Almost half of the New Testament's 27 books are attributed to Paul or his followers. Paul carried the Gospel to the Roman world.

   A. The Roman Empire stretched from the Atlantic to Syria, and from England to upper Egypt. It was effectively governed and administered. The culture was predominantly Greek.

   B. Greek philosophies, especially Epicureanism and Stoicism, were popular among intellectuals.

   C. Christianity emerged from a diverse religious context.
      1. The official religion of the Roman empire was the worship of the Capitoline gods.
      2. Mystery cults from Greece, Persia, and Egypt had many adherents. These cults stressed resurrection and an afterlife.
      3. All Jews believed in one God—Adonai—and accepted the Torah. Jewish belief in an afterlife arose at the time of the Maccabean revolt.
      4. Many Romans were attracted to Judaism because of its moral content.

II. Paul's life and thought can be reconstructed from two sources that do not always correspond: the Pauline letters (the primary source) and the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke towards the end of the first century C.E. Acts is a less reliable source than the letters.

   A. Paul was born a Hellenistic Jew and a Roman citizen.

   B. He received his education in the law in Jerusalem from Gamaliel. He studied in the Pharisaic school of Hillel (the less strict of the two Pharisaic schools).

   C. He began his career "steeped in the tradition of his ancestors," and he persecuted those who were a threat to that tradition.

   D. The Damascus experience changed his life. He encountered the risen Christ and became convinced that he was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles.

III. Paul's travels carried him to major cities in the Empire.

   A. He established communities of Christians (of both Jewish and Gentile origin) and nurtured them by means of his letters.

   B. His first letter was probably sent to the Thessalonians about sixteen years after his conversion.

   C. His last letter was probably written in Rome, where he died in 63. These letters are the earliest extant written theology in the Church.

   D. His letters generally addressed pastoral concerns.

IV. In accomplishing his mission to the Gentiles, Paul argued against the necessity of circumcision and lesser demands of the Mosaic Law.

   A. The Pharisees had "put a fence around the law," extending it far beyond what was contained in Scripture. As a result, it was very hard for Jews to observe the law fully.

   B. Paul shifted the focus from punctilious observance of the Mosaic Law to the centrality of faith in Jesus Christ, provided it is accompanied by adherence to the law of Christian love.

   C. He substituted baptism for circumcision and connected it with the death and resurrection of Jesus.

   D. Paul did not abandon his Jewishness but saw Jesus as its perfect fulfillment and replacement.

   E. Christianity was still considered to be a sect within Judaism during Paul's lifetime.

V. Paul's main accomplishments were his adaptation of Jewish theology to a Gentile audience and his establishment of communities out of which Christianity emerged.

Essential Reading:
The New Testament: Romans, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Colossians, Galatians, Titus, Philemon

Supplementary Reading:
Lecture Five
The Presocratics: Ionian Speculation and Eleatic Metaphysics
Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: The Presocratics were Greek philosophers of nature who lived during the two centuries prior to Socrates. Although they disagreed about what constituted the fundamental *Urstuff* of the universe and about the nature of existence and change, they were united in their rejection of mythical explanations, their interest in mechanistic questions of “what” and “how,” and their reliance on logic. This lecture examines the opinions and analytical methods of leading Presocratic thinkers and schools, including the Milesian (or Ionian) school of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes; Heraclitus of Ephesus; the Pythagoreans; the Eleatic metaphysicians (Parmenides and Zeno); and the Atomists (Democritus and Leucippus).

Outline

I. Introduction to the Presocratics.
   A. The Greek Presocratic period was an epoch of philosophy running from sixth century BCE to the time of Socrates—hence the expression “Presocratic.”
   B. As distinct from their myth-oriented predecessors, the Presocratics were rational in two different ways.
      1. They used a rational form of analysis. They refused to tell stories, and they used expository prose.
      2. They asked mechanistic questions of “what” and “how.”

II. The Ionian cosmologists ask “what” exists in the cosmological sense. What is the world made of? What is its “Urstuff?”
   A. Thales posited that water is the source of all things.
      1. All life-forms require water for their survival.
      2. Water is naturally found in all three states of matter (i.e. solid, liquid, and gas).
      3. Thales spoke of “soul” as the cause of motion.
   B. Anaximander posited the fundamental building block of the cosmos as the “unlimited” or undifferentiated.
      1. This was the first articulation of the concept of matter, a substrate capable of containing properties and qualities found in things.
      2. This was also the first articulation of the notion of natural law.
      3. The Earth (a cylinder) does not rest on anything but remains fixed in position on account of its similar distance from all things.
C. Anaximenes posited that air was the ultimate material entity, since it could be condensed and rarefied into all other substances.

III. Heraclitus believed that fire was the fundamental material element.
   A. The world is in constant flux. Change is basic to reality; its absence brings stasis and death. The Heraclitean world view included the first expression of the notions of static and dynamic equilibrium.
   B. Heraclitus offered the first doctrines on the cultivation of the soul and social criticism.
      1. Reason is the same for all human beings.
      2. Heraclitus criticized democracy as an imperfect form of government, since the masses are driven more by emotion than by reason.
      3. He criticized traditional religious beliefs and practices as irrational.

IV. Pythagoreanism was a quasi-religious philosophical school arguing that numbers and mathematical objects were the fundamental metaphysical entities.
   A. The Pythagoreans used the tetraktys as their their religious symbol of cosmic unity.
   B. They believed in the transmigration of souls.

V. The Eleatic metaphysicians put forth the first abstract and formal metaphysical arguments or “proofs.” The significance of these philosophers lies in their development of logical analysis and the doctrine of static monism.
   A. Parmenides argued that Being either is or is not. Of the two options, only the former is possible. Therefore, the apparent changes in the world (things passing into and out of being) were illusory and Being had to be One.
   B. Zeno supported Parmenides’ static monism and developed the form of logical proof known as reductio ad absurdum to prove that both plurality and motion were impossible.

VI. Atomism.
   A. This theory, first proffered by Leucippus and Democritus, held that the world was made of atoms (indivisible units of undifferentiated matter) whirling in a void.
   B. The purely mathematical properties of the atoms’ size, shape, and relative location were then used to explain all the properties of compound entities and the appearance of change.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Why are the Ionian cosmologists regarded as the first western philosophers?
2. Compare and contrast the answers of the Pythagoreans, the Eleatics, and Heraclitus to the “Problem of the One and the Many.”
Lecture Six

Republic I: Justice, Power, Knowledge

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: This is the first of three lectures on the philosophy of Socrates and Plato, as set forth in Plato's Republic. This lecture examines Book I of The Republic, which establishes the main themes and problems to be addressed in the dialogue. Socrates asks his interlocutors to explain the meaning of justice. He refutes the arguments of Cephalus that justice consists in telling the truth and returning borrowed property, of Polemarchus that justice consists in giving to every man his due, and of Thrasyarchus that might makes right. His refutation of Thrasyarchus is less than fully convincing, however, which leads Glaucon to restate the argument, as we shall see in the following lecture.

Outline

I. The main themes of The Republic are set forth in the introductory frame scene.
   A. Socrates and Glaucon go down to Piraeus to view a religious procession and are stopped by Polemarchus' slave.
   B. Socrates is "overpowered" by force. A dialectic of force and persuasion emerges in which the philosopher succumbs to the unknowing demos. Glaucon decides that Socrates will submit.

II. Socrates and Glaucon go to the house of Polemarchus and Cephalus.
   A. Aged Cephalus is erotic, avaricious, superstitious, philistine, and pious. As an old man, he is more interested in speeches than he had been during his passionate youth. He has just finished sacrificing. He needs wealth to buy off the gods to forgive youthful sins.
   B. Socrates refutes his argument that justice equals truth-telling and the return of property.
   C. Polemarchus inherits the argument when Cephalus returns to the sacrifices. The dialogue moves symbolically from old piety to living philosophy.
      1. Polemarchus tries to justify old piety to living philosophy.
      2. He invokes the authority of Simonides (no further mention of divine retribution is made until the myth of Er in Book X).
      3. Polemarchus asserts that justice is "giving to every man his due," i.e., that justice consists in doing good to one's friends and evil to one's enemies. Socrates responds that justice is incompatible with doing harm to another.

III. Thrasyarchus, the beast of discourse, breaks in.
   A. He demands that Socrates define justice, but not abstractly as "the advantageous" or "the needful."
   B. Socrates uses multilevel irony; he cannot answer since Thrasyarchus has prohibited abstraction.
   C. Thrasyarchus demands money; Glaucon and others guarantee it. (Thrasyarchus acts as if reluctant to speak, but he really wants to speak in order to enhance his reputation.)
   D. Narration makes it impossible to enact a Platonic dialogue. Unlike other drama, Platonic drama is a spectacle which appeals to the ear and eye, and perhaps to the brain.
   E. Thrasyarchus' argument is as follows.
      1. Justice equals the advantage of the stronger. Thrasyarchus is the spokesman for the status quo (all existing regimes formulate the laws according to their own advantage; therefore justice is obeying the law).
      2. Justice equals legality (understood as legal positivism and Realpolitik). The tyrant is in the best situation, as he can make laws that gratify his own desires.

V. Socrates engages Thrasyarchus in dialogue.
   A. What if the rulers do not know what is good for them and thus make mistakes? Then justice becomes the disadvantage of the stronger.
   B. Thrasyarchus agrees that really existing rulers make mistakes, but he asserts that the true ruler qua ruler is infallible. Thrasyarchus thus moves from positive to normative—the rulers should rule with perfect knowledge of their interests.
   C. Socrates responds that all arts serve the object of the art, not the interest of the artist. Medicine is to bodies as horsemanship is to horses (342E).
   D. Thrasyarchus goes ad hominem (343A) "Do you have a wet nurse? She should wipe your nose." He holds that injustice is more profitable than justice on the largest scale—tyranny.
   E. Socrates argues that the artist or technician wants to get the better only of those who do not properly practice the art, while the ignorant man wants to get the better of all others, even if the object suffers harm. The shepherd, for instance, gets paid because he is interested in the good of the flock, not in his own good.
      1. Thrasyarchus blushes, then turns petulant, then argues that even unjust men need some justice, in order to be able to act together. Complete injustice would leave them utterly impotent.
      2. Socrates holds that justice is the virtue of the soul, which allows it to perform its telos.
F. Thrasyphas has grown gentle; Socrates has silenced but not convincingly refuted him. Socrates wants to draw Adeimantus and Glaucon into the discussion.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What basic themes of The Republic are presented in the opening scene of the dialogue, and how are they presented?
2. What is Thrasyphas' definition of justice? How does Socrates refute him, and how convincing is his refutation?

Lecture Seven
Republic II-V: Soul and City

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Our study of Plato's Republic continues. Responding to Glaucon's challenge that he defend justice on its own merits rather than any practical consideration, Socrates suggests that the group examine justice in the city as an analogue of justice within the individual human soul. He then describes the educational regimen of the ruling class in his ideal city, and he explains that justice in the individual, as in the city, consists in the proper and harmonious ordering of the parts that constitute the whole. Finally, we examine the three "waves" of revolutionary change that characterize Socrates' ideal city: political equality of women, abolition of private property and the family, and rule by philosophers.

Outline
I. Socrates has silenced but not refuted Thrasyphas. Socrates' arguments offered in Book I are weak, as he realizes. Socrates offers weak arguments in order to provoke Glaucon and Adeimantus to enter the discussion.

II. Book II of The Republic examines Socrates' analogy between the just man and the just city.
   A. Glaucon asserts a social contract theory—justice is the advantage of the weaker.
      1. He recounts the myth of Gyges to demonstrate that all men will practice injustice if given the chance
      2. He demands that Socrates demonstrate that justice is good as an end, not as a means; i.e., he demands that Socrates remove all accidental considerations and show that justice is essentially good.
   B. Adeimantus anticipates Machiavelli in asserting that it is preferable to have a reputation for justice while practicing injustice. He notes that men can be fooled, and the gods either do not exist or can be bribed.
   C. Glaucon and Adeimantus want to seem just, but they are tempted to be unjust; they assert the disclaimer: "I have heard this, but don't believe it."
   D. Socrates asserts a parallel between man and city; he suggests that the group seek justice by examining the city.
      1. Socrates and Adeimantus construct a "city of utmost necessity" in which there is a basic division of labor—one job for each man.
      2. The arcadian simplicity of this image leads Glaucon to denigrate it as a "city of pigs."
3. Glaucón prefers a more luxurious city. A philosopher-king and a guardian class are needed to order desires in this “feverish city.” The guardians must behave like “philosophical dogs,” knowing and loving their own and showing antagonism toward strangers and toward change.
4. The education of the guardian class will consist of music (to soften their hearts and promote harmony in their souls) and gymnastics.

III. Book III of The Republic constitutes an attack on Homer.
A. The poets are inspired but ignorant; the apparent beauty of their poems hides moral corruption.
B. Homer’s heroes cannot be the ideal of men who would be wise, courageous, moderate, and just.
C. Homer and his ideal, Achilles, must be demoted and censored (in favor of a new poet, Plato, and a new ideal, Socrates—the philosopher-king). This is the point of the myth of metals—the different parts of the soul correspond to gold, silver, and bronze.
D. The education of the guardians harmonizes mind with body, gold with silver, Doric with Ionic.
E. Comedy and tragedy also produce bad (i.e., corrupting) imitations; thus they—like epic—must be censored in favor of the morally good.
F. Truly educational poetry is Platonic dialogue.

IV. As befits one who is oligarchically inclined, Adeimantus objects that rulers will be unhappy if deprived of property.
A. Socrates retorts that a good ruler seeks the good of the whole city. Sharp distinctions between wealth and poverty harm the polis by creating faction.
B. Unity of soul implies unity in the city.
1. Different virtues correspond to different parts of the soul, just as they do to different sorts of cities. Justice consists in the harmony that prevails among reason, spirit, and passion in the well-ordered soul.
2. Justice consists in each element pursuing its own telos and not trespassing into the sphere of the other elements.
3. Plato uses these logical ideas to distinguish silver from bronze. Only through justice can a city harmonize classes and can a man harmonize his own soul—justice is to the soul as health is to the body. The good ruler resembles a doctor, just as the tyrant resembles a quack doctor.

V. Adeimantus breaks in, demanding that Socrates explain his proposals for eugenic breeding and abolition of the family. Then all chime in, and the framing scene of book I is reprinted. Socrates is arrested again by a suddenly bold Adeimantus. Socrates fears being drowned by three “waves” of his argument.
A. The first wave is feminism; women should have the right to rule.
1. Female guardians receive the same gymnastic and musical education as men.
2. Socrates compares the difference between the sexes to accidental differences among men (e.g., long versus short hair). He distinguishes accidental and essential differences (which are analogous to the difference between body and soul).
B. The second wave is communal possession of property and abolition of the family.
1. Sex is a necessity. The rulers will arrange eugenic marriages, by contriving phony lots. Beyond reproduction (461C), the guardians have complete erotic freedom.
2. Children are reared apart from parents, so the parent-child bond is generalized among all the guardians.
3. Guardians are all one family. Eros is used in the service of war.
C. The third wave is rule by philosophers, but is such a regime possible? The impracticality of the good city shows that there is something wrong with the world, not with the theory.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Lecture Eight

Republic VI-X: The Architecture of Reality

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: We end our examination of Plato’s Republic by considering three of Plato’s most famous metaphors: the ship of state, the divided line, and the cave. The first of these depicts the negative consequences of misrule, while the latter two illustrate Plato’s ontological and epistemological teaching that with the right education, one possessing the proper constitution can advance from mere opinion of sensible particulars to true knowledge of the eternal, unchanging Forms—i.e., of ultimate reality. Next we consider Plato’s theory of the degeneration of good regimes into their vicious counterparts, and we close with the “Myth of Er,” intended to encourage just behavior among the unwise demos.

Outline

I. Book VI extends the discussion of the third “wave”—rule by philosopher-kings.
   A. This discussion foreshadows the epistemological and ontological doctrines to be considered next (light vs. darkness, sight vs. blindness).
   B. The philosopher is called the lover of Forms, but Adiemantus is unconvinced.
   C. Socrates offers the parable of the state. Only the ignorant and vicious pursue political power. The philosopher’s eros is for knowledge, not power.
   D. The philosopher desires the good, not merely the pleasurable.
      1. It is said that philosophers are corrupt and corrupting, but the opposite is true.
      2. The best natures, when corrupted, become tyrannical. Thrasymachus is thus an inverted philosopher-king who has suffered from a bad education.
      3. The best natures need the best education. They must go beyond mere opinion to knowledge, particularly knowledge of the Form of the Good, which is analogous to the sun.
      4. Plato uses the simile of the divided line to clarify this analogy. The dividing line is a schematic diagram of the progression from apprehension of images and sensible objects, of which one can only have opinion, to the knowledge of intelligible objects and ultimately of the Forms.
II. Book VII includes the Myth of the Cave.
   A. Most human beings are "imprisoned" in the realm of sensible particulars, which Plato analogizes to shadows projected upon the wall of a cave. The representations produced by deceptive poets and sophists are regarded as real by most men, when in fact they are illusion.
   B. The philosopher uses dialectic to free himself from the sensible realm and to progress upward out of the cave and into the realm of the sun (i.e., ultimate reality, the Form of the Good).
   C. The upward way is painful and difficult; the eyes take time to adjust.
   D. Glaucgon asks if the philosopher-king will be compelled to go back down into the realm of opinion, for the sake of the general good.
      1. The education of the philosopher-king, like other guardians, begins with gymnastic and the muses.
      2. The guardians study Pythagorean arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and harmonics between ages 20 and 30, followed by five years of dialectic. After fifteen years of practical politics, one can become a philosopher-king.
   E. Dialectic is an asymptotic journey, the end of which is knowledge of the Form of the Good, which cannot be articulated (532E).
   F. The City of Speech can be constructed only if true philosophers come to power and exile all citizens more than 10 years old.
      1. Its establishment requires coercive power (the good city is a yardstick, not a practical possibility).
      2. It has profoundly conservative and anti-utopian implications.
      3. The city of speech illustrates the limits of politics. Our progression toward it, like or movement toward the Form of the Good, is asymptotic.

III. Book VIII examines the degeneration of regimes from rule by philosophers ultimately to tyranny.
   A. Having reached the symbolic and conceptual high point with the Form of the Good, we descend through the degenerate regimes. The organic progression downward through the four degenerate regimes parallels that through the degenerate forms of the soul.
   B. History (i.e., change) has been abolished in the good city, but it returns as a dialectic of depravity (an inversion of Hegel). This process resembles the Nietzschean genealogy of morals.
   C. Good regimes follow a natural course of degeneration.
      1. The good city, led by the philosopher, degenerates into the timocratic city as a consequence of bad breeding and disagreement among the guardians. In the timocratic city, the desire for honor supplants desire for knowledge.

IV. Book IX compares the condition of the tyrant and the philosopher.
   A. The tyrannical man, a completely heteronomous bundle of insatiable desires, is the most miserable of men.
   B. The philosopher, who has the greatest knowledge, knows pleasures best. Pleasures of the soul are greatly superior to pleasures of body; virtue equals knowledge, and virtue is its own reward.

V. Book X discusses the usefulness of poetry and myth in reinforcing the imperative to behave justly.
   A. Socrates criticizes epic, tragedy, and comedy as imitations of imitations of Forms.
   B. Good poetry must edify with true opinion, if it cannot instruct with true knowledge.
      1. The poetry of the good city will not allow epic/comic/tragic heroes to make bad (ignorant) men worse.
      2. A new poetry and new hero are needed. Instead of tragic crime, comic foolishness, and epic slaughter, there must be a new poetry of education, with a virtuous (knowledgeable) hero who is a benefactor and educator.
3. The poetry of the good city is Platonic dialogue. Socrates is the new Achilles of reason without *hubris*. He embarks on a spiritual odyssey of dialectic. He is an Oedipus without a tragic flaw in a city in which everyone else is blind; a comic hero where the joke is on everyone else.

C. Since it is clear that justice is an end in itself, let us restore reputation and divine retribution in the Myth of Er. Not all can be wise; Cephalus and the *demos* are deterred from vice only by good myths.

**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. How does Plato's simile of the divided line illustrate the relationship between his ontology and epistemology?
2. What causes the degeneration of regimes from aristocracy to tyranny? What sort of desire or *eros* is characteristic of each of the degenerate regimes?

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**Lecture Nine**

**Aristotle's Metaphysical Views**

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

**Scope:** This lecture offers an introduction to Aristotelian metaphysics. It reviews Aristotle's quadripartite theory of causation, his understanding of being and its properties; his distinction between matter and form, and his allowance for change by positing a middle ground—potency—between being and non-being. In contrast to the Platonic theory of forms, Aristotle holds that forms do not exist apart from sensible particulars. They are abstractions from particular objects of properties that those objects share. Finally, we examine the implications of Aristotelian metaphysics regarding teleology and the existence of a natural hierarchy of being.

**Outline**

I. Aristotle tried to solve the "Parmenidean problem" of reconciling being with change.
   A. He retained the concept of essences but sought to rescue it from Plato's transcendental excesses.
   B. His metaphysics sought to explain what sort of entities exist; what causal relations exist among them; and what accounts for change.

II. Aristotle believed that the being of everything in the world can be explained in terms of the following four causal relations.
   A. The "formal cause" defines the "whatness" of a thing, or that form or structure that makes it a particular "this-something."
   B. The "material cause" is what a thing is made of, or that from which a thing's material nature arises.
   C. The "efficient cause" is the agency through which change or action is induced.
   D. The "final cause" is that which is the end of change or development, i.e., the purpose of an action or the final state of a process.

III. Aristotle claimed that the essential property of being is unity (i.e., completeness, wholeness, and self-subsistence).
   A. "Primary beings" are self-subsisting, while accidental beings depend for their being on something else.
   B. Primary beings are characterized by hylomorphism, i.e., they are composed of matter and form. The "form" is the essence of the thing and the object of scientific knowledge, while the material substratum is
what undergoes change from one form to another. Matter changes by taking on a new form.

C. Aristotle criticized Plato's theory of forms on the basis of its lack of parsimony. According to Aristotle, the eternal forms exist only in sensible particulars. If the forms exist apart from material particulars, then change is impossible.

D. Numbers and mathematical entities are abstractions from the mathematical features or magnitudes of sensible primary beings.

IV. Aristotle accounts for change by positing "potentiality," a middle ground between complete being (i.e., "actuality") and non-existence.

A. A thing's potential is that which, given the correct conditions, it will naturally tend to become.

B. A teleological view of the world is implied (i.e., the world has a purpose).

1. Motion in inanimate objects can result either from efficient causation by animate agents or from the object's own final cause (i.e., it can be natural to the object).

2. The principle or cause of change or motion in animate or organic entities is the soul, of which there are four natural kinds that form a hierarchy: nutritive souls (i.e., those of plants); animal souls (which allow for locomotion and sense perception); human souls (characterized by reason); and the intellective soul.

3. God is the only primary Being who is immaterial and is thus Pure Actuality or Pure Essence of soul. He is eternal; He is the prime mover; and He is the final cause of all activity.

C. Aristotle's metaphysics also imply the existence of a hierarchy of being.

1. At the bottom of this hierarchy is prime matter, then the four material elements, then inorganic matter, then plants, then animals, then man.

2. At the top of the scale is God, who is Pure Act and Prime Mover.

V. Aristotle is a realist philosopher, in contrast to Plato's idealism.

A. He classified the properties of existing things into seven categories: substance, quantity, quality, relationship to others of like kind, posture, period, act, recipient of action, and position.

B. Aristotle's realism implies that the universe has an apprehensible structure that is external to the human mind.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. How does Aristotle attempt to resolve the Eleatic problem of change?
2. Is Aristotle's hylomorphism a refinement or a refutation of Plato's doctrines of the Forms?
Lecture Ten
Aristotle's Politics: The Golden Mean and Just Rule

Dennis Dalton, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines Aristotle's political theory, as set forth in The Politics. Although Aristotle shared many of Plato's basic assumptions—e.g., regarding the primacy of reason, the intrinsic connection between politics and ethics, and the role of the city in improving individuals through education—his methodology was very different from Plato's, and thus he came to very different conclusions about what constitutes the best political regime. Aristotle criticized Plato's political recommendations primarily on empirical and practical grounds. He rejected Plato's proposals for revolutionary change by observing that they are impracticable—they do not comport with human nature as we know it. Aristotle attempted to correct Plato's excesses by taking the "golden mean" as his touchstone for evaluating political arrangements.

Outline

I. The Golden Mean refers to the Aristotelian principle that, in most forms of human behavior, it is wise to avoid extremes and to aim for moderation.

A. Plato violates the Golden Mean by going to extremes in his theory of the Forms and his definition of the ideal state.
B. The Golden Mean is achievable in most areas of life.
C. Aristotle shares Plato's conviction that the state should promote justice and virtue, but unlike Plato he appeals to empirical observation to validate his assertions.

II. Aristotle addresses Plato's "first wave" of revolutionary change (i.e., political equality of women).

A. He asserts the need for a union of naturally ruling elements with those that are naturally ruled, for the sake of the preservation of both.
   1. The intelligent element—i.e., that which is capable of exercising forethought—is naturally the ruling element.
   2. The element that has the physical capability to do what the ruling party wants is naturally the ruled element.
B. The soul has two elements: the ruling (rational) and the ruled (irrational).
C. Because slaves lack the faculty of reason, they are naturally ruled—i.e., some humans are slaves by nature.

D. According to Aristotle, women possess the faculty of reason, but in an ineffective form. Therefore, they cannot attain the same heights of moral goodness that men can.
E. The mean position is for women not to rule. At the extreme, women should be treated like slaves. Aristotle said women should be treated with respect as long as they fulfill their natural roles (which they carry out within the family).

III. Aristotle addressed Plato's "second wave" (abolition of the family and communal possession of property).

A. Aristotle thought Plato's argument was flawed because the family nurtures people to perform political functions, and it inculcates the habits of duty and loyalty.
B. Aristotle also addressed issues of private property.
   1. In communal systems, men will neglect their duties.
   2. The propensity to own property is natural to man, and thus Plato's scheme is impractical.
   3. Aristotle suggested a system in which privately-owned property is put to common use.
   4. The mean is not community of goods, but neither is it an endless accumulation by individuals of wealth and property.
   5. Aristotle observed that charity cannot exist in the absence of private property.

IV. Aristotle addressed the "third wave" (rule by philosophers).

A. He warned that Plato's system of rule by an elite few would breed discontent and dissension
B. Aristotle advanced the principle of ruling and being ruled in turn.
C. He advocated "polity," i.e., rule by the middle class.
   1. The middle class is more educated than the demos, and it possesses property (and thus a personal stake in the polity).
   2. The middle class represents the mean between the extremes of oligarchy and democracy. It is the most rational of the three constituent classes that compose the state.
   3. Polity has the estimable virtue of being practicable.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Lecture Eleven
Marcus Aurelius' Meditations: The Stoic Ideal

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines Stoicism as the main Hellenistic outgrowth of Socratic philosophy, and it focuses on Marcus Aurelius' Meditations as a premier expression of Roman Stoicism. Marcus Aurelius exemplified the Socratic virtue of rational self-control, and his introspection presaged the emergence of the Western conception of the autonomous ego.

Outline

I. Stoicism is a Hellenistic outgrowth of Socratic philosophy.
   A. Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism are all fragments of Socratic philosophy, and all influenced Roman thinking.
      1. Stoicism is a philosophy of moral duty which counsels us as rational creatures to harmonize our actions with nature. The rational man fears only the abdication of his own moral responsibility.
      2. Epicureanism and hedonism regard pleasure as the only good. Happiness consists in maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain.
      3. Skepticism is a disbelief in all philosophical dogmas.
   B. Marcus Aurelius is replete with Socratic elements such as self-control, moral duty, and disdain for mere physical pleasure.

II. Marcus Aurelius wrote the Meditations to himself. What sort of man would do this, and why?
   A. He was a conscientious, ruthless, and introspective man of limitless power and exceptional piety. Despite tremendous temptations to abuse his power, he practiced virtue consistently.
   B. He was unimaginably lonely. He had no equals and thus no friends.
   C. Marcus Aurelius lived modestly, like a Platonic philosopher-king. He concerned himself only with what he had control over—the condition of his own soul—and he feared only the prospect that his behavior might not reflect his rational ideals.

III. The Stoic ideal is reflected in Marcus Aurelius's Meditations.
   A. The Stoic man knows himself and lives according to nature.
   B. The rational soul is the autonomous ego; nature has a moral order in which the wise man can discern his own telos.
   C. Stoicism is an important step in the historical construction of the ego in the West.

Questions to Consider:
1. Discuss the main similarities and differences in Plato's and Aristotle's views of the city.
2. What classificatory principle underlies Aristotle's taxonomy of regimes? Which does he regard as the best regime, and why?
1. "I am in complete control over my will and I am indifferent to all that is not under my control."
2. "I am responsible only for meeting my moral obligations."

D. Marcus Aurelius offers a cosmopolitan political philosophy.
1. The cosmos is the polis of the Stoic.
2. Universal moral and political order is natural.
3. Stoicism is a perfect philosophy for those who ruled the Roman Empire with its heterogeneous mix of people, languages, and religions.

E. Marcus Aurelius holds essentially that virtue is its own reward.
1. He is agnostic regarding the existence of the gods, but he urges people to act as though the gods really exist. Whether or not the gods exist, the good man has nothing to fear.
2. The Stoic conception of virtue as sufficient in itself anticipates Kantian morality.

F. In his concern about the condition of his own soul, Marcus Aurelius marks an important point in the developing Western conception of the self.

V. Stoicism represents the true philosophical heritage of Socratic thought.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. To what extent is Marcus Aurelius a materialist?
2. Does the rigid determinism of Stoicism make it ultimately a doctrine of despair?
Lecture Twelve
Augustine's *City of God*: Grace, Original Sin, and Theodicy

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the life and teachings of St. Augustine of Hippo, an early Christian bishop and philosopher who attempted to fuse the traditions of Athens and Jerusalem. We will consider Augustine's appropriation of key Platonic concepts—especially that of the Form of the Good, which Augustine identified as God—and his differences from Plato. Augustine departed from Plato in holding that God created the material world *ex nihilo* and that ultimate happiness for man comes with the Beatific Vision. Finally, we examine Augustine's understanding of evil as privation, his understanding of belief as the free gift of God, and his answer to the problem of theodicy—i.e., how to justify God's ways to man.

Outline

I. St. Augustine of Hippo gave the first abstract theological expression to Christian doctrine.
   A. Augustine is one of the most important and profound Christian thinkers.
   B. Why did Christianity rise to prominence in the Empire?
      1. The emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in large measure to seal the loyalty of his troops, who were increasingly Christian.
      2. Christianity offered attractive answers to some of the basic questions of human existence. As interpreted by St. Augustine, Christianity attempts to fuse the spiritual insight of Jerusalem with the philosophical wisdom of Athens.

II. Augustine was a self-professed Platonist.
   A. A philosophical syncretist, he identified Plato's architectonic Form, as the Idea of the Good, as the Judeo-Christian God.
   B. Augustine located all of the Platonic forms or essences in the Mind of God; Plato did not locate these forms but viewed them as emanations from the Form of the Good.
   C. Augustine differed from Plato in holding that the material principle is not eternal but created from nothing, as told in Genesis. Unlike Plato, Augustine claimed that both form and matter emanate from God.
   D. Augustine's ethical theory, like Plato's and Aristotle's, is *eudamonic*, i.e., it is based on the goal of happiness.

III. St. Augustine believed that God and His creation (the universe) are inherently good. Evil, therefore, is not a thing in itself, but only the absence of good. Since the ultimate good is God himself, evil is the absence or denial of God.
   A. The origin of evil—the first and archetypal turning away from God—was Adam's original sin, as recounted in Genesis.
      1. Original sin is the selfish pride of humanism. Evil is the consequence of free human choice.
      2. St. Paul developed the concept of original sin to explain the origin of evil.
   B. Adam's sin opened a wide breach between God and man.
      1. It debased human nature such that our free will naturally tends toward self-centeredness.
      2. A mediator sharing both the divine and human natures—Christ—was needed to repair this breach.
   C. Fallen man is so self-absorbed in sinful pride that he cannot have true faith in God. Genuine belief is thus the result of God's saving grace rather than the result of man's own efforts.
   D. God is omnipotent and omniscient. He sustains the being of the world and is the source of all that is good. He also knows everything in an eternal present.

IV. St. Augustine's theodicy (the effort to justify God's ways to man) resembled that of Job in the Old Testament.
   A. The human mind cannot understand God's reasons for tolerating the world's apparent injustices.
   B. Human beings must simply accept God's will without attempting to understand or justify it. God does not have to justify himself to His creatures. The theodicy impulse—i.e., the attempt to hold God in judgment—exemplifies selfish, humanistic pride.
   C. God's justice is fulfilled by the eternal punishment of sinners who transgress His laws and obstinately refuse to believe through their own free will.
   D. God's mercy is exemplified by His gracious infusion of faith in otherwise undeserving sinners.
   E. St. Augustine's teachings have enduring influence.
      1. His pessimistic view of human nature informs both Protestantism and the U.S. political system, with its emphasis on checks and balances to counter the vicious tendencies to which human nature is prone.
2. The Augustinian perspective supports the liberal tradition in Western thought by counselling prudence and casting doubt on the claims of some to have special insight into the truth.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. St. Augustine has been characterized as a sort of neo-Platonist. To what extent are his ethical and political teachings consistent with those of Plato and Aristotle?
2. St. Augustine affirms that God is omnipotent and omniscient, and that His creation is perfect. How, then, does St. Augustine account for the presence of evil in the world? Why does God's omniscience not make Him ultimately responsible for that evil?

Glossary

aesthetics: the branch of philosophy that studies the feelings, concepts, and judgements that arise from our appreciation of art or other objects considered sublime or beautiful.

apeiron (Greek): "the boundless"; in Greek philosophy, the infinite or formless.
arete (Greek): virtue or excellence.
asceticism: the practice of self-denial or "mortification of the flesh" for the sake of virtue or God. The practice is widely associated with certain strands of Christian theology that preached the sinful or fallen nature of the body, but it has been practiced within a variety of religious and philosophical traditions.
demos (Greek): people. Root of the word "democracy."
efficient cause: according to Aristotle, the agency that induces a change or action.
Epicureanism: according to Epicurus, the pursuit of pleasures that can be controlled and enjoyed in moderation, especially those of friendship and aesthetic contemplation.
epistemology: the study or theory of the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge.
eschatology: the notion or orientation toward the end of time, conceived by Christians to be the judgment day, and by Hegel as the coming to fruition of the self-consciousness of Geist or the world-spirit.
ethics: the study of standards of conduct and moral judgment, and their application to practical reasoning.
eudaimonia (Greek): happiness, well-being, or success; the central goal of all systems of ancient ethics. According to Aristotle, eudaimonia consists in the active exercise of the powers of the soul in accordance with reason.
final cause: according to Aristotle, the end or purpose of an action, or the final state of a process.
Form: in Plato's philosophy, the idea, essence, or perhaps definition of a thing (as of man or justice); also conceived to be the most real ontological level.
formal cause: according to Aristotle, the pattern or blueprint determining the form or structure of a thing.
hubris (Greek): pride, usually coming before a fall.
hylomorphism: the ontological doctrine, associated with Aristotle, that everything is composed of matter and form.
logic: the system of rules for deriving true inferences.
Logos: in Greek, statement, principle, law, reason, or proportion. In Stoicism, *logos* is the cosmic source of order.

Material cause: the substance or material of which a thing is made or from which its material nature arises.

Metaphysics: the branch of philosophy that examines first principles and seeks to explain the nature of being or reality.

Mythos (Greek): myth, story.

Nomos (Greek): political law.

Ontology: the branch of metaphysics that studies the nature of being, reality, or ultimate substance.

Pentateuch: the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.

Philosophy: the love of, or the search for, wisdom and knowledge.

Physics: the branch of philosophy that studies the material world of space and time.

Physis (Greek): natural law or, simply, nature: what spontaneously produces itself or acts from within itself.

Polis (Greek): city. Root of the word “politics.”

Polity: rule by the middle class, which Aristotle recommends as the most rational and moderate form of regime.

Realism: in the context of these lectures, the belief that essences, such as Plato’s forms, have real existence independent of sensible particulars.

Skepticism: the philosophical doctrine that denies the possibility of any certain knowledge and thus affirms that inquiry must be a process of doubting.

Stoicism: Greek school of philosophy, founded by Zeno about 308 BC, holding that all things, properties, and relations are governed by unvarying natural laws, and that the wise man should follow virtue alone, obtained through reason, and remain indifferent to the external world, passion, and emotion.

Techné (Greek): art, skill, craft; most generally, rule-governed activity. Root of the word “technology.” The concept is central to both Plato and Aristotle.

Telos: in Greek, the purpose or end-state of a thing or action.

Theodicy: a system of natural theology that seeks to vindicate God’s justice in allowing evil to exist.

Biographical Notes

Anaximander of Miletus (c. 610-c.547/6 BC). The first Greek philosopher whose thought we know in any detail. He held that the ultimate reality is the *apeiron*—the boundless, limitless, imperishable, and eternal surrounding. Anaximander went beyond Thales in perceiving that the ultimate matter of the universe must be independent of the structure and form of particular kinds of matter.

Anaximenes of Miletus (fl. c. 546 BC). The junior member of the Miletian school, and probably Anaximander’s pupil. He held that one primary substance—air—produces all the others, either through rarefaction or condensation. He offers the first physical account in western philosophy of particular substances as modifications of one primary substance.

Aristotle (384-322 BCE). Born in Stagira in northern Greece, the son of Nicomachus, a physician in the Macedonian court. Aristotle studied at Plato’s Academy in Athens between 367 and 347 BCE. From 342 until 339, he tutored the young heir to the Macedonian throne, later known as Alexander the Great. Aristotle later returned to Athens, where in 355 he opened his own school—the Lyceum. He engaged in wide-ranging intellectual pursuits while in Athens, lecturing or writing on physics, metaphysics, logic, ethics, biology, politics, rhetoric, and the arts. An upsurge in anti-Macedonian sentiment following Alexander’s death in 323 forced Aristotle to flee to Chalcis in Euboea, where he died in 322.

Augustine, St. (354-430). Bishop of Hippo in Africa from 395 until his death; the premier theologian of early Christianity and the most influential of the western Church Fathers. Raised as a Christian by his mother, St. Monica, Augustine fell away from the faith in his youth and became a Manichean. While in Milan, he came under the influence of St. Ambrose and soon found his way back to the Christian faith. While visiting the town of Hippo in 391, he was chosen against his own will to become a priest. Four years later he became bishop of Hippo, where he died in 430 during a siege by the Vandals.

Democritus of Abdera (c. 460-c. 370 BC). Along with Leucipus, the founder of classical atomism. Democritus held that ultimate reality consists of atoms—indivisible, homogeneous, solid, and unchanging units. These atoms are in eternal motion and combine in various ways to form all material things.

Heraclitus of Ephesus (d. after 480 BC). Held that *logos* governs all things and is somehow associated with fire, which is pre-eminent among the four elements. Heraclitus is principally remembered for the doctrine of the “flux” of all things.

Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE). Roman emperor of the late second century A.D., Stoic philosopher, and author of The Meditations. He was adopted at age seventeen by his uncle, the Roman emperor Antonius Pius, and married Antonius’s daughter, Faustina. Marcus became emperor upon his uncle’s death in 161 and
voluntarily shared rule with his adoptive brother Lucius Aurelius Verus. Marcus spent much of his time defending the empire against Britons, Parthians, and Germans—considered by the cultivated Romans to be barbarians. He wrote the *Meditations* while commanding Roman troops north of the Danube. He curbed the gladiatorial games, mitigated some of the worst injustices against slaves, and placed the security and welfare of the empire before his own. He nevertheless persecuted Christians, fearing that they would weaken the empire.

**Parmenides of Elea** (b. c. 515 BC). Probably the most important Presocratic philosopher, he held that what is real must be ungenerated, imperishable, invisible, perfect, and motionless.

**Paul of Tarsus** (d. 63 A.D.). A Jew and a Roman citizen, born in the city of Tarsus in Asia Minor. After completing his studies in the Jewish religion, Paul was commissioned to suppress Christianity in the town of Damascus. While travelling there, he was blinded by a brilliant light, and he heard Jesus ask him: "Why persecutest thou me?" With this revelation, Paul converted to Christianity, was baptized, and immediately began preaching. He travelled to many cities throughout the Roman Empire, preaching to and instructing the Christian communities. Paul was arrested by the Roman authorities sometime after 57 A.D. on the charge of provoking a riot. According to tradition, he was beheaded in Rome during the 60s A.D.

**Plato** (c.427-347 BCE). Student of Socrates and a leading philosopher of fourth-century B.C. Athens. In about 385, Plato established his famous Academy in Athens, where he lectured and wrote. In 367 and again in 361 he travelled to Syracuse (in Sicily) in the unsuccessful effort to develop an ideal government.

**Pythagoras** (b. c. 570 BC). Founder of a quasi-religious society in Crotona in southern Italy. He taught the doctrine of reincarnation and held that the *cosmos* is explicable in terms of harmony or number.

**Socrates** (469-399 BCE). Late fifth-century Athenian philosopher and teacher of Plato. In his youth, he probably practiced stone sculpture. Socrates fought as a hoplite for Athens during the Peloponnesian War. Famous for his view that "the unexamined life is not worth living," Socrates combined skepticism and logic in his resolute pursuit of wisdom. His technique of questioning others in pursuit of the consequences of statements is often referred to as the "dialectical" or Socratic method. Socrates was tried for corrupting the youth of Athens and not believing in the gods of the city, and he was found guilty and executed.

**Thales of Miletus** (fl. 585 BC). The first Greek to search for the ultimate substance of things, which he identified with water.

**Zeno of Citium** (c. 334.-c. 262 BCE). Founder of Stoicism. After turning from Cynicism to Socratic philosophy, he gradually developed the metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics that compose the Stoical system.
Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part II
The Age of Faith to the Age of Reason
**Dennis G. Dalton, Ph.D.**

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Dennis G. Dalton, Ph.D. received his Bachelor's degree from Rutgers University in 1960 and did post-graduate work at the University of Chicago. In 1965, he earned his Ph.D. in political theory from the University of London. Professor Dalton has been honored with numerous scholarships and grants, including a grant in 1975 from the American Council of Learned Societies for research in South Africa a senior fellowship in 1975 with the American Institute of Indian Studies for research in India; and a Gandhi Peace Foundation Grant in 1970 for participation in an International Seminar in Delhi, India. Between 1964 and 1966 he was a review editor for the *Journal of Developmental Studies* (London), and between 1969 and 1975 he served as a U.S. correspondent for the *South Asian Review* (London).

Professor Dalton's fields of interest include political theory (classical and modern, Western and Asian), the politics of South Asia (particularly the Indian nationalist movement), and ideologies of modern political movements with reference to Europe, India, China, and Africa. He has written numerous articles about all of these subjects. He is a member of both the American Political Science Association and the Association for Asian Studies. Professor Dalton has edited and contributed to more than a dozen publications, and he is the author of *The Indian Idea of Freedom* (1982).

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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part II
The Age of Faith to the Age of Reason

Scope: These twelve lectures trace the Western philosophical tradition from St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century to G.W. Leibniz in the early eighteenth century. The first lecture examines Aquinas’ synthesis of Christianity with the classical Greek tradition as embodied in Aristotle. Lecture Two examines the utopian system described by the Renaissance humanist and Christian saint Thomas More, discusses its reformist features in the context of contemporary English society, and compares it with Plato’s similar utopian scheme. In Lectures Three and Four we examine the path-breaking thought of Niccolo Machiavelli, who broke decisively with the classical tradition of political theory, and Francis Bacon, whose inductive method of scientific inquiry marked a departure from adherence to the received wisdom of Aristotle and other ancient authorities. In Lectures Five through Eight we examine other great thinkers early modern Europe—Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and Baruch Spinoza—who established the bases for modern philosophy. In Lectures Nine and Ten we examine the contributions of Sir Isaac Newton and Giambattista Vico to the modern perception of order and regularity in the cosmos and human history respectively, and in Lecture Eleven we consider Blaise Pascal’s faith-based corrective to the rational and skeptical focus of early modern thought. The final lecture examines the metaphysical and epistemological speculations of G.W. Leibniz.

Lecture One
Aquinas and the Scholastic Synthesis
Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Saint Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) is the greatest figure of medieval scholasticism. Born outside Naples into the ruling family of Aquino, he was educated as a youth by Benedictine monks and joined the Dominican order at age twenty. As a professor of theology, Aquinas combined Aristotle with Christianity, arguing that reason is both compatible with and subordinate to faith. His greatest philosophical accomplishment, the Summa Theologicae, was written between 1265 and 1273 and remains today one of the pillars of Catholic theology. This lecture will explore the significance of Aquinas as a synthesizer of Christianity with classical Greek learning and as a forerunner of the more extensive incorporation of classical thought that characterized the Renaissance.

Outline

I. Overview
A. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was an Italian Dominican priest whose philosophy, known as "Thomism," reconciled the Greco-Roman and Christian traditions, insofar as was possible given the philosophical texts and tools that were available in the thirteenth century.
B. In the generation before Aquinas, Pope Innocent III tried but failed to dominate Christendom politically. In the mid-13th century Aquinas succeeded in dominating Christianity intellectually.

II. Aquinas was a great synthetic thinker who combined the classical pagan and Christian philosophical traditions.
A. He helped make the University of Paris a center of Scholastic thought that articulated a concrete and encyclopedic "Aristotelian" Christianity, as opposed to the traditional Platonic/Augustinian variant of Christianity upheld at other universities, e.g., Oxford.
B. Aquinas assumed that natural knowledge derived from reason and revealed knowledge derived from scripture are never in conflict.
1. Faith and reason are never contradictory, if one identifies God as the logos spoken of in John’s Gospel.
2. Faith is an Aristotelian "mean" between opinion and knowledge. However, "knowledge falls short of faith."
3. Philosophy can prove that God exists but cannot prove the doctrine of the Trinity, which is scriptural and thus within the domain of theology.
C. Aquinas held that the classical tradition supports and serves the biblical tradition.

1. Aquinas borrowed from Aristotle an emphasis on teleology, syllogistic logic, and a system-building tendency of encyclopedic exhaustiveness.

2. Aquinas borrowed from Plato the Socratic question-and-answer technique (including the use of “straw man” arguments), but his use of the dialectical method was ossified and yoked to un-Socratic dogmatism. Plato’s fluidity, playfulness, and provisionality are lost.

3. Aquinas borrowed from Cicero and Stoicism the idea of natural law, which he Christianized by subsuming it under the eternal law. From Neoplatonism he adopted the idea of God as pure actuality without potentiality.

D. Aquinas had an encyclopedic knowledge of the Church Fathers (he even accepted some, such as Pseudo-Dionysus, who were apocryphal), yet he was judicious in his borrowing.

1. From Augustine, Aquinas took the idea of evil as privation, and much of his political thinking attempted to reconcile Augustine’s City of God with Aristotle’s Politics.

2. Both Augustine and Aquinas incorporated classical philosophy into the revealed religion of Jerusalem, assuming that each had its proper methodology (revelation for theology, reason for philosophy), and that faith ultimately superseded reason.

3. Thomism is one of the most intellectually felicitous and institutionally successful attempts to bridge the gap between Athens and Jerusalem.

E. Aquinas’ use of concepts developed by the pagan philosopher Aristotle led the Church to condemn his teachings in 1277, although he was subsequently rehabilitated and canonized in 1323.

III. Scholasticism, logic, and the problem of universals.

A. Syllogistic logic was the main intellectual instrument for Scholastic thinkers like Aquinas, and a ready-made set of ontological and epistemological concerns (e.g., the problem of universals) was contained therein.

B. Like Aristotle, Aquinas attempted to find a "mean" between the realism of Augustine and Anselm and the nominalism which was later radically expressed by William of Ockham.

C. Unwilling to allow either for quasi-Platonic Forms or empty nominalist set-names, Aquinas was a “moderate realist” who held that the universal is immanent in the specimen.

IV. The Summae.

A. The Summa Contra Gentiles is a rational apology for Christianity, directed toward non-Christians.

B. The Summa Theologica.

1. Like Aristotle and unlike St. Anselm, Aquinas began with sense data rather than an idea. He used Aristotelian concepts to explain that God is Truth per se, actuality without potentiality (“Being is”). The existence of the Cause is demonstrable from the effects. Philosophy can demonstrate that God exists; theology can demonstrate what God is.

2. Aquinas offered five logical proofs for God’s existence.
   a. God is the Prime or Unmoved Mover.
   b. God is the first efficient cause; the cosmos cannot be self-caused.
   c. The existence of possible or contingent beings implies the existence of a necessary being. Like Descartes, Aquinas held that the contingency of phenomena implies the necessity of noumena.
   d. Degrees of perfection imply absolute perfection (this argument is reminiscent of Plato).
   e. The argument from design: the natural order of nature and humanity implies the existence of an orderer.

3. The ontological hierarchy of the “Great Chain of Being” provides theological validation for feudal politics (later reformulated as the Divine Right of Kings).

4. Aquinas distinguishes four kinds of law:
   a. Eternal Law: God’s Providence; the "idea of the government of things."
   b. Natural Law: the means by which rational creatures participate in eternal law.
   c. Positive Law: nomos or legislation; the “black-letter law” of particular governments.
   d. Divine Law: Revelation, a product of grace that leads men to faith, hope, love.

V. Conclusion.

A. Thomism is the most self-conscious and successful attempt to harmonize Athens and Jerusalem in the millennium between Augustine and Thomas More. It remains the most important philosophical influence on Catholicism.

B. Aquinas “baptizes” Cicero as well as Aristotle. Despite positivistic disclaimers, natural law theory is alive and well in the twentieth century, as shown by the Nuremberg trials, civil disobedience, “higher law” defenses like those of Gandhi or Martin Luther King, conscientious objection, and human rights.
Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. How did Aquinas recast Aristotle to accommodate Christianity?
2. How do Aquinas’ political views differ from those of Aristotle?

Lecture Two
More’s *Utopia*: Reason and Social Justice

Professor Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: Thomas More’s *Utopia* provides a Christian-humanist view of an ideal society. More offers this vision not only as a mental ideal but as one that humans can strive to create in this world. The text is a self-conscious effort by More to offer his readers a Christianization of Plato’s *Republic*. This lecture will review the features and significance of More’s ideal system, highlighting its similarities to and divergences from Plato’s utopia.

Outline

I. Sir Thomas More was a Renaissance man (and subsequently a Christian saint) known for his piety, integrity, learning, and wit. He served as a member of Parliament, diplomat, and Lord Chancellor of England. He was ultimately beheaded for refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of Henry VIII’s rule of the Church in England.

II. More’s book, *Utopia*, was the last great synthesis of Christianity with the pagan classical tradition.
   A. The Christian aspect of More’s synthesis is Christ’s message of caring for the poor, oppressed, and downtrodden.
   B. The Greek aspect of his synthesis is the Platonic republican tradition.
   C. More wrote the *Utopia* in a comedic tone, which allowed him to speak his truth while esoterically telling his deeper story.

III. *Utopia* takes the form of a dialogue led by a Socratic wise man named Raphael Hythloday. The first book sets the stage for all that follows, and the second book is an exposition of the communal, social, and political arrangements of the Utopians.
   A. Book I discusses the political realm and More’s Christian-humanistic critique of sixteenth-century England.
   B. More critiques the royal court, the two-facedness of members of the clergy, and the laws.
   C. He also critiques the economy of England and the enclosure movement of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in which rich landlords pushed the poor off the common lands and into wretched poverty in the cities.
      1. More critiques early capitalism by observing that useful people, tradesmen, and peasants can no longer subsist on the land.
2. He points out the inanity of exacting the death penalty for property-related crimes.

IV. Book II details the actual workings of the Utopian society.

A. Utopia is very similar to England in its physical topography. This similarity indicates that More's project was not just a "Utopian scheme" but a legitimate form of Christian reconstruction.

B. All property in Utopia is owned by the community, and all production—except agriculture—is located in the household.
   1. Trades are assigned on the basis of aptitude and choice.
   2. Spiritually corrosive labor—such as butchery—is relegated to slaves.
   3. The workday is kept short in order to allow time for leisure pursuits and cultural enrichment.

C. Utopian social life is highly communal
   1. Utopians take their meals in common.
   2. There is no personal privacy, as indicated by the absence of locks on doors.
   3. Restrictions are imposed on travel.
   4. People wear uniform, undyed clothing.
   5. To ensure against attachment to property, people are required to switch their domiciles every ten years.

D. Utopian society has an enlightened system of governance.
   1. To reduce the risk of corrupt bargains, political issues are never spoken of outside of chambers.
   2. To promote deliberation, no legislation can be debated on the same day it was introduced.
   3. Utopia is governed by an elected parliament and prince (the latter for a life term). Parliament's function is to allocate goods and labor to the individual towns, conduct foreign policy, and create new colonies.
   4. Governors are drawn from the educated class.

E. Various principles and criteria govern Utopian foreign policy and warfare.
   1. Utopians fight wars for only three reasons: to defend their territory, to defend the territory of an ally, or to liberate oppressed peoples.
   2. They refuse to enter into treaties with other states.
   3. They wage war either by offering a ransom for the enemy's leader, by buying off the enemy's army, or by employing mercenaries.

F. The Utopians practice religious tolerance.
   1. The Utopians promote Christianity but tolerate other religions.
   2. Atheists are denied political rights.

3. The Utopians prohibit visual representations of God so as not to favor any one interpretation of Him.

4. The Utopians' moral philosophy is eudaemonic, i.e., oriented toward altruistic pleasure as the highest good.

V. The communal nature of the Utopian community is at once a Christian-humanistic ideal of beauty and in some respects a harbinger of the twentieth-century total state. The distinction between private life (outside the purview of the government) and public life (that of the community) is almost extinguished.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Compare and contrast the governments of More's utopia and Plato's ideal republic.
2. How similar is More's moral eudaemonism to that of the classical Greeks?
Lecture Three
Machiavelli's The Prince: Political Realism, Political Science

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: As a premier work of political realism, Machiavelli's The Prince marks a sharp departure from the classical idealist tradition associated with Plato. The book's "hero," Cesare Borgia, is a cold-hearted, unscrupulous, calculating despot. The word "Machiavellian" has come to refer to a sinister, cunning person who ruthlessly pursues personal power in the manner described in The Prince. This lecture will explain Machiavelli's purposes in writing The Prince, and it will outline his practical advice for gaining and keeping political power.

Outline

I. Machiavelli's The Prince represents the rebirth of the classical tradition of empirical political speculation.

A. His purposes in writing The Prince were to urge the Medici to unify Italy and expel the "barbarian" invaders, and to ingratiate himself with the Medici in the hope of winning public office.

B. The Prince is a practical work on how to acquire, secure, hold, and improve princely power. It avoids normative observations. Its stark realism and proto-nationalism prefigure political thinking and practice in subsequent centuries.

II. Machiavelli offers the following advice to the prince.

A. All principalities are either based on inheritance or are newly founded. The former are easy to maintain as long as the prince respects tradition. The latter are somewhat harder to control; the precise difficulty in such a situation depends on certain fundamental circumstances.

1. If the prince has the same language as the kingdom he seeks to obtain, he must simply eliminate all members of the old royal family.

2. Acquisition and retention of a new kingdom having a different language and culture are more difficult and require the exercise of skill. The prince should reside in the new territory, plant colonies at strategic locations within it, and ally with his less powerful neighbors against his more powerful rivals.

B. All principalities are governed with the aid of either appointed ministers or hereditary barons. The prince will always have more power over the former than the latter.

1. Regimes with appointed ministers are difficult to conquer but easy to hold.

2. Regimes with barons are easy to conquer but difficult to hold.

C. Free cities are very difficult to conquer and hold because of their traditions of independence and liberty. Once the prince acquires such a city, he can either despoil it, take up residence within it, or give it autonomy under a friendly local elite while taking tribute.

D. Private citizens can become princes either through their own efforts and abilities, or through fortune and the efforts of others.

1. The former find it difficult to acquire new possessions because of the new rules they are forced to impose. Once obtained and reformed, however, these territories are easy to hold.

2. Those who become princes through fortune or the efforts of others have an easy ascent to power, but they have difficulty retaining power.

E. Some princes rise to power through coups d'etat, while others are elevated to that position by fellow citizens.

1. In the first case, the prudent ruler will commit all acts of cruelty at once, and subsequently he will soften his rule.

2. A prince elevated by his fellow citizens will have to play off the nobles against the people.

3. The prince should ensure that the people always need him and become dependent economically upon him. He will more easily gain the loyalty of the demos than of the nobility.

F. In addition to good laws, the basic foundation of any regime is good arms.

1. The prince must study the military arts and their historical practice.

2. Armies are either made of mercenaries, auxiliaries (the forces of allied nations), or a national militia. The militia is the only safe form of army.

G. It is better for a prince to have the reputation for stinginess than to be too liberal with his resources.

1. Excessive liberality will require the prince to impose high taxes, which incurs hatred and disgrace.

2. Miserliness will incur resentment but not hatred.

H. It is sometimes better for the prince to show cruelty than clemency.

1. It is always better for him to be feared than loved. Fear need not and should not bring hatred.

2. The key to avoiding hatred is not to take the property of citizens.

I. The prince should have the reputation for honesty, integrity, and religion, but not always the reality. For princes, the end justifies the mean.
Lecture Four
Bacon's New Organon: The Call for a New Science

Alan Kors, Ph.D.

Scope: Francis Bacon wrote more than thirty works of philosophy and many other tracts on law and science. He is regarded by many as the father of British empiricism. In his Novum Organum (1620), he presents a "new method" for acquiring knowledge that abandons the traditional deference toward the received wisdows of Aristotle and other classical sources and advocates inductive, theory-free observation by the senses. This lecture will examine the main features of Baconian scientific inquiry (chastity, holiness, and legality); Bacon's criteria for assessing the merit of philosophical ideas (usefulness and charity); the main themes of Bacon's Instauratio Magna; and his identification of obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge.

Outline

I. Francis Bacon sought to acquire useful knowledge. He took a distaste for Aristotle and Scholasticism while a student at Trinity College.

II. Bacon rebelled against the regnant Western philosophical tradition.
   A. He attacked it for confusing religious and natural knowledge and for emphasizing concern for words rather than concern for things.
   B. He sought to reorient rational inquiry toward existing things; i.e., the natural world. This inquiry must be:
      1. Chaste—i.e., without ornamentation or self-indulgence.
      2. Holy—i.e., undertaken with Christian humility and reverence, and directed toward charitable use.
      3. Legal—i.e., it must follow the correct method for acquiring knowledge.
   C. Bacon intended his New Organon to move European thought away from the worn and tortured Aristotelian system. He insisted on two new tests for judging the success of a system of knowledge:
      1. Philosophical (including scientific) ideas should be judged on the basis of their capacity to expand human power over nature and, by extension, to improve human well-being.
      2. Philosophical ideas should be judged by the religious value of their capacity to increase human charity.

Questions to Consider:
1. What does Machiavelli regard as the main duty of a prince? What must the prince do in order to fulfill this duty?
2. How can one reconcile Machiavelli's praise of republicanism in The Discourses with his championing of monarchical rule in The Prince?
III. Bacon’s “Great Instauration” has four main themes.

A. Knowledge is power.
   1. Knowledge must have the goal of increasing human power over the thing known.
   2. The goal of human dominion over nature is charity (rather than private gain). We must be humble in the face of nature.

B. Natural philosophy is distinct from theology.
   1. Scripture cannot dictate the methods or conclusions of science.
   2. Bacon defends himself against accusations of impiety by insisting that God would have written a better book of science than Scripture if He had meant to write science.

C. Bacon advocates use of the inductive method of scientific inquiry,
   1. He launches a dramatic assault on Aristotelian syllogistic argumentation based on deduction from a general principle assumed to be true. The major premises are derived from authority, and knowledge is extended by application of these general rules to particular cases.
   2. Bacon argued that knowledge of nature is derived from induction, i.e., experience of particular cases, from which generalizations are derived. This claim reversed the hierarchy of knowledge, elevating the careful observation of particular facts over clever manipulation of general rules.

D. Knowledge is cooperative and progressive. Because observation of facts in the world is the source of knowledge, no one human mind can know the final truths about nature. Science must be a dynamic, cooperative, and cumulative undertaking.

IV. Bacon formulated a metaphor for describing three kinds of mind.

A. The ant accumulates things indiscriminately.

B. The spider weaves intricate systems of its own devising.

C. The honeybee appropriates things from nature, which it mixes with its own content, producing something useful and sweet.

V. Bacon identified several obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge

A. We can be misled by our emotions, erroneous sense impressions, and equivocal words.

B. We worship “false idols.”
   1. “Idols of the Tribe” are the general tendencies inherent in human nature (uncritical reliance on sense perception; overgeneralizing; perceiving order where none exists).
   2. “Idols of the Cave” are distortions arising from our particular perspectives.

3. “Idols of the Marketplace” are distortions arising from faulty communication, and especially from ambiguous words.

4. “Idols of the Theater” are errors introduced by abstract theories, especially those of Aristotelianism and of systems that mix theological and scientific notions.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:


Questions to Consider:
1. What are Bacon’s main objections to Aristotelian science? How did Bacon’s own method differ from that of Aristotle and his Scholastic followers?

2. Describe and distinguish among Bacon’s four “idols of the mind.” Is it possible to overcome these “idols,” and if so, how?
Lecture Five
Descartes' Epistemology and the Mind-Body Problem

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: Rene Descartes is widely regarded as the first modern philosopher. His philosophical method centered on radical doubt of all received knowledge and the search for an indubitable first principle upon which to found all knowledge. This lecture will review the four steps of Descartes' method for gaining certain knowledge; his argument for assuring himself of his own existence (the "Cogito, ergo sum"); his rationale for distinguishing mind from body; the philosophical problems created by this mind-body dualism; and the answers to these problems proposed by Descartes' followers.

Outline

I. Rene Descartes is known as the father of modern philosophy.
   A. He refused to appeal to the authority of the great classical thinkers. Instead, he tried to build an entirely new and complete philosophical system on foundations that were purely rational and logically certain.
   B. Descartes' philosophy was modern in its search for absolute certainty that rested upon science and logic rather than the authority of the ancients.

II. The "Cartesian Method" was the basis of Descartes' philosophy.
   A. Descartes claimed that his method, if followed correctly, would produce absolute certainty.
   B. The Cartesian Method comprised four different steps or operations:
      1. The first step consists of systematic doubt of anything that can be doubted and is therefore logically unnecessary. Such propositions should be rejected as merely probable. Only that which is certain ought be accepted as a philosophical starting point.
      2. The second step is analysis—each problem or issue should be analyzed (i.e., broken down) into its smallest constituent parts.
      3. The third step is synthesis—complex wholes or issues should be logically reconstructed from their constituent elements.
      4. The final step is to recapitulate the argument—such reconstruction should be carefully composed and copied down in the manner of Euclidean or other mathematical proofs.

III. Descartes extended systematic doubt to the existence of the physical world and all mathematical knowledge.
   A. Since the only things we apprehend immediately are our own cognitive states, how can we be certain that an external reality corresponds to our perceptions?
   B. If one can doubt his own physical existence, then he must necessarily exist, for there must be something that possesses the cognitive state of doubting. Thus, "Cogito, ergo sum"—I am thinking, therefore I am. I am a thinking being or mind.
   C. The Cogito is an intuitively clear and distinct idea, and thus it is indubitably true. Geometrical and logical proofs and our idea of God are also clear and distinct and hence indubitably true.
   D. We know that God exists because He is infinitely perfect, which implies that He must exist. Because God is infinitely good and thus is not a deceiver, we have reason to believe that an external physical world corresponds to our perceptions of it.

IV. Descartes distinguished between mind and body.
   A. Since two things are identical if and only if they both possess the same properties, the mind (which cannot be doubted) is distinct from the body (which is doubtable). The universe is thus composed of two distinct substances, mind and body. Man, who possesses both mind and body, is thus a microcosm of the universe.
   B. Descartes' mind-body dualism poses two logical problems:
      1. How can mind and body causally interact, since they are two distinct substances that have nothing in common? Some Cartesians posit "parallelism" (mental and bodily activities occur simultaneously) or "occasionalism" (God intervenes to ensure that our cognitive states correspond to physical realities).
      2. Statements about belief are "referentially opaque"; i.e., they refer not to things in themselves but to our statements about things.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Lecture Six
Hobbes' *Leviathan*: Of Man

Professor Dennis Dalton, Ph.D.

Scope: In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes describes in splendid detail his philosophy of materialism. This lecture will review Hobbes’ materialist explanation of human behavior and emotion, and it will consider how his view of human psychology distinguishes his political theory from Plato’s. Whereas Plato held that both the individual human soul and the state should be ruled by reason, Hobbes holds that reason serves the passions, the strongest of which are the desire for security and the fear of violent death. His materialistic ethics regards as “good” what brings pleasure and as “evil” what brings pain.

Outline

I. The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes was born in 1588, a time of immense turmoil. The circumstances of his birth is significant because they constitute a metaphor for his whole political philosophy.

II. Hobbes' great work of political theory is *Leviathan*.
   A. *Leviathan* is a brilliant book because of its systematic, logical tightness.
   B. Its main theme is the commonwealth, which men regard with awe and against which they seek protection.
   C. Its specific themes include the material composition of human nature, the social covenant, and the power and authority of the sovereign.
   D. Hobbes discerns two key passions in human nature: desire and fear.

III. Hobbes's political theory departs sharply from the Platonic tradition.
   A. Unlike Plato, who held that human behavior should be governed by reason, Hobbes argues that reason cannot rule because humans are sensual and passionate animals, not rational types.
      1. All thought arises from sense perception
      2. Reason calculates which passion is the strongest and how to satisfy it.
   B. Unlike Plato, who held that reason allows the creation of a state based on virtue, Hobbes holds that states arise from the passion of fear and that they exist only to provide security.
IV. Hobbes groups passions into two categories: appetites or desires (those that we move toward) and aversions (those which tell us to move away).

A. Hobbes attributes “good” to appetites and desires (representing pleasure) and “bad” to aversions (representing pain). Happiness consists of nothing more than continual success in satisfying one’s desires.

B. The strongest human passions are the desire of power and the fear of violent death.
   1. The struggle for power ends only in death; it cannot lead to permanent tranquility.
   2. Humans in the state of nature fear each other as potential murderers; they are driven by fear to seek ever more power, which frightens others into seeking power for their own self-defense. The inability to attain total security arises from this vicious cycle of fear-defense-fear, not from any innate human aggressiveness or avariciousness.
   3. Constant fear of death thus motivates our chronic state of insecurity and anxiety.

V. Hobbes describes the human predicament in the state of nature as a futile search for peace, security, and order.

A. He insists that the general law of peace and peace-seeking is at the bottom of all human behavior.

B. Humans in the state of nature fail to attain peace and security because their efforts to do so instill fear in others, trapping all in a vicious cycle.

C. According to Hobbes, the only way to escape this cycle is to create a higher authority—an all powerful state that can obtain greater safety and security for human beings.

D. Whereas Plato would use education to transform people’s attitudes, Hobbes relies not on reason but on human passions to rescue people from their condition of pervasive insecurity.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:


Questions to Consider:
1. Compare and contrast the views of Plato and Hobbes on the interaction between reason and the passions or appetites. How do their differing views of human nature contribute to their differing political conclusions?
2. How does Hobbes’s materialism influence his understanding of ethics and moral choice?
Lecture Seven

Hobbes' Leviathan: Of the Commonwealth

Dennis Dalton, Ph.D.

Scope: In this lecture we consider Hobbes' dramatic departure from the classical tradition in political theory. His social-contract theory of government rejected the medieval idea that the monarch derives his authority from God and the Platonic idea that justice is objectively rooted rather than a matter of convention. Hobbes discovered the roots of justice in individuals' fear of domination by others, and he held that government should be based upon the rational self-interest of its constituents. We will examine Hobbes' explanation of the origin of political society and his reasons for favoring absolute monarchy as the best form of government.

Outline

I. In the second part of Leviathan, Hobbes sets forth the finest and most logical and systematic statement of political realism in Western political philosophy.

A. Hobbes agrees with Plato that a healthy society requires the concentration of leadership and power in the right hands. Both Hobbes and Plato begin with a perception of crisis arising from civil war.

B. Locke stands to Hobbes as Aristotle stands to Plato. Both Locke and Aristotle are "reformers" who warn that concentration of power can lead to despotism.


II. Hobbes restates the critique of justice offered in The Republic by Glauc
c, the first exponent of social contract theory.

A. According to Glauc, human beings—who individually are too weak to dominate each other—form a contract to ensure their own self-preservation. Justice consists in their agreement not to attempt to dominate each other.

B. Glauc's key assumption—which Hobbes also accepts—is that the nature and origin of justice are rooted not in any transcendent objective standard but in convention. Justice is the result of fear of domination by others.

1. Thus social contract theory as expounded by Glauc and Hobbes rests upon moral relativism.

2. Exit from the state of war comes not through reason or education, but through fear. Individuals who are desperate for a resolution arrive at a covenant.

III. Hobbes describes the origins of the state.

A. He asserts in his discourse on "The Natural Condition of Mankind" that human beings in the state of nature are radically equal—the weakest are capable of killing the strongest.

1. Thus no one in the state of nature enjoys security.

2. The condition of war exists whenever there is no common power to keep people in awe.

B. Hobbes does not view the state of nature as a purely historical period or condition. We can revert to the state of nature at any time.

C. The passions that incline men to seek peace are fear of death and desire for security.

D. Humans cannot ensure their own peace and security by themselves. They must fashion a covenant under which they transfer their rights and power to a sovereign.

1. The contract establishes a common power that will leave the people in awe and direct their actions toward a common good.

2. Men can achieve peace, order, and security only by conferring all of their power and strength upon one man or assembly, thereby reducing their multiple wills to one.

E. Individual human beings authorize the sovereign to assume and exercise all of their rights and powers for the sake of ensuring their own peace and security.

1. The sovereign is not a party to the social contract, and thus its power is not limited by its terms.

2. The sovereign holds all executive, legislative, and judicial powers. It has power over all private and public property. (Locke views the right to property as unalienable.)

IV. The legitimacy of the contract depends upon the sovereign's ability to ensure personal security.

A. Each subject retains the right to his own life.

B. Individuals can withdraw from the contract if the sovereign fails to ensure security.

C. Hobbes has established the principles of legitimacy (rooted in the self-interest of each person) and liberalism (rooted in his perception that the people are the source of the sovereign's power to maintain peace and security).
Lecture Eight
Spinoza's Ethics

Darren Staloff, Ph.D

Scope: This lecture will examine the metaphysical and ethical ideas of Baruch Spinoza, one of the most brilliant and challenging thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition. Spinoza's principal work, the Ethics, offers a brilliant expression of his metaphysical monism. He argues that the universe is reducible to a single substance, which he identifies as monads, rather than to two two discrete substances—mind and body, as Descartes had it. Spinoza asserts that Nature is not the creation of a supernatural God. Rather, he identifies Nature as God. Spinoza believes that what is, is of necessity. Knowledge of this necessity gives power and virtue to individuals. Escape from desires through understanding is one of the benefits of the ethical life.

Outline

I. Baruch Spinoza is one of the most challenging thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition. His arguments are extremely abstruse and technical, and in many ways they are antithetical to the mainstream European intellectual tradition.

A. Spinoza was the first modern philosopher completely to reject, in the name of science and reason, the traditional Judeo-Christian notion of a personal God.

B. Spinoza rejected any teleological interpretation of nature and man. He held that the world's operation do not reveal any intelligence, purpose, or moral content.

II. Spinoza advocated a metaphysical monism.

A. Spinoza was profoundly influenced by Descartes's philosophy. Given Descartes's epistemology and definition of substance, Spinoza concluded that it is logically impossible for there to be more than one substance, and hence he subscribed to metaphysical monism.

B. This one substance is the universe itself, which Spinoza identified as "God" or "nature." This pantheistic reverence for being represents Spinoza's attempt to offer a purely rational and scientific form of spiritual nurturance.

C. Spinoza rejected Descartes's mind-body dualism and argued instead that mind and body are two different attributes of the same substance (described as either intellective or extended).

1. That is, mind and body comprise distinct descriptive protocols or different ways of talking about the same events or phenomena.
2. The mind of God exists only within nature and is identifiable with human rationality (and thus also with the human body, since mind and body are not distinct).

III. Spinoza advocated monistic determinism.

A. Given the Cartesian epistemological view that intuitively clear and distinct ideas are true (i.e., they correspond to objective reality), Spinoza concluded that the causal nexus is identical to logical implication. Therefore, all causes are logically necessary.

B. Since every change and event has a cause, then everything is determined. Consequently, there is no chance or accident in the universe.

C. Since all natural events have a cause, and humans are part of nature, then all human actions are determined and thus free will is a logical impossibility and absurd.

D. Positing only the instinct of conatus (i.e., desire for survival) and the principle of association, Spinoza, like Hobbes, demonstrated that human emotions are causally necessary responses to external stimuli.

IV. Spinoza argued that the well-being or happiness of humans is a function of their relative empowerment through their environment.

A. The capacity of the environment to induce powerful psychological states or emotions is the cause of human bondage.

B. Insofar as our disposition is caused by external events, these events control us and we are merely passive.

C. Spinoza’s way of salvation is predicated on achieving control over one’s emotions by using reason to understand their necessary causes and thereby therapeutically eliminate their control over one’s mind/body.

D. Human salvation, or blessedness, consists in understanding the necessity of each event that occurs in life and facing each with equanimity.

1. Such a quasi-Buddhist enlightened person can transcend hatred, revere being, and manifest his empowerment through a universal rational love.

2. By loving everything (even one’s enemies), one demonstrates his freedom from control of his emotions by outside stimuli. Happiness and love become a demonstration of one’s power.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:


Questions to Consider:
1. How does Spinoza reconcile his rigid determinism with his emphasis on freedom as the goal of his philosophy?
2. How does Spinoza resolve the Cartesian problem of soul-body interaction?
Lecture Nine
The Newtonian Revolution

Alan Charles Kors, Ph.D.

Scope: In this lecture we will examine the scientific discoveries of Isaac Newton and assess their profound philosophical, cosmological, and theological implications. The lecture examines the emergence during the seventeenth century of learned societies for scientific research, and it reviews Newton's stunning discoveries during his stay in the country in 1665 and 1666. We will also examine the Cartesians' accusation that Newton "feigned hypotheses" regarding gravitation after the manner of Aristotle, and we will assess Newton's response to this charge.

Outline

I. Various learned societies were formed in seventeenth-century Europe to study "natural philosophy."

   A. These societies arose, especially in England, as centers for the study of new empirical sciences, since the universities remained beholden to Aristotelian Scholasticism.

   B. Among the most important of these societies was the Royal Society.

      1. In the 1640s, students and professors began meeting informally to discuss "experimental philosophy."
      2. In 1662, this group was chartered as the Royal Society. It regarded both experimentation and publication of one's findings as essential for the advancement of knowledge.
      3. In 1664, the Royal Society divided into committees, each devoted to a different scientific discipline.

II. The life and achievements of Isaac Newton.

   A. Newton was born in 1642 and entered Cambridge University at the relatively advanced age of 19 in 1661. Although the Aristotelians dominated Cambridge, Newton entered Trinity College, a center of Cartesian physics and higher mathematics.

   B. Cambridge was evacuated in 1665 due to the plague, and Newton returned home, where over the next eighteen months he made numerous scientific discoveries.

      1. Newton asked how the moon maintains its orbit around the earth. All seventeenth-century physicists and astronomers believed that natural inertial motion is circular; Descartes regarded inertial motion as straight but held that a whirlpool of matter maintained the moon in its orbit. Newton formulated his Law of Gravity to explain the moon's motion.
      2. He also developed differential and integral calculus, formulated his Three Laws of Motion (or Thermodynamics), discovered the composition of light, and set the foundation for modern optics.
      3. He shared none of these discoveries with anyone else for several years.

III. Newton's great scientific work is entitled the Principia.

   A. In 1684, Newton showed his work on gravity to the astronomer Halley, who encouraged him to publish it. Newton did so in the Principia of 1687.

   B. The Principia was a staggering achievement. It made the universe seem lucid, structured, and understandable. The human mind appeared able to understand God's design for the universe.

      1. The action of gravity and inertia upon matter served to explain both terrestrial and celestrial motion, thereby unifying both types of physics. Humans can understand and predict both earthly and celestial motion.
      2. The achievements of empirical observation and mathematical technique gave dramatic confirmation to the claims of empiricism. Before, "nature and nature's laws lay hid in night; God said 'let Newton be,' and all was light" (Alexander Pope).

   C. The Cartesians attacked Newton's theory of gravity.

      1. They regarded Newton's doctrine regarding the earth's gravitational power of attraction as a throwback to teleological Aristotelian explanations of motion via "occult forces." They regarded gravity as an occult and unprovable posit that failed to demonstrate the mechanism by which one mass acts upon another at a distance.
      2. Newtonians replied that the force of gravity is demonstrable by its effects and that its action is predictable. There is no need to feign hypotheses to explain what it is.
      3. Newton's response is in keeping with Locke's empiricism; only observable facts can be known. The irreducible "qualities" of things cannot be known, nor would awareness of them be useful.

   D. Newton's discoveries had profound implications.

      1. Nature is knowable—the universe is ordered, and it operates according to laws knowable through reason.
      2. The pursuit of natural knowledge is pursuit of the knowledge of God, and thus science is a species of piety.
Lecture Ten

The Early Enlightenment and the Search for the Laws of History: Vico’s *New Science of History*

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the efforts of the historian Giambattista Vico to use Newton’s scientific method to discern regular and constant laws of historical causation and human behavior. We will review Vico’s argument for the possibility of attaining certain knowledge of history, and we will examine his cyclical theory of history, according to which class struggle propels history from the Age of Gods through the Age of Heroes to the Age of Men. Finally, we will consider some implications of Vico’s “new science” of history.

Outline

I. Vico proposed a new science of man.
   A. The early Enlightenment sought to apply Newton’s scientific method to the study of humanity; to replace considerations of entelechy with regular and constant laws.
   B. The “science of man” took two forms.
      1. Scientific psychology, which sought to taxonomize and explain the laws of human behavior.
      2. Identification of the laws of historical causation.
   C. Giambattista Vico combined both of these approaches.

II. Vico redefined the epistemological status of history.
   A. Cartesian epistemology precluded any possibility of scientific history, since the objects of historical inquiry are not “clear and distinct” and not susceptible to experimentation.
   B. Vico offered a critique of the Cartesian depreciation of scientific history.
      1. Clarity and distinctness are not universal criteria of truth. These attributes apply only to mathematical objects, since they are wholly conceptual and lack empirical referents—i.e., they are human creations. We attain knowledge of scientific objects through experiment rather than deduction, and thus our knowledge of them is practical and incomplete.
      2. Vico replaced the "cogito" with his own principle of "verum factum"—we know the truth about objects that we have cognitively constructed or "made." Since history is made exclusively by men, it can be known by them with scientific certainty.
III. Vico proposed a new theory of history.

A. In his view, history is cyclical.
   1. All nations undergo a common course of development through three stages, each of which represents a distinct level of cultural activity and consciousness.
   2. Class struggle is the mechanism that moves any culture through these stages.
   3. Each stage is increasingly popular, humanistic, and democratic. When the cycle has run its course, the whole process begins anew.
   4. The scope of Vico's theory is the history of the post-deluvian gentiles, and its primary focus is the history of Hellenic classical Greece and Rome, which is taken as the archetypal pattern.

B. According to Vico, history passes through three stages.
   1. The first stage is the Age of Gods.
      a. History begins with the establishment of the "family state."
      b. Augury is the principal form of wisdom and law.
      c. The patriarch has absolute power as king, judge, and priest.
      d. This stage of history is characterized by three main institutions: religion, marriage, and the burial of the dead.
      e. The mentality of this epoch is crude, superstitious, and based on sense.
   2. The second stage is the Age of Heroes.
      a. Some primitive men seek refuge from their more violent fellows in the "asylums" (forest clearings) of the patriarchs, where they work the land and ultimately become serfs. A feudal social order emerges.
      b. The patriarchs unite against the serfs and create aristocratic commonwealths. Patrician and plebeian orders emerge, each defined in opposition to the other.
      c. The mentality of this stage is characterized by imagination and poetic creativity.
   3. The third stage is the Age of Men.
      a. The plebes continue to fight for their rights, especially those of sacred marriage, citizenship, and access to political office. This process culminates in the rise of democratic republics and recognition of every man's inherent dignity as a rational being.
      b. Democracy degenerates into disorder. An ambitious leader restores order through constitutional monarchy, but culture continues to degenerate. A madman arises who destroys the state.
      c. The overall mentality of this period is characterized by a hyperrationalism that eventually becomes purely skeptical and critical. Legal and social humanism gives way to luxury and decadence. The society loses the common bonds of religion and regard for the public good.

C. Once a culture or nation has run its course, it continues to degenerate until it can recover the religious and primal spontaneity of the primitive mind, which is expressed as contact with God. For instance, the early Christian Church heralded a new "Age of the Gods" among Europeans, followed by an "Age of Heroes" in medieval Europe, which was in turn followed by an "Age of Reason" which announced the next "Age of Men" in Europe.

IV. Vico's theory has important implications.

A. Each historical stage represents a new stage in human mentality.
B. Artifacts such as Homer's Iliad and heraldic paraphernalia are sources for reconstructing a worldview or culture.
C. The state should reflect the stage of cultural development of the nation over which it presides.
D. History teaches us the psychological nature of man, and it is the true science of man.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Compare and contrast the explanations offered by Vico and Hobbes for the origin of society.
2. How does Vico's philosophy of history avoid the fatalism of cyclical or eternal return?
Lecture Eleven
Pascal's Pensees

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Blaise Pascal's religious writings were published posthumously as Pensees de M. Pascal sur la Religion et sur Quelques autres Sujects (1670), in which he asserted the insufficiency of either rationalism or skepticism to solve men's problems or realize their hopes. Instead, Pascal argued, we must give ourselves over to the mysteries of faith if we are to achieve comfort and true understanding. This lecture will review Pascal's scientific achievements, his turn toward religious speculation and introspection, his attraction to Jansenism, his efforts to undermine his contemporaries' attachment to rationalism and skepticism, and the purpose of his famous "Wager" argument in favor of religious belief.

Outline

I. Blaise Pascal was a mathematician, mystic and apologist for Christianity.
   A. Acclaimed as a scientific and mathematical prodigy, he made original contributions to the theory of probability, the philosophy of science, and experimental physics (air pressure and the vacuum).
   B. Pascal gave up his scientific and mathematical pursuits following his conversion experience. His scientific contributions have been eclipsed by an unfinished work, An Apology for the Christian Religion (published as Pensees), in which he sets forth his conception of Christianity.

II. Pascal recalled his conversion experience as the "night of fire."
   A. In 1646 he became attracted to Jansenism (a Catholic heresy that emphasized the depravity of the human condition) and spent long hours reading the Bible and meditating upon the mysteries of faith.
      1. He became associated with the Jansenist convent of Port-Royal.
      2. In his Provincial Letters, he attacked the casuistry and hypocrisy of the Jesuit enemies of Jansenism.
   B. On November 23, 1654, Pascal had a conversion experience which he called the "night of fire"—a direct apprehension of God. His interests subsequently shifted from science and mathematics to charitable works, apologetics, and morbid introspection.

III. Pascal's intellectual milieu.
   A. Pascal sought to undermine both Cartesian rationalism and the complacent skepticism of Montaigne and his ilk.

   1. He wrote for an educated audience that no longer took religion seriously and had drifted toward either hubristic rationalism or self-indulgence.
   2. He sought to show the insufficiency of both Cartesian arrogance and Montaigne's skepticism and complacency for achieving true knowledge and happiness. Both rationalism and skepticism bring moral endangerment.

B. Pascal hoped both to stimulate a search for religious enlightenment by rousing his audience to a frenzied despair, and to undermine scientific naturalism as an alternative stance toward Being.
   1. Tradition, as well as reason, is an important source of knowledge and authority.
   2. Reliance on reason alone brings frustration and misery.

IV. Theology for Accountants: The Wager.
   A. Pascal sought to atone for his earlier misuse of probability theory (through gambling) by putting it to good use in encouraging belief in and obedience to God.
   B. The major premise of Pascal's wager is that God either does or does not exist.
      1. If an atheist denies a nonexistent God, he gains little, since human life is nasty, brutish, and short. If an atheist denies a real God, he is damned for all time.
      2. If a believer accepts a nonexistent God, he loses nothing in the afterlife, since there is none, and nothing in this life, since it is wretched without God, an aimless meandering toward extinction. If a believer accepts a real God, he gains salvation.
   C. Pascal did not intend his "Wager" argument to serve as a rational proof of God's existence.
      1. The existence of the inscrutable Deus abscondita cannot be proven mathematically, as blasphemous Cartesians suggested. The Wager is propaedic, not conclusive; it is a stimulus to religious inquiry.
      2. The motive for belief that underlies the Wager, however, is self-interest rather than disinterested love of God. What if God prefers the intellectual honesty of the agnostic to the calculation of those who adopt belief out of prudence rather than inspiration? Pascal responds that suicide is the only rational alternative to belief in God.

V. "Distracted from Distraction by Distraction" (T.S. Eliot).
   A. Pascal had an Augustinian view of human depravity, which foreshadowed the contemporary-sounding idea that human life is meaningless.
      1. Without God, the world is meaningless and the human condition is wretched.
      2. Pascal believed (probably correctly) that there was no political solution to the human condition. Human aspiration and activities
merely divert our attention from our corruption, contingency, and mortality.

B. Pascal had Hamlet's problem but he devised his own solution—a dive into faith, using mathematics as a springboard.

VI. Conclusion: Esprit d'Kierkegaard or Esprit d'Nietzsche

A. One's evaluation of Pascal depends upon one's stance toward Being—i.e., whether one is a spiritual citizen of Athens or Jerusalem, a child of Job or Prometheus.
   1. Pascal's morbid and overwrought religious enthusiasm resembled that of Kierkegaard.
   2. Nietzsche wrote: 'I will never forgive Christianity for what it did to Pascal.' Pascal's shift from science to theology is symptomatic of what Nietzsche believed was worst in Christianity.

B. Pascal was great because he swam against the current of the Enlightenment. Instead of going from God to Nature, he reversed the sequence.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Does Pascal's rejection of Cartesian rationalism imply a corresponding rejection of reason as a means of attaining knowledge? Why or why not?
2. What is the purpose of Pascal's wager argument? What conclusions can one legitimately draw from it?

Lecture Twelve
The Philosophy of G. W. Leibniz
Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the epistemological and metaphysical theories of G.W. Leibniz. It examines the Cartesian roots of Leibniz's central philosophical assumptions and concerns, and it considers how Leibniz anticipated Kant's distinction between external reality and how we perceive it. We will also investigate Leibniz's theory of monads, his four proofs of the existence of God, and the rationale for his optimistic conclusion that we inhabit the best of all possible worlds.

Outline

I. Introduction to the life and works of G. W. Leibniz (1646-1716).
   A. Leibniz led an interesting life, held fabulous doctrines, and was a precursor of many interesting later developments in philosophy.
      1. His progressive view of history prefigured Vico and Hegel.
      2. His understanding of the relativity of space and time prefigured Kant.
   B. Although he was a very logical thinker, Leibniz never synthesized his work into a published treatise or system. The following account is based primarily on his published views in the *Monadology* and *Discourse on Metaphysics*.

II. The assumptions and problematic that underlay Leibniz's thought came from Descartes. These assumptions and problems included:
   A. Syllogistic logic and its implications for the distinctions between substance/accident and necessity/contingency.
   B. Mind-body dualism.
   C. Rationalist epistemology of clear and distinct ideas, and the problem of mind-body interaction.
   D. The problem of skepticism: how do we know that our mental states correspond to external reality?

III. Leibnizian philosophy reflects mind-body dualism and skepticism.
   A. Leibniz argued from the dualism of mind and body toward a proto-Kantian distinction between the world as it really is and as it appears to us.
   B. Also like Kant, Leibniz argued that space, time, and extension are mentally constructed and not "things in themselves."
      1. Space is relative to the perspective of the viewer.
2. Time is a human construct by which we organize our mental states.
3. Extension is posited by humans as an attribute of things that are contiguous

IV. Leibniz propounded a new metaphysics.

A. He held that the ultimate entities of the universe are non-extended metaphysical points that he called monads. As in atomism, the physical objects of our experience are in fact merely aggregates of these monads.
1. Monads are simple substances and thus lack divisibility and extension.
2. Monads possess entelechies or substantial forms. They are composed of “mind.”
3. Monads have "perception" in the sense that their activity reflects the activity surrounding them.
4. Monads have “appetition”—the exercise of an inner potency that determines their activity. It refers to the monad’s internal inclination or disposition to develop in a particular way.

B. Every organic body has a dominant monad called the “soul.” The dominant monad of a human body is a spirit or rational soul.
1. The dominant monad accounts for the relationship between monads of the body and of the mind.
2. There is a hierarchy of consciousness among dominant monads—from those of plants to those of humans.

C. Leibniz held that the monads seem to interact with each other, but in fact they do not.
1. Each monad is autonomous and a microcosm of the entire universe. Each develops according to its own internal entelechy, which is perfectly attuned to the development of everything else in the universe.
2. The universe contains an infinite number of autonomous monads that seemingly interact in causal relation to one another but in fact operate independently, much like a series of perfectly tuned clocks.
3. This doctrine, which Leibniz called “pre-established harmony,” allowed him to reconcile final and efficient causality. The former relates to the universe of monads while the latter relates to the phenomenal world of appearances.

D. Leibniz offered four arguments for the existence of God:
1. The ontological argument—we can imagine God as the perfect being and thus He must exist, since existence is an attribute of perfection.
2. The argument from “eternal truths”—an eternal mind must exist to contain necessary or eternal ideas.
3. The cosmological argument—everything that occurs has a cause, and God is the uncaused first cause.
4. The argument from the pre-established harmony—God ensures the perfect harmony of all monads.

E. According to Leibniz, there must be a sufficient reason why every event or state occurs as it does. All that occurs, does so for some necessary reason.
1. This law raises troubling questions about determinism and freedom of the will. It also raises the question of the sufficient reason for the existence of the world.
2. Leibniz proposes the following answer is the principle of perfection: God could have created any of an infinity of possible worlds, but He created the one that maximizes perfection. God acts for the best, and this is the best of all possible worlds. Evil is a consequence of human free will, which is itself a good.

V. Leibniz’s theory poses some problems.

A. How do we know that any external reality corresponds to our perceptions?
B. Leibniz draws completely logical but utterly implausible deductions from the Cartesian problematic. By raising questions about Cartesian rationalism, Leibniz signals the need for a new paradigm.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. How might Leibniz’s theory of monads reinforce the attitude of skepticism and doubt regarding the external world that was characteristic of the Age of Enlightenment?
2. Is Leibniz's solution to the problem of mind-body interaction any more satisfactory than that offered by Descartes and his followers?

Glossary

analysis: the process of breaking a concept down into simpler parts, so that its logical structure is evident.

appetition: in the philosophy of Leibniz, the quas-psychological impulse or aspiration that constitutes the principle of change in monads.

deduction: a process of reasoning in which a conclusion is drawn logically from a set of premises.

divine law: according to Aquinas, divine law is the revealed law of God, a product of grace that leads men to faith, hope, love.

dualism: the ontological position that there are two sorts of things: generally, minds and bodies or physical objects. Descartes is the most famous dualist.

entelechy: the informing spirit that gives life to something, or the active power that generates motion in material things.

eternal law: according to Aquinas, the eternal law is God's plan for the governance of the universe.

induction: a process of reasoning that draws empirical conclusions as generalizations from empirical premises.

Jansenism: a reformist and quasi-Calvinist tendency within seventeenth-century Catholicism that emphasized predestination and the need for personal holiness and reliance on God's saving grace. One of the greatest Jansenists was Blaise Pascal.

materialism: the view that all reality consists of matter. The philosophical concept of materialism originated with the ancient atomists and received one of its classic modern statements in the work of Thomas Hobbes.

monad: in the philosophy of Leibniz, monads are extensionless, indivisible mental entities of which all material reality is composed. They are capable of perceptions and appetitive states, but each is self-sufficient and develops independently of any other.

natural law: according to Aquinas, natural law is the means by which rational creatures participate in eternal law. It is a set of moral principles accessible by reason or by observation of the world (independently, that is, of scripture).

nominalism: with regard to the problem of universals, nominalism holds that only particular things exist and that universals pick out sets of such things in virtue of their similarities with one another. William of Ockham, Hobbes, and Hume are nominalists.

Organon: a system of principles for investigating the world. The term is associated with Aristotle's system. Bacon put forward a "New Organon" with the intention of replacing scholasticism with empirical science.
pantheism: the view that God and nature, or God and the universe, are identical. The position is associated with Spinoza, among others.

positive law: according to Aquinas, positive law refers to legislation promulgated by earthly authorities.

rationalism: a philosophical movement characterized by emphasis on reason as a source of knowledge and by deductive method. Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz are classical rationalists.

scholasticism: the philosophy taught in church schools and theological training institutions since the high middle ages. It was the dominant philosophical school in Europe from the 11th century until the 16th century, and it combined religious doctrine, study of the Church Fathers, and Aristotelian philosophical concepts.

synthesis: the process of reconciling a thesis and antithesis, or the outcome of such a reconciliation.

Thomism: the philosophical and religious thought of St. Thomas Aquinas.

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Biographical Notes

Aquinas, St. Thomas (1224-1274): Known as the Angelic Doctor, Aquinas is the greatest figure of Scholasticism. He was born outside Naples into the ruling family of Aquino and was educated by Benedictine monks. At age twenty he joined the Dominican order while a student at the University of Naples. His family was disappointed by his religious commitments, hoping instead that he would assist them in their political endeavors. Kidnapped by his brothers and held prisoner for a year in the family castle, Aquinas escaped in 1245 and made his way to Paris to study with the Dominican theologian Albertus Magnus. He taught theology at Paris, Cologne, and Rome, combining Aristotle with Christianity and arguing that reason is subordinate to faith and does not contradict faith. His greatest philosophical accomplishment is the *Summa Theologica*, which remains today one of the pillars of Catholic theology. Aquinas died on March 7, 1274 at a monastery between Naples and Rome.

Bacon, Francis (1561-1626): Bacon was born in London and educated at Cambridge University. His father, Sir Nicholas Bacon, served at Queen Elizabeth's court, and his position opened many political and intellectual opportunities for his son. At age sixteen Bacon was an assistant ambassador to France, and at twenty-five he became a member of Parliament. His early years in Parliament included participation in the Queen Elizabeth's Learned Council. Knighted in 1603, he subsequently became attorney general and, in 1618, Lord Chancellor. In 1621 he was banished from court after having pled guilty to taking bribes. He dedicated the remaining five years of his life to writing philosophy and literature.

Descartes, Rene (1596-1650): Descartes was born in France and educated by the Jesuits at the College of La Fleche and at Poitiers. After a university training that included the study of rhetoric, philosophy, theology, and mathematics, Descartes joined the army of Prince Maurice for the sole purpose, as he later wrote, of continuing his education. After leaving the army he traveled throughout Europe, living for a time in Paris and then in Holland. During his early years in Holland, he wrote a study of physics, but upon hearing of Galileo's condemnation by the Catholic Church he judged it prudent not to publish the work. In 1649 he moved to Sweden to tutor Queen Christina, and he died there the following year.

Hobbes, Thomas (1588-1679): Hobbes graduated from Oxford University at age twenty, and for many years thereafter he served the Cavendish family. This lifelong connection afforded Hobbes many opportunities. As tutor for the family's children, he twice toured the Continent. On the second tour (1634-1637), he joined the intellectual circle surrounding the mathematician Mersenne, a group that included Descartes. Hobbes fled England in 1640, in the midst of rising political turmoil that would culminate in the English Civil War. He lived during the next decade in France, serving for a time as tutor to Charles II. Returning to England in 1651, he again served the Cavendish family as tutor, advisor, and secretary. He
spent the remainder of his ninety-one years writing and debating prominent religious figures, mathematicians, and scientists.

**Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm** (1646-1716): Leibniz was born in Leipzig into an academic family. In 1676 Leibniz became librarian to the Duke of Brunswick at Hanover, a position which he held until his death forty years later. In 1700 Leibniz was appointed president for life of the Berlin Society of Sciences. He maintained a wide correspondence throughout much of his life with mathematicians, scientists, and theologians. Leibniz is best known for his invention (independently of Sir Isaac Newton) of the calculus. His notation is used in the calculus today. Leibniz is credited with laying the foundations for the first system of symbolic logic. He also made major improvements to Pascal’s calculating machine, laid the groundwork for the branch of mathematics known as topology, and set out to write a universal history.

**Machiavelli, Niccolo** (1469-1527): Born in Florence into an impoverished branch of a distinguished family, Machiavelli became a major figure in Renaissance political philosophy. As a Florentine diplomat, he learned about power politics and met many of the figures about whom he subsequently wrote—among them Cesare Borgia, Pope Julius II, and the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. When the Medici took power in Florence in 1512, Machiavelli was dismissed from his post and withdrew to his home in the countryside. In 1513 he was briefly imprisoned and tortured for his alleged role in a conspiracy against the Medici.

**More, Thomas** (1478-1535): More was educated at Oxford University and subsequently became a successful London lawyer and a diplomat in the court of Henry VIII. After serving the king in a number of important governmental positions, he was appointed Lord Chancellor in 1529. More resigned this position in 1532, and was soon thereafter imprisoned in the Tower of London for refusing to swear allegiance to Henry VIII as head of the Church of England. Beheaded in 1535, More died a celebrated martyr in the Roman Catholic Church.

**Newton, Isaac** (1642-1727): Newton was born at Woolsthorpe, England, and attended Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1664 the university was forced to close temporarily due to plague, and Newton returned home to Woolsthorpe where, during the following eighteen months, he made his revolutionary discoveries in gravitation, calculus, and the composition of light. At the urging of the astronomer Edmund Halley, Newton published his theories regarding gravity and other subjects in his famous *Principia* in 1687. Newton was Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, and he was president of the Royal Society from 1703 until his death in 1727. Although a pious man, he was also deeply interested in alchemy and numerology, writing many more pages on these pseudoscientific subjects than on his scientific and mathematical insights. Newton was very sensitive to criticism, and he engaged in numerous intellectual quarrels, the most famous of which was his debate with Leibniz over which of them had been the first to invent the calculus.

**Pascal, Blaise** (1623-1662): Pascal was born in Clermont, France. At a young age, he proved especially able in mathematics and science. At age sixteen he wrote an innovative essay on conic sections, and at nineteen he devised a mechanical calculating machine (regarded by some as the first computer). He is also acknowledged as the founder of modern probability theory and as a contributor, through his work on the cycloid, to the development of calculus. His experiments in the physics of atmospheric pressure and vacuums gave rise to "Pascal's Law." From an early age Pascal and his sister, Jacqueline, were adherents of Jansenism. Following the death of his father and his own extreme illness, Pascal underwent a mystical conversion experience in 1654. Religion remained his central concern during the duration of his short life.

**Spinoza, Baruch** (1632-77): Born in Amsterdam of Jewish parents who had fled the Portuguese Inquisition, Spinoza was one of the preeminent philosophers of the seventeenth century. He was educated at the Rabbinical School, where he studied Hebrew, the Old Testament, the Talmud, and the works of Maimonides, Rene Descartes, and Thomas Hobbes. In 1656, Spinoza was excommunicated from the orthodox Jewish community in Amsterdam for expressing doubts about orthodox Judaism. Largely cut off from the Jewish community in Holland, he spent the rest of his life in several Dutch towns, grinding lenses and developing his philosophy. At age forty he was offered but declined a chair in philosophy at the University of Heidelberg, preferring his quiet life in Holland. Spinoza died of tuberculosis, his illness likely worsened by the dust from grinding lenses.

**Vico, Giambattista** (1668-1744): Vico was born in Naples, where as a youth he could often be found studying in the seclusion of his father's bookshop. Vico attended a Jesuit college, and subsequently he tutored for some years the nephews of the bishop of Ischia. In 1699 Vico was named professor of rhetoric at the University of Naples, a post which he held until shortly before his death. Vico is regarded by many as the first modern historian, a great philosopher of history, and a brilliant social theorist. His major work, *Scienza Nuova (The New Science)*, portrays history as offering descriptions of the creation and development of human cultures and institutions. Vico's work seems to have been largely unacknowledged during the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, however, his work influenced the French historian Jules Michelet and was esteemed in England by the poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Arnold. In the twentieth century, his work has been admired and written about by such intellectuals as Benedetto Croce and R.G. Collingwood.
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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part III
The Enlightenment and Its Critics

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COURSE GUIDE
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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part III
The Enlightenment and Its Critics

Scope: The lectures in Part III examine the great French and British enlightenment philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These years were a time of growing philosophical skepticism, widespread religious disbelief, expanded faith in science, and early responses to the industrial revolution. The lectures on John Locke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant emphasize the linkage between these thinkers' epistemologies and their theories of morality. Other lectures examine Baron de Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, George Berkeley, and Edmund Burke. Each in his own way, these philosophers exalted the freedom and power of human potential and scientific expansion. Their age was also marked by the rise of the urban middle classes, which increasingly demanded free markets, free speech, and a louder political voice.

Lecture One
Locke's Epistemology

Alan Charles Kors, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines John Locke's empiricist theory of knowledge, which held that the mind is a blank slate ("tabula rasa") upon which our experiences write themselves through our sense impressions. Professor Kors distinguishes Cartesian rationalism from Lockean empiricism, especially in reference to the purpose of natural philosophy and the source of our knowledge of the external world. He then examines in detail Locke's epistemological theory, which departed from scholasticism by denying that humans could achieve certain knowledge of anything beyond sense experience. Finally, he considers the influence of Locke's ideas on subsequent theories of epistemology and ethics.

Outline

I. Tension emerged during the seventeenth century between Cartesian rationalism and Baconian/Lockean empiricism.

A. This disjunction is genuine but should not be exaggerated.
   1. Descartes was empirical as well as rationalistic.
      a. He held that reason apprehends that the natural order is governed by fixed laws of motion, although one can discern and understand these laws only through empirical observation.
      b. However, he elevated reason over observation by positing from reason alone his laws regarding inertia and the impossibility of a vacuum.
   2. Locke was rationalistic as well as empirical.
      a. He distinguished between empirical propositions, which are at best probable and thus can be doubted, and propositions that are necessarily true at the level of logical analysis and that the mind perceives as intuitively certain.
      b. Locke held that only the latter sort of propositions confer absolute certainty and denote necessary truth.

B. Two examples illustrate the distinction between Cartesian rationalism and Lockean empiricism:
   1. What is the goal of natural philosophy?
      a. Descartes held that the goal of natural philosophy is true knowledge about the real qualities of the world, i.e., of things in themselves.
      b. Locke held that the goal is useful knowledge about our experience of the world.
   2. What is the source of our ideas about the world?
a. Descartes held that our foundational ideas are innate, implanted by God in the human mind.

b. Locke held that all ideas derive from experience. Intuitively certain truths about relations (e.g., those of mathematics) do not give us knowledge of the phenomena of the world. We know only our experience of things, not the reality of things in themselves. Nor do we know the essence of mind or matter other than as an experience of our own minds.

c. Locke's attitude is one of providential optimism. God has shaped our mental capacities to suit our needs. We do not need to know what things are in themselves, only how they behave.

II. Locke developed an empirical epistemology.

A. According to Locke, all knowledge arises from two sorts of experience:
   1. Sensation.
   2. Reflection, i.e., the experience of our mind dealing with the ideas of sensation.

B. The mind is a "tabula rasa"—a blank slate—on which nature imprints simple ideas gained through experience. Complex ideas are formed from the mind's combination of simple sensations or reflections.

C. Locke claimed that our knowledge is absolutely limited to our experience of the world. We cannot know what underlies or is prior to experience.
   1. Thus he rejected the scholastic emphasis on discovering realities (e.g., "substance") that lie beyond human experience.
   2. We can know only the "nominal essence" of things (i.e., the "name" that we assign to them), not the "real essence" that transcends our experience of the thing.
   3. Locke departed from the Scholastics and Cartesians in holding that we cannot know what the mind is or what underlies the mind. We can know only the mind's behavior, since that is all we experience.
   4. Locke's critics accused him of impiety because he denied any knowledge of the soul. Locke responded that it is impious to suppose that God could not endow matter with the power of thought.

III. Locke's theories proved enormously influential.

A. European thinkers embraced Locke's theory of knowledge because it explained and justified the progress of the experimental sciences.
   1. Any true proposition must be susceptible to analysis, clarity, and confirmation. That is, it must be capable of being analyzed into clear and simple ideas, and ultimately into the discrete experiences that compose those ideas.

2. The theory invites the empirical confirmation or disconfirmation of all propositions.
3. The world of ideas is thereby demystified and made accessible. All prior claims to knowledge can be analyzed and either confirmed or rejected on the basis of open, communicable human experiences.

B. According to Locke, ethical ideas are also derived from experience. Those things that cause human happiness or well-being, or that we think bring those effects, are "good." Those that bring pain, or that we think bring pain, are "evil."
   1. Locke was confident that God has so arranged the world that what we perceive as "good" is also what God wills to be good. God has providentially adapted ethics to real human experience.
   2. Through proper use of mind and senses, we can derive appropriate ideas of good and evil.

C. Miracles and prophecy-fulfillment are God's empirical evidence of the truth of Scripture.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:


Questions to Consider:
1. According to Locke, are consequences or intentions more important in evaluating the moral content of human actions?
2. Does Locke believe that true knowledge can be acquired through reason alone?
Lecture Two
Locke’s Political Theory

Dennis Dalton, Ph.D.

Scope: John Locke was an influential political theorist as well as an epistemologist. He held that all people have a natural right to life, liberty, and property. Just governments, in his view, derive their power from the consent of the governed. Locke’s political philosophy greatly influenced the authors of the American Declaration of Independence and other later political thinkers. This lecture combines Locke with Aristotle as political “reformers” and distinguishes them from the idealist tradition represented by Plato and the realist tradition embodied in Hobbes. It also distinguishes the views of Locke and Hobbes regarding man’s natural condition, the origins and character of the “social contract,” and the purposes of government.

Outline

I. The American Declaration of Independence reflects the ideas of John Locke by proclaiming that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

II. Professor Dalton distinguishes among three types of political theorists: realists, idealists, and reformists.

A. Realists such as Hobbes are concerned primarily with security, while idealists such as Plato are concerned with virtue and justice. Both, however, see man’s political situation as one of desperate crisis that requires a desperate remedy: strong central leadership.

B. Reformists, led by Aristotle, assume that man’s natural state is not one of crisis, as Plato and Hobbes suggest.

1. Reformists consider that man’s condition is basically good and requires only palliatives rather than radical surgery.

2. Reformists warn against revolutionary or excessive change. They favor moderate change that respects and builds upon existing institutions, laws, customs, and political culture.

3. Locke stands to Hobbes as Aristotle stands to Plato. Locke denies that humans are in a state of crisis and require powerful leadership which, as he warns, tends inevitably toward despotism and tyranny. The solution to the imperfections of the human political condition consists above all in respect for institutions and liberty under law.

C. Locke and Hobbes offer differing prescriptions for man’s condition.

1. Hobbes goes to extremes; he creates an all-powerful central state to resolve the perceived crisis facing men in the state of nature.

2. Locke speaks not of leadership but of institutions, laws, and political culture. His key concern is to fashion a polity that will secure freedom under law. The success of the United States of America in achieving this goal is due not to brilliant leadership but to the quality of its institutions and to its political culture, which discourages extremism.

III. Locke views the state of nature in far more benign terms than Hobbes does.

A. Locke views power as the right to make laws for regulating and preserving property (understood both as one’s possessions and as life itself). Power can be exercised legitimately only for the public good.

B. According to both Hobbes and Locke, the state of nature is not a historical “golden age.” It refers to the intrinsic human impulses that would manifest themselves in the absence of government.

1. Unlike Hobbes, Locke views the state of nature as an original benign condition of perfect equality and perfect freedom from the arbitrary power of others.

2. For Locke, liberty in the state of nature is governed by the laws of nature, which enjoin respect for the lives and welfare of others.

C. Locke distinguishes between society and state.

1. Society is constituted by a benign set of values—freedom, equality, and the obligation of mutual love.

2. Society is not characterized by Hobbesian crisis, and thus there is no need for an all-powerful state to keep people in awe. According to Locke, a limited government is necessary only to remedy the inconveniences and imperfections of society.

D. Locke’s social contract is a compact among free and equal men to exit the state of nature by forming a limited polity.

1. Locke differs profoundly in this respect from Hobbes, who holds that desperate individuals are driven by fear to create an all-powerful sovereign.

2. Locke holds that one must consent to become subject to another’s power. The majority has the right to rule the minority.

3. Locke, not Hobbes, marks the beginnings of modern democratic political theory, which emphasizes the rights of the majority.

E. Locke’s theory of property begins with the labor theory of value.

1. Human beings consent to unequal possession of property, based on the labor one expends in acquiring it.

2. Locke stresses legal equality, not equality of material possessions.

IV. Lockean natural liberty consists not in license but in freedom from another’s arbitrary power.
A. Man is free when he is subject only to political authority to which he has given his consent.

B. The purpose of law is to preserve and enlarge liberty. Liberty is impossible without law.

C. The form of government least injurious to liberty vests power in the legislature rather than the monarch.
   1. The legislature is the least likely of the branches of government to abuse power since it represents the middle class, which holds property and is thus unlikely to go to revolutionary or disruptive extremes.
   2. Legislative power is constrained by specific boundaries that apply in all circumstances: the legislature must apply the same rules to all citizens, both rich and poor; its laws must promote the public good; it must not seize private property via taxation without the people’s direct and continuing consent.

D. Legitimate political power is exercised only for the common benefit, and it requires continuing consent of the governed. It becomes illegitimate when it is exercised arbitrarily and without regard for the public good. Absolute arbitrary power can and must be resisted.

Questions to Consider:
1. According to Locke, does the existence of government enhance or diminish individual freedom?

2. According to Locke and Hobbes, what makes political power legitimate? Under what circumstances, if any, may people rightfully rebel against their government?

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Lecture Three
Montesquieu and the Beginnings of Political Science

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D

Scope: This lecture examines the political theorist Baron de Montesquieu, whose naturalistic and scientific perspective departed from the classical tradition of Plato and Aristotle. Like Machiavelli, Montesquieu examined governments as they actually are rather than as they should be. Influenced by both Locke and Aristotle, he traced the lineaments of various governmental forms in relation to the geography, religion, climate, and culture of the society in which they were found. He identified three basic forms of government—monarchies, republics, and despotisms—each of which is appropriate under particular circumstances. Although he refused to identify any particular form of government as intrinsically superior, he praised the separation of powers within the British constitutional monarchy as most conducive to respect for individual rights. This lecture will review Montesquieu's political ideas and their influence upon the makers of the American and the French Revolutions.

Outline

I. Montesquieu represented the first attempt to create a social science modeled upon natural science. He tried to discern in a purely naturalistic way how human societies work, what makes human governments function, and what sort of political arrangements are good for people under various circumstances.

A. The rise of modern natural science fundamentally changed Western conceptions of society, morality, and political organization.

B. Montesquieu looked empirically at governments that actually existed either in his own time or historically. He departed from the classical political tradition of Plato and Aristotle by examining actual rather than ideal governments, and by discussing how governments really are rather than how they ought to be.

C. Since practice was his central concern, he tried to analyze all varieties of governments that actually exist.

II. Montesquieu lived in France during the age of absolute monarchy and under a king who claimed to rule by divine right but proved in practice to be an unenlightened despot.

A. His prime concern was how to impose limitations on government in order to protect individual rights, but without undermining all possibility of political authority.

B. His skeptical and secular orientation placed an almost Calvinistic emphasis on human selfishness and the limitations of human potential.

III. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu adopted a naturalistic and scientific perspective on political history. He identified three basic kinds of government, which are characteristic of different climatic, geographic, economic, and demographic conditions.

A. In asserting that different governments are appropriate to different circumstances, Montesquieu departed from Plato and Aristotle, who each identified a single regime type that they regarded as best regardless of circumstances.

B. Montesquieu identified three basic kinds of government: monarchy, despotism, and republic. Each of these regimes is distinguished by the spirit that informs its laws.

1. Monarchy is best suited for large territories that have no natural boundaries and are thus open to external invasion. Such states are likely to be heavily populated and contain wide disparities of wealth. Such territories can be effectively controlled only through centralized monarchical authority. Montesquieu holds that monarchies are actuated by the principle of honor.

2. Despotism is rule by a single individual, without law, legitimacy, or restraint. The principle that actuates despotism is not honor but fear (cf., Machiavelli and Hobbes). Montesquieu clearly disapproves of despotism, which he seems to identify with Louis XIV. His normative disapproval of despotism conflicts with the dispassionate, objective, and descriptive tone he tries to maintain elsewhere.


a. Democracy is appropriate for small, isolated states (preferably mountainous areas or islands) where there are natural geographic barriers to invasion, where the population is small, and where wealth disparities are minor. The actuating spirit of democracy is virtue among the citizenry, which prevents the decline of social cohesion and a descent into despotism.

b. Aristocratic republics are characterized by moderation, understood as equilibrium among the three natural segments of society (the one, the few, and the many). The predominance of a strong and moderate aristocracy can help to prevent government from becoming oppressive.
IV. Montesquieu attempted to reconcile the traditional, normative element in political theory with the empirical and sceptical focus of natural science.

A. He held, with David Hume, that human beings have a natural propensity to form polities and systems of morality. This is the "objective" or "positive" element that arises from human nature and holds true across societies.

B. However, the specific form of those polities and moral systems depends upon contingent circumstances of time and place. This is the sceptical or relativistic component in Montesquieu's thought. Thus he disagreed with Plato and Aristotle that any one regime is best regardless of circumstances.

C. Montesquieu stressed the need to maintain the spirit that underlies the laws of one's regime, in order to prevent a decline into despotism.

V. Montesquieu offered practical recommendations for reforming existing governments. His most important contribution was the idea of dividing governmental powers among various societal interests in order to prevent tyranny and disorder.

A. Like Locke, Montesquieu sought to secure individual liberty by dividing government powers among the one, the few, and the many.

B. Montesquieu influenced the American founding fathers.
   1. They appropriated Montesquieu's advocacy of the separation of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.
   2. However, they rejected his contention that republicanism is appropriate only for small and easily defensible states.

C. Montesquieu's influence reinforced the concern of the American founding fathers to preserve America's republican virtue.

Questions to Consider:
1. To what extent does Montesquieu represent a departure from the normative and idealistic focus of Plato's political theory?
2. According to Montesquieu, what system of government best avoids internal strife, and why?

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:


Lecture Four
Berkeley’s Idealism and the Critique of Materialism

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: George Berkeley’s most important philosophical work—A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge (1710)—established his reputation as one of the three great British empiricists (with Locke and Hume). Berkeley held in this treatise that there is no existence independent of perception. His subjectivist idealism was cogently stated in the Latin phrase "esse est percipi" (“to exist is to be perceived”). Locke had argued that human knowledge depends upon the existence of material objects independent of minds. He held that secondary qualities—such as color—arise in the mind, while primary qualities of objects—such as extension—are intrinsic to objects and exist independently of our perception of them. Berkeley argued, by contrast, that both primary and secondary qualities exist only in minds: human minds contain certain ideas, and the mind of God contains all ideas. This lecture examines the extreme idealist conclusions that Berkeley drew from his empiricist premises.

Outline

I. George Berkeley offered an influential critique of Enlightenment philosophy.

A. He opposed the Enlightenment’s mechanistic materialism, which he saw as conducive to skepticism and atheism.

B. He adopted the Enlightenment’s empiricist epistemology
   1. He shared Locke’s view of the mind as a “tabula rasa”—all ideas arise from sense perception.
   2. His empiricism and nominalism, however, were more thoroughgoing than Locke’s.
      a. Locke rejected the realist view of universals in favor of a conceptualist view that treated universals or “nominal essences” as abstract ideas rather than real subsistent entities.
      b. Berkeley disparaged this notion of abstract ideas as a half-hearted compromise with realism. Only particular ideas can exist, since our sense data are all particular. Abstract ideas are merely names that we apply to individuals.

II. Berkeley argued that consistent empiricism entailed the conclusion that ideas are the only phenomena of which we are aware. Materialism is a dogmatic superstition, and matter is an “occult substratum.”

   A. All sensible objects are composed of ideas derived from sense. We never actually experience matter, and thus we can have no idea of it.
      1. Matter is a posited substratum held to unify the various simple ideas of sensible particulars or objects.
      2. The various sensed properties of a given object are “constantly conjoined” in the mind of the percipient. They do not inhere in a given quantity of matter.
      3. If all sensible objects are actually ideas, then ideas must have a substratum in which they reside, which is mind.

   B. Berkeley attempts to prove that God exists and is the cause of the law-like regularity of ideas.
      1. All the objects of the world are ideas in minds, and only minds are capable of producing or causing ideas.
      2. While we produce the ideas of imagination and reflection, we are incapable of producing the ideas of sense.
      3. Another mind must exist that is capable of producing all the ideas we sense. That mind is what we call God.
      4. If a tree falls in the forest and no person is there to hear it, it still makes a sound because God is everywhere and perceives everything. If God were not present, there would be neither sound, nor tree, nor forest.

   C. According to Berkeley, Newtonian physics shows us the law-like regularity in the order of sense impressions that we receive from God.
      1. Those laws allow us to predict behavior but not to explain the causes of behavior.
      2. Thus Newtonian science has no metaphysical implications. It cannot supplant God as the central causal agent of the universe.

III. According to Berkeley, belief in matter conduces to skepticism and atheism.

   A. We are separated from the real "material" world by an impenetrable veil of ideas. Skepticism results from our inability to know whether or not our ideas correspond to external material objects.

   B. By dismissing the possibility that material objects exist, we remove the cause of skepticism.

   C. Berkeley asserts that most people are idealists in practice; they regard as real their own sense perceptions of the world, not some assumed quality of the world that transcends their perception.

   D. Materialism promotes atheism by positing an unknowable and occult substratum—matter—that is held to cause experiences and regularities
that actually issue from the mind of God. If we eliminate matter, then
God becomes the only possible cause of our ideas.

IV. Berkeley views idealism as liberation from sterile metaphysical speculation.
   A. Philosophy is irrelevant to real-life concerns, such as virtue, beauty, and
devotion to God.
   B. Idealism promotes awareness of God as the source of our ideas.
   C. Thus Berkeley can be seen as the first Romantic.

Essential Reading:
Berkeley, George. *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge.*
Hackett, 1982.

Supplementary Reading:
Copleston, Frederick S. J. *A History of Philosophy*, Book II, Vol. V. New York:
Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 213-257).
Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy*. New York: Simon and
Schuster, 1945 (pp. 647-658).
Luce, A. A. *The Life of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*. Greenwood Reprint of
1949 ed.
Moked, Gabriel. *Particles and Ideas: Bishop Berkeley’s Corpuscularian

Questions to Consider:
1. Why does Berkeley claim that materialism breeds skepticism? Does his own
   idealism refute such skepticism?
2. Is Berkeley’s empiricism consistent with his idealism?

Lecture Five
Hume’s Epistemology

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the empiricist philosophy of David Hume, who
held along with Locke and Berkeley that all of our mental representations
arise from sense experience. Hume identified relations of cause and effect
as the source of all of our knowledge of “matters of fact,” but he denied
that causation had any objective or logical necessity. Instead, he
explained causation as a customary or habitual inference that we draw
from the “constant conjunction” of sensed phenomena. We will examine
these aspects of Hume’s epistemology and his efforts to reconcile
necessity with liberty.

Outline

I. David Hume brought to fruition the empiricist epistemology of Locke and
   Berkeley.
   A. Hume categorized all of our mental representations as either
      impressions or ideas.
      1. Impressions are those representations distinguished by their
         relative phenomenal vividness and force.
      2. Ideas are “copies” of impressions. They are relatively less clear
         and vivid to the perцепtient than are impressions.
      3. The temporal sequencing between impressions and ideas (the
         former come before the latter) indicates the causal relationship
         between them.
   B. Hume identifies three principles according to which the mind associates
      various ideas: resemblance, spatial or temporal contiguity, and cause
      and effect.

II. All human knowledge can be broken down into one of two classes.
   A. Some knowledge involves relations between ideas. This knowledge is
      either intuitively certain or logically demonstrable. It has no existential
      implications.
   B. Other knowledge involves matters of fact, i.e., propositions that concern
      existential statements or statements of fact. This sort of knowledge has
      no necessary logical basis, since counterfactual propositions are
      logically possible.
      1. The critical epistemological question asks how we can know
         matters of fact that are not supplied by present sense data. Hume’s
answer is the principle of cause and effect, which allows us to infer from sensed to unsensed phenomena.

2. Relations of cause and effect are an inference from our experience of constant conjunction.

3. Science confers only provisional knowledge, not absolute or ultimate answers. Hume is concerned to avoid dogmatism.

III. Given that our knowledge of matters of fact is based upon cause and effect, which is based in turn upon experience, what warrants our belief in experience?

A. Reason cannot warrant our belief in experience, since it is logically possible that the future will not resemble the present.

B. Causation cannot warrant this belief, since causation itself depends on experience.

C. Hume concludes that we believe in relations of cause and effect through custom, instinct, or habit. Non-rational beings (e.g., children or certain mentally incompetent adults) act on the basis of cause and effect, although they cannot justify it logically.

IV. If all of our knowledge of matters of fact is based upon cause and effect, which is in turn based upon experience, what is the origin of the synonymous metaphysical doctrines of "power, force, and necessary connection?"

A. There is no logical doctrine of necessary connections in the world, since logical proofs have no existential implications.

B. All ideas must have their origin in sense. If an idea has no sensual basis, then it is a chimera. None of the aforementioned notions, however, arises from sense.

C. Hume concludes that power, force, and necessary connection are thus merely powerful psychological conditions, arising from the constancy of certain conjunction. Our belief in mind and matter is just a common-sense intuition.

V. Hume attempted to reconcile liberty with necessity.

A. Necessity and causation, which are the essence of determinism, are simply the experience of constant conjunctions and the expectation that the future will resemble the past.

B. Liberty is merely the absence of external restraint. It is perfectly consistent with a causally determined universe; i.e., it does not imply a metaphysical doctrine of free will.

1. If our actions were not determined by causal laws (i.e., if they were completely free and uncaused), there would be no basis for evaluating them morally.

2. Hume asserts that everyone believes in causal determinism in practice.

C. Miracles are, by definition, violations of the laws of nature that we discern through observation. There can be no rational grounds for belief in them.

1. Hume seeks to advance human liberation by ridiculing everything, including the sacred.

2. Although Hume denies any logical connection between belief in God and moral behavior, he acknowledges that most people require belief in God as a stimulus to behave morally.

VI. According to Hume, Cartesian skepticism cannot be refuted by logic, but it can be refuted by practical life and common sense. It, along with all philosophy, is irrelevant to real life.

A. Moderate skepticism can be useful, however, in discouraging the dogmatism of rationalistic philosophy and the intolerance of learned Christian orthodoxy.

B. Only with Hume does freedom of opinion come to be regarded as a positive good.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What is the function of skepticism in Hume's philosophy?
2. In Hume's view, what is the ultimate basis of our knowledge of matters of fact about the world?
Lecture Six
Hume's Theory of Morality
Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: We turn now to Hume's theory of ethics and morality. Just as Hume located the origins of causation in the constant conjunction of sensed phenomena, he located the origin of our moral judgments in their constant conjunction with a sentiment of approbation or disapprobation. That is, morality is rooted not in rational judgment but in instinct or sentiment. Hume assesses the morality of behavior in terms of its consequences, and especially in terms of its advancement of social utility.

Outline

I. Hume's moral theory represents a transition between the moral sense doctrines of the Scottish school of common-sense philosophy and the consequentialism of the great nineteenth-century utilitarian thinkers.

II. Hume offers a scientific theory of morality.
   A. He treats morality as an already existent realm of human judgment and action. He asks how we ever came to make such judgments.
   B. He seeks to describe the cause of moral evaluation among the human species and to show in what such judgments consist. He does not prescribe a foundational moral theory.

III. Hume argues that our moral judgments find their origin in a sentiment of approbation or disapprobation.
   A. He notes that all our moral judgments are constantly conjoined by a sentiment of approbation that precedes such judgments.
   B. Moral judgment cannot be based on rational deliberation, for simpletons and children are capable of moral judgment and virtuous action. Nor is there any evidence that the most rational and intellectually advanced people are more disposed towards moral insight or virtuous behavior.

IV. Hume attempts to answer scientifically the question of what makes us approve of some actions and disapprove of others. He examines the various virtues universally accorded to moral rectitude, searching for a common element that might prompt our instinctual/sentimental approbation. He discovers that the common element is utility.
   A. Benevolence is universally acknowledged to be a virtue, and its most distinctive characteristic is that it tends to promote the public good.

B. The only basis of our sentimental approval of the virtue of justice is its obvious social utility.
   1. There is no need for justice in societies of super-abundance or super-scarcity, or in societies of selfless people or thieves.
   2. If we could imagine interaction with creatures every bit as rational as we but entirely weak and unable to resist our force, we would probably suspend our operation of justice towards them because it has no utility for us.
   3. Hume argues that moral progress consists in including more and more people in our sense of community, and thus extending our moral sentiments over a larger domain.

C. All government or political society has its basis in utility. For example, when countries are at war, the laws of nations are not useful and are suspended.

V. Hume argues that utility excites our sentiments of approval as the consequence of an inherent psychological or instinctual disposition.
   A. Moral judgment is equivalent to aesthetic judgment. It is a matter of taste.
   B. Utility and thus virtuous action have a "natural beauty" that moves us like a calm passion. Virtue is the result not of narrow self-interest but of a well-rounded and pleasant life.
   C. The moral quality of an act can be judged on the basis of its intention or its consequences.
      1. Those who believe in final causality will tend to judge actions in terms of their intention.
      2. Those, like Hume, who view acts and agents mainly as efficient causes will judge their morality on the basis of the consequences.
      3. At certain times our moral judgments should be based on the intentions of an act, and at other times they should be based on the consequences.
      4. Consequentialism as the basis of moral judgment is especially appropriate where the consequences of an act affect society as a whole.
   D. Although Nietzsche agrees with Hume that morality is an instinct or a psychological disposition, he views it as stupid and dangerous while Hume finds it natural and pleasant.

Essential Reading:
Lecture Seven
Smith's Wealth of Nations

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the thought of the moral philosopher Adam Smith, who along with David Hume and Adam Ferguson was one of the great figures of the Scottish Enlightenment. Smith sought to understand scientifically the requisites and procedures for creating—rather than merely redistributing—wealth. His Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations marked the origins of economics as an academic discipline. The lecture will also touch on Smith’s other great work—The Theory of Moral Sentiments—in which he located the origins of moral judgment in the benevolence and sympathy that humans naturally feel toward each other.

Outline

I. Adam Smith’s The Wealth of Nations is one of the great epoch-making works in the history of social science.
   A. Science and scientific approaches to the study of society are central to Smith’s concern.
   B. The age of machines and the rise of technology are implicit in the development of modern natural science.
   C. Smith was the founder of economics and one of the first social thinkers to describe its influence on society.
   D. The "rationalization" of society unleashes unprecedented productive forces that create vast and permanent social change.

II. The first two books of The Wealth of Nations discuss price theory, capital accumulation, the economic history of the West, mercantilism, and revenue and expenditure.
   A. In the first book, Smith presents his most important discovery, which is that the division of labor is the cause of increased productivity of labor. The division of labor is limited by the extent of the market, which in turn is limited by nature and convention.
   B. The second book attacks mercantilism and analyzes the revenue and expenditures of the sovereign. By justifying expenditures on the grounds of public utility and showing that minimal political interference maximizes wealth, Smith implicitly laid the groundwork for the modern liberal state.
C. The division of labor is limited by the extent of the market. There are two kinds of things that impede the extension of markets: natural causes and conventional causes.
   1. Natural causes are essentially space and time.
   2. Conventional causes include interference by government (e.g., by means of monopolies or protective tariffs).

D. Smith uses the example of the pin factory to show how the division of labor increases human felicity by boosting the productivity of labor.

E. Smith identifies various social consequences of the division of labor.
   1. It can undermine skill and craftsmanship.
   2. It can modify social structure, e.g., by incorporating children and women into the work force.
   3. It will tend to divide society into economic classes with opposed economic interests. Owners of capital will collude to limit the wages of labor.

III. Smith's *homo economicus* is the apotheosis of human heteronomy.
   A. Desire is raised to the status of a principle, and reason becomes "the slave of the passions." Reason allows us to maximize the satisfaction of our non-rational desires.
   B. A given quantum of wealth may not be sufficient for human happiness but it is surely necessary.
   C. Smith does not believe that people are always rational utility-maximizers. He believes that ethical theory is derived from our emotions and has no rational foundation.
   D. Smith established the discipline of economics. His perceptions were very influential among Marx and other later critics of capitalism. These critics were concerned more with the distributional consequences of capitalism than with its productive capacity.

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**Questions to Consider:**

1. Does Smith view government involvement in the economy as always to be avoided?
2. What is the meaning of Smith's metaphor of the "invisible hand"? What conditions must exist in order for this mechanism to function?

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**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**
Lecture Eight
Rousseau's Dissent: The Challenge to the Idea of Progress

Alan Charles Kors, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines Jean-Jacques Rousseau's critique of Enlightenment thought and of his own society. We begin by noting Rousseau's differences from the other Enlightenment thinkers of his day. Next we examine his critique of the arts and sciences, which held that "civilized" culture degraded virtue and moral progress by encouraging laziness and luxury. We will also examine his contention that man's natural state is one of perfect equality, and that society is the origin of inequality and unhappiness. Finally, the lecture discusses the totalitarian overtones of Rousseau's theory of the "general will."

Outline

I. Introduction: Rousseau had a distinctive identity and distinctive ideas.
   A. He was a self-educated Protestant from Geneva and a solitary man in an age of great sociability.
   B. He was a fervent deist, although he loathed the atheists of the French Enlightenment.
   C. He argued that one must have good faith as well as reason and evidence in order to prove the existence of God.
   D. He believed that most philosophers were more eager to pursue reputation and fame than honest truth.
   E. He argued that reason can oppose truth and virtue when it is not tamed by conscience and the heart.

II. Rousseau's First Discourse (1749) examined the arts and sciences.
   A. Unlike most Enlightenment philosophers, Rousseau held that progress in the arts and sciences has led us away from virtue and moral progress.
   B. He offered historical arguments on behalf of this thesis.
      1. Moral decadence always accompanies cultural progress.
      2. The post-Renaissance culture of cultivation and politeness lost the simple virtues.
      3. The "simpler" Swiss and the American Indians compared favorably on moral terms with the great centers of progress of the arts and sciences (such as France and England).
      4. Sparta lacked the culture of Athens, but its citizens were more self-sacrificing and virtuous.

   C. Reason assists history in showing the linkage between cultural progress and moral decadence. The sciences satisfy not our natural human needs but our vices. They create the desire for luxury and lead to laziness.
   D. Rousseau distinguished between the natural and the artificial (formerly, the natural had been distinguished from the supernatural).
      1. The natural world, created by God, is the one into which we were born and in which we function as nature intended.
      2. The social/cultural world of human creation detracts us from the natural and causes us to live artificial, as opposed to natural, lives.

III. In 1755 Rousseau published his Discourse on the Origins of Inequality.
   A. Rousseau denied in this essay that inequality is natural.
      1. His poetic and lyrical depiction of primitive humanity shows healthy, morally sound, compassionate beings who live according to natural instinct.
      2. Human beings in their natural state had no private property or division of labor.
      3. Physical differences existed, but they had no social or moral implications.
      4. Natural man had to rely on his senses and wits for survival, while modern man is sedentary and soft. Thus the former was better fit for survival than the latter.
   B. Rousseau offered a social-contract theory of the origins of civilized society.
      1. According to Rousseau, society arose from a perceived need to resolve a temporary problem.
      2. Tragically, that society persisted and came to dominate the lives of those within it, depriving them of freedom and independence.
   C. Social organization is the root of inequality and unhappiness.
      1. Society is the source of inequality, private property, the division of labor, and class divisions.
      2. Society creates and maintains artificial social distinctions that people come to regard as natural.
      3. Civilization creates artificial needs and insecurities that come to dominate people's lives and make them miserable. Natural phenomena (e.g., the desires for food, clothing, and housing) become sources of anxiety, cruelty, misery, and domination.
      4. Society desensitizes people to the needs of others. It encourages people to define themselves in comparison to others.
   D. Rousseau saw the problem created by society as permanent and inescapable.
      1. The goal is to minimize human depravity and maximize original human nature.
      2. Partial reparation can take place through nature-based education.
Lecture Nine

Kant’s “Copernican Revolution”: Epistemology and the Critique of Metaphysics

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the epistemological theories and enduring influence of the German idealist philosopher Immanuel Kant. Just as Copernicus’s heliocentric argument for planetary motion revolutionized cosmology, so Kant revolutionized philosophy by arguing that our experience of the world centers on the “phenomenal” rather than the “ noumenal ” world. As we learn in this lecture, Kant held that we do not directly experience the external world, but only our representation of it as shaped by certain a priori forms present in the mind.

Outline

I. Introduction.
   A. Immanuel Kant sought to synthesize the rationalist and empiricist traditions. He viewed experience as necessary but not sufficient for knowledge.
   B. For Kant, the critical question of philosophy was whether metaphysics could be a science, and whether it could offer knowledge of God, freedom, and immortality.
   C. For Kant, the critical epistemological question is how synthetic a priori propositions are possible and true.
      1. Synthetic a priori judgments provide new information about the world but are not derived from experience.
      2. Kant regarded mathematics and metaphysics as synthetic a priori knowledge.

II. Kant presented a “Copernican” epistemology in his Critique of Pure Reason.
   A. Rather than the mind having to correspond to objects, objects must correspond to our knowledge. This makes synthetic a priori knowledge of objects possible.
      1. Something cannot be an object of knowledge unless it is subject to certain a priori conditions or “forms” of the mind.
      2. We do not experience noumena (the world as itself) but only phenomena (our own representation of the world).
   B. The a priori forms of the mind allow sense experience to be presented in certain definite relations. The two pure forms of sensibility, which
Kant calls “transcendental aesthetic,” are space and time. The mind imposes space and time upon the object.

C. Kant offered a “transcendental logic or analytic.”
   1. Human knowledge is a combination of sensibility and understanding. The forms of understanding are called “transcendental logic.”
   2. This logic studies a priori concepts or "categories," which are necessary conditions for an object to be thought rather than perceived.
   3. The four key categories of thought are quantity (unity, plurality, totality), quality (reality, negation, limitation), relation (inherence and subsistence, causality and dependence, community), and modality (possibility and impossibility, existence and nonexistence, necessity and contingency). Each of these categories follows the form of thesis-antithesis-synthesis.

D. How do we know which category to impose on particular representations? Kant argues that the imagination works as a mediator between sensibility and the understanding by producing and bearing "schemata" which let us know which categories are applicable for a given appearance.

III. The two pure forms of sensibility and the categories of the understanding comprise a conceptual scheme that we impose on our sense data to form our object or objective world.
   A. Metaphysics arises from a natural disposition of the human mind to apply this conceptual scheme transcendently, i.e., beyond experience. However, metaphysics can provide no certain knowledge about the world, since our conceptual scheme is objective only for phenomena, not noumena.
   B. Transcendental ideas can have an important regulative function for phenomenal inquiry. Thus the transcendental idea of the world as a totality prompts us to seek absolute laws of nature.
   C. The most important regulative function of transcendental ideas, particularly those of God, freedom and immortality, is moral rather than scientific.

IV. Kant’s ideas proved extremely influential.
   A. Subsequent absolute idealists questioned the existence of things in themselves, and they held that cultural differences arise from differences in conceptual schemes.
   B. Kant promoted pragmatism in holding that “pure ideas” should be accepted on the basis of their utility rather than their truth.

Essential Reading:


Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What is the fundamental epistemological problem for Kant?
2. Describe Kant’s “Copernican Revolution”?
Lecture Ten
Kant’s Moral Philosophy

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Kant asserted in his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) that our moral decisions should be made autonomously and rationally. In making choices, people ought to employ the categorical imperative: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." According to Kant, we should not arrive at ethical decisions through heteronomous appeals to God, sensual desires, or utility. Unlike Hume and Smith, he held that our intentions—and not the consequences of our actions—are the key to determining the morality of our actions.

Outline

I. Kant was bothered by Hume’s epistemological skepticism, ontological naturalism, and instrumental conception of reason.
   A. Kant was most upset by the implication of Hume’s moral theory that morals are a question of taste, feeling, and sentiment.
   B. According to Kant, Hume’s moral theory implied that God’s justice, the ultimate divine moral law, is an illusion that does not apply to human beings.
   C. Kant tried to reconcile Christian religious belief and Western culture as influenced by Newtonian mechanics and its social, political, and moral concomitants.

II. In *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant hoped to account for both the natural and the moral, and thus to reconcile his religious views with the new developments in physics in an architectonic philosophical system that charted the perimeter of human reason.
   A. Kant was a metaphysical thinker who split the cosmos into two worlds: the noumenal world and the phenomenal world.
      1. The noumenal world is moral—the world of freedom.
      2. The phenomenal world is the world of sense perception—of space and time.
   B. He argued that human beings had an obligation to develop their natural capacity for rational thought into rational, free, autonomous, and moral action.
   C. He argued that reason could determine rational ends as well as rational means for action.

III. Kant proposed an objective and universal moral law that allows us to establish the goodness or evil of every action by every free, rational, moral agent under all circumstances and regardless of space and time. Kant formulated the law of ultimate moral duty, called the categorical imperative.
   A. Kant’s categorical imperative is a universal algorithm for determining the goodness or evil of an action. That determination rests upon the agent’s intention.
   B. Kant distinguished his categorical imperative from Hume’s hypothetical imperative.
      1. The hypothetical imperative tells one to perform certain actions in order to achieve some benefit, while the categorical imperative tells one to perform those actions for their own sake.
      2. Unlike Hume, Kant believed that we ought to resist the desire to be heteronomous, to act according to the dictates of desire and treat ourselves as exceptions to the moral rules we recognize as universally binding.
   C. The categorical imperative is the logic of good will. It is the Golden Rule dressed up in its logical Sunday best.

IV. The point of Kant’s categorical imperative is the possibility of creating free, moral, rational agents. Kant wants us to be more than animals; he wants us to live up to the potentiality of our spiritual nature.
   A. According to Kant, man’s ability to control his immediate passionate demands elevates him above the rest of nature and gives him something in common with God and the angels.
   B. For Kant, the categorical imperative is not only universal, but it applies to every rational agent: human beings, nations, and angels. He views nation-states as moral agents that must obey the categorical imperative.
   C. Kant’s political theory is an extrapolation from his moral theory and in some respects is a response to Hume’s moral theory and political theory.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Questions to Consider:
1. How does Kant's intentionalist ethics compare with Hume's moral views?
2. How does Kant's moral theory compare with Plato's

Lecture Eleven
Burke and the Birth of Enlightened Conservatism
Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the political thought of Edmund Burke, widely regarded as the father of modern conservatism. We will examine his characteristic moderation, prudence, pragmatism, and attention to the practical consequences of policy measures, all of which shaped his response to the excesses of the French Revolution. Burke was a moderate reformer who defended the cause of the American revolutionaries but assailed the French revolution as driven by dangerous abstract theorizing and heedless of the essential role performed by traditional social and political institutions.

Outline

I. Edmund Burke was a practical politician who was very influential in late eighteenth-century England. His primary concern was to ensure the success of representative government.
   A. Although he is often seen as one of the most conservative thinkers of the Enlightenment, he was also a reform-minded Whig.
   B. He emphasized practice over theory, induction over deduction, sentiment over science, and empiricism over rationalism.
   C. Burke believed that empiricism was risky when applied to political science or reform.
   D. Burke was not a reactionary; he was a conservative who supported gradual reform.

II. Burke criticized the French Revolution in his Reflections on the Revolution in France.
   A. Burke insisted that abstract reasoning about the rights of man and the social contract would lead to revolutionary chaos.
   B. He believed that the rationalistic contempt for tradition and the optimistic anticipation of a secular millennium made the immediate and radical reform of society seem achievable, although in fact it was not.
   C. Even though Burke was not a professional philosopher, he is in the mainstream of English enlightenment thought.

III. Burke's contributions to political thought involved political parties, problems of legislation, legitimate opposition, the theory of virtual representation, and the priority of praxis over theory.
Lecture Twelve
Naturalism and Materialism: The Boundaries of the French Enlightenment

Alan Charles Kors, Ph.D.

Scope: We conclude this group of lectures by examining the efforts of eighteenth-century French thinkers to explain natural phenomena in naturalistic and mechanistic terms rather than in terms of spiritual or divine agency. Although many thinkers of this epoch continued to identify immaterial causes of spontaneous motion, others—notably Mettrie and Diderot—denied the dichotomy between material and spiritual reality and insisted that all bodily and mental phenomena are physical.

Outline

I. Atheistic materialism is one of the most important legacies of the French Enlightenment, although eighteenth-century thinkers did not conceive of the world and human beings as matter alone.

A. The eighteenth century was an age of naturalistic and mechanistic explanations of natural philosophy.

B. Spiritual factors were discounted as causes of most physical phenomena.

C. The willingness of eighteenth-century philosophers to naturalize and mechanize explanations did not extend to human beings.
   1. Humans were seen as unique not because of their physical properties, but because they possessed an immortal and immaterial soul.
   2. Why should the behavior of plants and animals be described as reflexive, while that of humans is explained in terms of a soul?

D. The eighteenth-century thinkers sought to establish a spiritual reality that could explain physical phenomena.
   1. Many concluded that if mass is inertial, then matter is indifferent to motion or rest.
   2. The cause of motion must be immaterial.

E. The eighteenth century also had to deal with "spontaneous" as opposed to "acquired" motion. Its existence indicated the permeation of living matter by something immaterial. Growth is a spiritual reality.

II. La Mettrie insisted in L'Homme Machine (1749) that a fundamental materialist-spiritualist dichotomy exists in the science of mankind.

A. To adopt spiritualism is to admit ignorance.

B. Materialism sets no boundaries to human knowledge.
   1. This view regards "mental" activity as a corporal phenomenon—i.e., as a bodily behavior.
2. It views "soul" as the effect, not the cause, of bodily movement.
3. It regards bodily and mental phenomena as aspects of one physical unity.

C. The transition from animals to men is not categorical but gradual.
D. What moves us is the physical energy of our organs, not a spirit.

III. Diderot was one of many who built dramatically on La Mettrie's work.
A. Genuine explanations of natural phenomena must be based on natural processes rather than appeals to God.
B. Nature consists of blind matter in an ongoing cycle of decomposition and regeneration. Life and death are distinct physical states; i.e., two modes of matter.
C. Diderot regarded human thought as a scientific rather than a theological mystery. It is a product of the complex organization of the brain.
D. The world has no extra-human moral dimension.
   1. Humans interpret what is agreeable as "good" and what is disagreeable as "evil."
   2. Human happiness consists in coexisting with nature as it actually exists.
E. We are linked to a nature that is indifferent to us. We have only the natural light of our knowledge to guide us.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did some philosophers of the French Enlightenment seek to preserve both physicalist and supernatural explanations of living things?
2. On what basis did some French Enlightenment thinkers argue that human beings do not have souls?
Glossary

**a posteriori** (Latin): knowable only through experience. The notion is key to the empiricist tradition.

**a priori** (Latin): knowable independently of experience. The notion is key to Kant and to the rationalist tradition.

**autonomy**: literally, self-rule. This notion is central to Kantian ethics, where it is bound up or indeed identical with freedom, rationality, and obedience to the moral law.

**categorical imperative**: Kant’s objective and universal moral law by which human beings can establish the goodness or evil of every action by every free, rational, moral agent under all circumstances and regardless of space and time. Kant held that the morality of any act rests ultimately in the agent’s intention. He stated the categorical imperative as follows: “Act only on that maxim whereby thou can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”

**deontological ethics**: ethical systems are said to be deontological if they judge actions not by their consequences but by the moral rule, law, or duty from which they proceed. Kant’s system is the prime example.

**empiricism**: in philosophy, the theory that all knowledge arises from sense experience.

**esse est percipi** (Latin): To be is to be perceived. The phrase encapsulates Berkeley’s idealism.

**heteronomy**: being determined by something outside oneself, as by the desire for some object. The notion is central to Kantian ethics, wherein it is opposed to autonomy.

**impressions**: according to Hume, all of our mental representations can be classified as impressions or ideas. Impressions are distinguished by their relative phenomenal vivacity and force. Ideas are “copies” of impressions and are relatively less clear and vivid to the percipient.

**noumena**: Kant’s term for things in themselves, rather than as perceived by human beings. According to Kant, noumena are unknowable except by God.

**phenomena**: Kant’s term for our representation of the world, which is shaped by the *a priori* categories of the mind.

**philosophes**: any of several intellectuals and writers of the French Enlightenment.

**reflection**: according to Locke, the experience of our mind dealing with the ideas of sensation; reflection, along with sensation, constitute the two sources of human knowledge.

**sensation**: according to Locke, the first of the two sources of all human knowledge.

**social contract**: in the theories of Locke, Hobbes, and Rousseau, the agreement among individuals uniting for various reasons, by which organized societies were established and regulations instituted to govern interrelations among the members.

**transcendental aesthetic**: the term by which Kant refers to space and time, the two pure forms of sensibility. The mind imposes the properties space and time upon a perceived object.

**transcendental logic**: Kant’s term for the forms of understanding, the most important of which are *quantity* (unity, plurality, totality), *quality* (reality, negation, limitation), *relation* (inherence and subsistence, causality and dependence, community), and *modality* (possibility and impossibility, existence and nonexistence, necessity and contingency).
Biographical Notes

Berkeley, George (1685-1753): Berkeley was born near Kilkenny, Ireland, of English lineage. At age fifteen he enrolled in Trinity College, Dublin, where he studied divinity. In 1707, three years after graduating, he became a Fellow of the College, and in 1709 he published his *Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*. At age 26 he published his most important book, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), which established his reputation as one of the three great British empiricists (with Locke and Hume). During the 1720s he planned (but ultimately failed to establish) a new college in Bermuda to educate Native Americans and the sons of English planters. After his return to Ireland, he was appointed in 1734 the Anglican bishop of the poor and isolated diocese of Cloyne. He died in Oxford, England, in 1753.

Burke, Edmund (1729-1797): Burke was born in Dublin to a Catholic mother and a Protestant father. He was educated at a Quaker grammar school and later studied classics at Trinity College. Having found law not to his liking, he dedicated himself to scholarship and politics. His first two books, *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756) and *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), were respectively a political satire and a book on aesthetics. He also worked for a time on the Annual Register. In 1766 Burke became a member of parliament on the side of Rockingham and the Whig party. During the American Revolution he was heralded by the American colonists for voicing support in Commons for their efforts to win independence. Although he supported the American war for independence, he condemned the French Revolution. His best-known work, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), is an eloquent defense of tradition and an attack upon the excesses committed by the French revolutionaries.

Hume, David (1711-1776): Hume was born into a well-to-do family in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was admitted to Edinburgh University at age eleven but left the university without graduating, however, and spent the following years studying at home. In 1734, Hume moved to France, where he wrote his brilliant *Treatise of Human Nature*. He was greatly disappointed by the widespread neglect and ridicule of the *Treatise* following its publication. To improve the treatise's accessibility to readers, Hume published anonymously *An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature* (1740), and he published reworked sections of the *Treatise as An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751). In 1752 he published his *Political Discourses* and in 1755 his *Natural History of Religion*. During these years he sought but was denied two professorships, one at Edinburgh and the other at Glasgow, largely because his unacceptable religious views. In 1752 he was appointed librarian to the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh, a position which allowed him to continue work on his six-volume *History of England* (1754-61). In 1767 Hume became Undersecretary of the Northern Department of the Secretary of State in London, a post which he held for two years. He spent his final years in Scotland.

Kant, Immanuel (1724-1804): was born in Konigsberg, East Prussia, into a devoutly pietistic Christian household. In 1740 he entered the University of Konigsberg, where he remained (except for several years spent tutoring in East Prussia) for the rest of his life. At Konigsberg he studied theology, philosophy and the natural sciences, and he read the works of Newton and Leibniz. He taught logic and metaphysics at Konigsberg for more than thirty years. Kant published a number of works between 1747 and 1781, including his *General History of Nature and Theory of the Heavens* (1755). After a ten-year hiatus in publications, Kant entered the "critical period" of his philosophical efforts in 1781 with the publication of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which espoused his revolutionary "Copernican Revolution in philosophy." He followed this with his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1787) and *Critique of Judgment* (1790). Kant presented his deontological ethics in his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785).

Locke, John (1632-1704). Locke was born in Somerset, England and raised in a Puritan family. He studied and then lectured in Greek, Latin, and moral philosophy at Christ's Church College, Oxford, and went on to obtain a license in medicine from the university. In 1665 Locke traveled to Brandenburg on a diplomatic mission, after which he was offered but refused a secretarialship with the Earl of Sandwich. In 1666 he met Anthony Ashley Cooper, soon the first Earl of Shaftesbury. Shortly thereafter, Locke became Shaftesbury's physician, adviser, and confidant. Having unsuccessfully opposed Charles II's accession to the throne, Lord Shaftesbury was forced to flee England for Holland in the early 1680s. Locke followed his benefactor into voluntary exile in late 1683. He remained there for six years, dedicating himself largely to his philosophical writing and political work. It seems certain that Locke advised William and Mary of Orange on political issues during these years. He accompanied the soon-to-be Queen Mary from Holland to England after the Glorious Revolution of 1689. He spent the remaining years of his life in England, writing and debating publicly on politics and philosophy.

Montesquieu (1689-1755): Charles Louis de Secondat, baron de la Brede et de la Montesquieu, was born near Bordeaux, France. In his youth he read widely in philosophy, the natural sciences, and law. Although his parents were not rich, Montesquieu lived a life of comparative ease after marrying a wealthy heiress and inheriting his uncle's position as president of the parlement of Bordeaux. In 1722 he published to great acclaim *The Persian Letters* (1721), a satire of French customs and institutions. With its publication, Montesquieu became a leading literary figure in France. He was elected to the French Academy in 1728, and soon thereafter he toured Europe until 1732. In 1734 he published his pioneering work in the philosophy of history, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and Their Decline*.

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Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712-1778). At sixteen, Rousseau he fled an apprenticeship to an engraver and wandered about for a time, coming under the care of Madame de Warens at Chambery, Savoy. In 1742 Rousseau moved to Paris and became secretary to the French ambassador to Venice. He joined the intellectual circle of the philosophes and contributed articles on music to Diderot's Encyclopedie. During this time, Rousseau began what was later viewed as a common-law marriage to a barely literate servant. The couple had several children together, but Rousseau abandoned the family. In 1749, in response to a contest held by the Academy of Dijon, Rousseau won first prize with his essay "Discourse on the Arts and Sciences," which argued that the sciences and arts had corrupted and weakened man's natural goodness. He followed this essay with his "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" (1755). He subsequently returned to Geneva, reconverted from Catholicism to Protestantism, engaged in a bitter quarrel with Voltaire, got in trouble with the religious authorities in Geneva, and returned to Paris. In 1762 Rousseau published The Social Contract, which provided vastly influential despite its sometimes flawed argumentation. His Emile, a work on education, was condemned by religious leaders and burned in both Geneva and Paris. In 1766 Rousseau settled in England, where he began work on his revealing autobiography, The Confessions (1782, 1789). By this time he had developed a pathological persecution mania and accused David Hume of plotting against him. After two years of increasingly caustic accusations against Hume, Rousseau returned to France. By 1770 he had settled once again in Paris and could be found reading sections of his Confessions in Parisian salons.

Smith, Adam (1723-1790): Smith was born at Kirkcaldy, Scotland, and educated at the University of Glasgow and Oxford University. Though known today as the founder of modern political economy, his initial successes were in moral philosophy. His first major work, The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759), was culled from the lectures which he gave as professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow. Smith was a friend of David Hume, who entrusted him with the publication, after Hume's death, of his Discourse on Natural Religion. After a brief stint as a lecturer at Edinburgh University, and after a decade as professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow, Smith accepted a position as tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch, with whom he travelled on the Continent between 1764 and 1766. While in Paris he met a number of French physiocrats and began work on An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. He spent the following decade at home in Kirkcaldy working on the text, which he published in 1776. In 1778 Smith was appointed Commissioner of Customs for Scotland. His Philosophical Subjects was published posthumously in 1795.
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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part IV
Philosophy in the Epoch of Ideology

Scope: These eleven lectures in the "Great Minds" series continue our examination of the consequences of the scientific revolution for our self-understanding and the many problems that it raises. Human reason appeared to reach its apex in the impressive predictive and productive powers of modern natural science. Consequently, many philosophers applied the scientific method to subjects and problems where it had not before been tested. Auguste Comte founded sociology, which he saw as the queen of the sciences because it represented society's awareness of itself and also entailed society's capacity to create itself. William Graham Sumner applied the evolutionary insight of Charles Darwin to the structure of society, and Max Weber applied the science of historical inquiry to the understanding of the social order.

We will also examine the idealism of G.W.F. Hegel and its subsequent appropriation and transformation by Karl Marx. Both Hegel and Marx applied historical methods to develop a science for understanding the progress of society. Sigmund Freud brought the tools of science into to the philosopher's sanctum sanctorum—the mind. During this period the West became aware of its social and psychological origins and purposes. Because almost all such efforts to reveal the working of natural laws in human life tend to deflate traditional sources of virtue and transcendence, this was a period of spiritual turmoil as well as of material progress. Each in his own way, Arthur Schopenhauer and Søren Kierkegaard both exemplified the strained search toward a new ground for the self.

Lecture One
Comte and the Origins of Sociology

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: This series of lectures on nineteenth and early twentieth century thought begins with Auguste Comte, who coined the words "sociology" and "altruism" and is widely seen as the father of both sociology and "positivism." Comte's philosophy of positivism rejects teleology and seeks instead to formulate scientific laws of humanity based on observation. Comte describes three stages in the evolution of the human intellect: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive. The first stage of development explains the world in religious terms; the second stage describes events in terms of abstract ideas or essences; and the third stage explains the world through science. This lecture will review the main intellectual influences upon Comte, the main tenets of his philosophy of positivism, his three-stage, "Vico-esque" philosophy of history, his grandiose projects to unify all of the sciences and found a new "religion of humanity." It concludes by evaluating Comte's influence upon subsequent philosophy.

Outline

I. Although Auguste Comte is little read today, his early work was profound, and his ideas had great influence on subsequent philosophy and social science.

A. Comte's thought was shaped by four primary influences:
   1. Catholicism. Comte longed for the organic stability and unity of medieval Catholicism. He stressed the need for order, stability, and progress.
   2. Modern natural science. Like Aristotle, Comte was versed in all scientific disciplines. He sought to organize all sciences logically under a single intellectual structure.
   4. French utopian socialism. Like Marx and Dickens, Comte denounced the social dislocations of industrial society.

B. Comte was always an intellectual outsider.
   1. His mental imbalance became apparent early on.
   2. He failed to gain a university position but attracted followers to whom he lectured.
   3. He became an object of ridicule and had little influence, except at the fringes of the Western world (e.g., in Brazil).
II. Comte's six-volume *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830-1842) was a logical examination of the origins of human knowledge and self-consciousness. The theoretical aim of positivism was the unification of knowledge, and the practical aim was the perfection of human life.

A. He held that all civilizations necessarily develop in three stages, each of which is a precondition for the next. Every branch of knowledge undergoes triadic movement.
   1. During the first or theological phase, all knowledge arises from myth or theology.
      a. The theological phase of knowledge extends from the time of cave-painting through European feudalism.
      b. Fetishism is followed by polytheism and then by monotheism.
   2. During the second phase, that of metaphysical knowledge, people appeal to intellectual abstractions rather than anthropomorphic beings to account for the world. This phase runs from Plato to the French Revolution.
   3. During the third, or positive, phase of history, all abstractions are discarded in explaining the world. Positivism refuses to distinguish between appearance and reality. It applies empirically verifiable and mathematically expressed laws to explain observed phenomena.

B. Comte's theory of epistemology holds that the sciences are all locally related and refer to the same things.
   1. He discerns a logical and historical hierarchy in the sciences, from the most general, simple, and abstract to the most specific, complex, concrete.
   2. He regards sociology as the final phase in the historical and logical self-consciousness of the species.

III. Comte's last work was his *System de Politique Positive* (1851-1854), in which he offered a normative theory for improving society.

A. He sought to impose organic unity upon a dynamic society, and in this respect he was reactionary.

B. Comte founded his own religion of humanity—an ersatz Catholicism predicated on his own positivist understanding of right and wrong.
   1. He viewed himself as the high priest of this religion and as the very self-consciousness of humanity.
   2. Comte held that we exist primarily as a species, not as individuals. Positivism tends toward the abolition of the individual.
   3. He instituted a Positivist catechism, calendar, and ceremonies, with Paris as the new Rome. Anxious about the revolutions of 1848, Comte offered to serve as head of "Positivist Council."

C. Unable to achieve the detachment of Hume, Comte succumbed to the Promethean temptation to construct a new secular, ascetic, and repressive religion that combined Rousseau's "civil religion" with the Jacobin "cult of reason."

IV. How should we evaluate Comte?

A. The charitable interpretation holds that Comte's project to unify all of the sciences was noble and humane but also hubristic and tragic. Torn between his desires for moral order and logical clarity, his mental rope snapped, and he became a tragic, Faustian figure.

B. The uncharitable view is that Comte was brilliant but paranoid and unstable from his early years. Like Hegel, he constructed an intellectual edifice which, however elegant and brilliant, presumed that the entire previous history of human consciousness led inevitably to himself. He attempted the supremely hubristic task of reconciling traditional religion with reason and logic.

V. Despite its disturbing aspects, Comte's thought proved highly influential. He first articulated some of the most important issues and problems in the subsequent history of philosophy of science.

A. The problems of method and the focus on pragmatism in philosophy both date from Comte.

B. Comte influenced Herbert Spencer and the rise of Social Darwinism.

C. Other influential aspects of his thought included his rejection of metaphysics, his technocentric philosophy of history, and his efforts to develop a positivist moral and political theory.

D. Comte's ideas had their most practical influence in Brazil, whose national motto is "Order and Progress." All technocratic tendencies in modern politics owe a debt to Comte.

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**


Questions to Consider:
1. How might positivism reconcile the antagonism between liberty and equality?
2. Discuss the totalitarian implications of Comte’s positive polity.

Lecture Two
Hegel: The Phenomenology of Geist

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines G.W.F. Hegel’s response to the Enlightenment celebration of rationality and mechanistic science. The preeminent German thinker of his day, Hegel centralized the notion of spirit (or Geist) in his philosophy. As we learn in this lecture, he tried to create a grand philosophical system that would encompass all of human knowledge and add to its store. Although his Phenomenology of Geist is not easy reading, its influence can hardly be overstated. This lecture will review the central aspects of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Geist and assess its significance for later western philosophy.

Outline

I. G.W.F. Hegel was the last of the great German system builders.
   A. He tried to build a coherent explanation of the external world of nature, the inner world of consciousness, and the process by which consciousness develops over time.
   B. His early theological writings are the best introduction to his thought.
   C. Although triads are ubiquitous in his thought, the dialectic (thesis-antithesis-synthesis) is relatively rare.

II. Hegel attempted to solve the Kantian “problem of consciousness”—i.e., if things in themselves (dienen an sich) are directly unknowable to us, how do we know that they exist?
   A. According to the early German Idealists, Kant erred in attributing existence to dienen an sich.
      1. Fichte and Schelling held that “things in themselves” do not exist, but this implies that the mind creates both the form and content of human cognition.
      2. Kant had tried to avoid solipsism (i.e., the idea that nothing exists beyond our own minds) by asserting the existence of dienen an sich. His philosophy was critical rather than idealist. For the German Idealists, by contrast, the world is the product of mind.
      3. Fichte and Schelling, however, fell into solipsism by denying external reality.
   B. Hegel resolved this problem by treating the universe as the product not of finite human minds, but of Mind—a giant collective subject, the Geist.
      1. Geist has no good English translation, although it is commonly translated as “mind” or “spirit.”
2. *Geist* is etymologically related to “ghost,” “gist,” and “geyser.”
   a. Like a ghost, *Geist* is psychic, mental, immaterial, and relatively more concrete than “spirit.”
   b. Like a geyser, it is regular, periodic, and predictable. It has its own internal force and operates by its own laws.
   c. The concept of “gist” connotes well the meaning of *Geist*.

III. In *The Phenomenology of Geist* (1807), Hegel tries to explain consciousness in the absence of the thing in itself.

   A. Contrary to Kant, Hegel believed that the mind’s categories of understanding evolve over time, allowing for the growth of consciousness. This growth of consciousness is teleological: it moves from finite to infinite consciousness.

   B. *The Phenomenology of Geist* is the science of the appearance of self-knowledge, which is the same as reality, since there is no *ding an sich*. The world will disclose itself to us rationally if we examine it rationally.

   C. The history of philosophy is the *Geist’s* coming to self-knowledge, which proceeds dialectically.
   1. The finitude of human understanding rises through self-contradiction to ever-higher levels.
   2. The end-state is absolute, final self-consciousness. This can be viewed as the reconciliation of God and man, or of human beings with themselves.

   D. *The Phenomenology of Geist* is necessarily an account of Hegel’s own spiritual odyssey toward self-consciousness, as well as that of all humanity. The *Geist* is animated by an entelechy, a natural purpose: to achieve full omniscience and self-consciousness.

   E. The *Geist* constructs reality, which is rational since *Geist* is rational.
   1. To be free is to be rational and autonomous.
   2. Rationality allows the discernment of ends or purposes.
   3. Finitude and abstraction generate contradiction. Nothing partial or finite is truly free, so freedom rationally “sublates” contradictions in the process of realizing infinite self-consciousness.
   4. The end-state of this dialectical process is the transcendence of contradictions and the bounds of finite understanding.

   F. Hegel describes the development of subjective *Geist* (in the individual).
   1. Although the categories of understanding are objective, our consciousness of the world is subjective, since we only find in nature what we put there.
   2. Humanity moves from nature to history via the master-slave dialectic.
      a. All people seek power and recognition from others; this is the beginning of history.
   c. Ironically, the slave is forced to become independent, while the master is freed to become dependent on the slave.

   3. This situation generates the stage of the Unhappy Consciousness, which seeks freedom by means of resignation and dependence upon oneself, viz., Stoicism, which leads logically to Skepticism and eventually to despair.

   4. With Christianity (the religion of Spirit), the universality of humanity is recognized.

   G. The next stage is Objective *Geist*—i.e., society and its rules.
   1. Like Kant, Hegel holds that freedom requires law. Objective *Geist* develops first within the family, then within civil society, and finally within the state.
   2. The conflict between these different sorts of law is depicted in art (e.g., Sophocles’ *Antigone*).

   H. Absolute Spirit is the synthesis of subjective and objective Spirit. It consists of art, religion, and philosophy.
   1. Art is the first stage of absolute Spirit. It passes through three phases: symbolic, classical, and romantic.
   2. Religion is the second stage—it presents a pictorial representation of reality, and it evolves from primitive nature-worship to Christianity, where *Geist* is made universal.
   3. Philosophy is the final stage. Self-consciousness develops from the earliest thoughts on nature to culminate in Hegel himself.

IV. How should we interpret Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Geist*?

   A. Hegel viewed *The Phenomenology of Geist* as “the Golgotha of Absolute Spirit.” Is it the vindication or the abolition of religion?

   B. The Left or Young Hegelians treated Hegel as an atheist. In saying that God is dead, did Hegel mean that at the end of history, man will be reconciled not with God but with himself?

   C. The *Phenomenology* can be read in either theistic or atheistic terms. Hegel was probably a religious thinker and a genuine Lutheran. The left-wing reading of Hegel, however, has probably been more fruitful over time.

Essential Reading:
Lecture Three
Hegel's Philosophy of History

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D

Scope: Although this lecture covers some of the same ground as the previous one (which is just as well, given the difficulty of the concepts), it emphasizes Hegel’s greatest legacy: his philosophy of history. For Hegel, history represents the necessary and rational unfolding of absolute Spirit toward self-consciousness. That is, history is the world or God or the collective spirit of humanity becoming conscious of itself and discovering its own nature. It proceeds in necessary phases, an understanding of which allows us in turn to understand the artistic, scientific, and philosophical products of each phase. Hegel’s historicism—the notion that the artistic products and accepted truths of a given era are relative to that era—profundely influenced Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida.

Outline

I. Hegel was one of the most important thinkers about the meaning and course of history. He is the father of modern historicism and idealism.
   A. The concept of Geist is central to Hegel’s philosophy.
      1. Geist refers to a collective subject, a personality larger and more complex than the individual.
      2. All human beings form one giant, collective subject.
      3. Hegel analogizes phases in history to phases in the development of individual human beings. The species proceeds from ignorance and superstition to full understanding of their own nature and potential.
      4. Geist is the soul of the whole human race.
   B. Hegel wants to present a comprehensive interpretation of human existence.
      1. He wants to discern rationally the goal or purpose of human existence.
      2. Just as Kant develops a logical foundation for the Golden Rule, Hegel translates Christian eschatology into the language of German idealism.
      3. Hegel wants to reveal God’s providential plan for the human race.

II. Progress is central to Hegel’s conception of history.
   A. According to Hegel, the Geist develops over time. Each epoch has its own Geist and contributes to the overall development of the Geist.

Questions to Consider:
1. Discuss the pervasive use of triadic structures in the Phenomenology of Geist.
2. What is the place of Christianity in the Phenomenology of Geist?
B. The Geist develops in accordance with its own necessary laws of rationality and freedom.
   1. The Geist is the essence of human existence.
   2. The Geist of each epoch is revealed in that epoch's cultural products.

C. The Geist—the universal soul of humanity—gradually becomes more knowledgeable about itself and the world, and more conscious of its essential freedom and potential for autonomous rationality.

D. As Geist becomes more conscious of itself, it learns how to dominate nature. As our knowledge increases, we become more powerful.

E. The ultimate purpose of human existence is to complete this project of gaining knowledge and power—i.e., to achieve the unification of God and man.
   1. Hegel believes that he was the first to understand the purpose of human existence. He believes that Geist has coalesced in himself.
   2. He ends human history by reconciling human beings with the divine mind and by understanding what human beings really are.

F. Hegel devised laws of human history.
   1. Marxism is an extension of Hegel's project of discerning the laws of history.
   2. Unlike Marx, though, Hegel does not view these laws in deterministic or inevitable terms. Hegel sees these laws as conducing to freedom and rationality.
   3. Hegel believes that human beings become more self-conscious and free as they understand better the purpose of their existence.

G. Hegel's philosophy of history is essentially Christian theology. For him, the purpose of human existence is reconciliation between God and man.
   1. With the Renaissance, the focus of study shifted from God to man.
   2. With the Enlightenment, nature became the focus of inquiry.
   3. Unlike the great thinkers of the Enlightenment, Hegel's concern was not with nature but with history.

III. Hegel's confidence that we can achieve true happiness and change the world once we understand the purpose of human existence has proven very influential with Marxists, utopian socialists, social Darwinists, and proponents of international understanding. He is the last great synthesizer of Athens with Jerusalem.

Essential Reading:
Hegel, G.W.F. Introduction to the Philosophy of History (trans. Leo Rauch).

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Compare Hegel's linear view of history with the Christian view of history as articulated by St. Augustine.
2. What ethical views, if any, follow from Hegel's philosophy of history?
Lecture Four
Marx and the Problem of Alienation and Ideology

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Karl Marx was important not only as a philosopher who elaborated on and attacked Hegel’s philosophy of history, but as a political thinker and agitator whose ideas helped to shape the political history of the West in the twentieth century. This lecture will examine the philosophical origins of Marx’s thought, especially Hegelian philosophy of history. It also examines Marx’s theory of surplus value and his contention that the division of labor gives rise to class conflict, exploitation, and alienation. It closes by evaluating both the shortcomings and the continuing relevance of Marxism.

Outline

I. Karl Marx’s philosophy combines three intellectual traditions: English political economy, French utopian socialism, and German idealism. Although Marx never reconciled the tensions among these elements, his philosophy was an influential response to the industrial age.
   A. Marx borrowed from English political economy, and especially from Adam Smith, the labor theory of value and the idea that the division of labor divides society into antagonistic social classes. He also borrowed the naturalistic perspective of David Hume.
   B. Marx borrowed from the French utopian socialists the idea that fundamental social change can be achieved through an a priori plan. He sought to add a scientific component to the utopian elements of French socialism.
   C. Marx borrowed from Hegel his view of history.
      1. Hegel viewed history as the progressive realization of the Geist. Like Hegel, Marx viewed history as teleological—as the progressive development of the species toward universal human liberation, characterized by the absence of alienation and the achievement of social justice.
      2. Social justice is primarily a matter of redistribution of wealth.

II. Unlike Hegel, Marx viewed the working class rather than the intelligentsia—the doers rather than the thinkers—as the universal class.
   A. In primitive society—i.e., in man’s natural state—there was no division of labor.
   B. The emergence of the division of labor was accompanied by the rise of a hierarchical social structure of producers and exploiters. Marx believed that in every epoch, the ruling class uses oppression to appropriate surplus value from the producers.

III. According to Marx, the ruling ideas in every age are those that reinforce the social relations that benefit the ruling class, i.e., the exploiters.
   A. Contrary to Hegel, Marx held that changes in the dominant ideas of any age come not from the Geist but from changes in the mode of production.
   B. The division of the human species into hostile classes causes alienation, understood as a necessary false consciousness in defense of class interests.
   C. As a society’s productive forces change, its social structures and the dominant ideas by which those structures are legitimized will also change.
      1. Aristotle’s defense of slavery as a natural institution responded to the economic self-interest of the ruling class in ancient Greece.
      2. Aquinas defended monarchy and serfdom by giving them divine sanction. Like Aristotle, he legitimized the exploitive social relations characteristic of his society.

IV. Marx sought to return man to his natural state by eliminating alienation, classes, false consciousness, and exploitation.
   A. In his view, Marxism allows one to view the human condition as it really is, with the distortions of alienated thought removed.
   B. When Marxism is finally understood and practiced, science will be realized and man will be redeemed. This “secular apocalypse” will bring the end of history.
   C. Marx believed that he was the first to explain history accurately. He sought a return to early primitive communism but without forfeiting the abundance made possible by modern technology.

V. Although Marxism had weak predictive power, it identified genuine social problems and had deep appeal.
   A. Unlike Smith, Marx was impressed mainly by the negative side of the industrial revolution. He expressed moral indignation over the social and economic condition of the working class in early industrial Britain.
   B. He held that the problems of alienation and exploitation are not susceptible to gradual reform. The condition of the working class can be ameliorated only through a global proletarian revolution. This global applicability helps to explain the wide appeal of Marxism during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
C. Marx underestimated the ability of the capitalist system to reform itself gradually.

D. Marxism is the last great Christian heresy. Its faith in progress and in the end of history is essentially Christian eschatology with a naturalistic and scientific twist. Marx thinks that his system will bring true human liberation and self-understanding.

E. Marxism has produced both terrible human tragedies and theoretical incoherence.
   1. Where it has been instituted in practice, Marxism has brought not the elimination of exploitation and oppression, but instead the replacement of one ruling elite by another.
   2. The millennial aspect of Marxist theory can lead to the devaluing of individual human lives for the sake of achieving a utopian future goal. That is, it can legitimate totalitarian political practice.
   3. The teleological aspect of Marxism is mythological—a holdover from Christianity, which Marx otherwise rejected.

F. As the practical political influence of Marxism wanes, it is worth remembering that Marx attempted an impossible intellectual task, the reconciliation of the materialistic and metaphysical traditions in Western philosophy.

VI. Marx was one of the great social theorists of the nineteenth century and the source of many progressive reforms in modern capitalist society. The development of the welfare state is homage to Marx.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What are Marx’s main objections to Hegel?
2. What kind of distortions does capitalism produce in the consciousness of those it oppresses?
Lecture Five
Marx's Historical Materialism

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: Perhaps Marx's deepest influence on contemporary thought has been the epistemological view, described in this lecture, that even the most sincere beliefs and most widely-held truths of a given epoch may be produced to justify or "naturalize" the economic structure of that epoch. As Professor Staloff explains, this perspective opens up a completely new way to understand intellectual history.

Outline

I. Karl Marx's historical materialism is an attempt to answer Hegel's idealist explanation of history in purely naturalistic or scientific terms. It seeks to identify the scientific laws that causally determine human history.

II. A rational reconstruction of Marx and Engels's historical materialism begins with Marx's reference in The Communist Manifesto to the problem of history. This problem involves three critical issues that constitute the background assumptions and themes of the unfolding account of human evolution.

A. The first issue is one of philosophical anthropology, i.e., what distinguishes man from other species?
   1. According to Hegel, man is distinguished by consciousness. But why did consciousness emerge? What evolutionary function does it serve?
   2. Marx notes that only human beings constantly reshape their environment; only they produce with cognitive forethought.

B. The second issue is anthropological and natural-historical. Marx observed that the division of labor is present in all organized human production.

C. The third issue is the scarcity of goods to supply all the material and cultural wants of society's members.
   1. As a result of this scarcity, one part of society establishes itself as a ruling stratum so that it can "enclose" a disproportionate share of social income.
   2. Marx offers no moral evaluation of this behavior. He views it as necessary and inevitable.

III. Marx's historical materialism posits two fundamental entities: actual historical persons and the "forces of production." The forces of production are comprised of two elements: the means of production and abstract labor power.

A. The means of production are comprised of tools, facilities or productive spaces, and "raw materials" or the objects of labor.

B. Abstract labor power includes the various techniques and skills of labor as they develop over time. For Marx, science is the most important component of abstract labor power.

IV. Persons and productive forces stand in various relations called "relations of production."

A. These relations include ownership, mastery (over slaves), renting or leasing.

B. The productive relations are strongly determined by the stage of historical development of the forces of production.
   1. Societies in which the forces of production are primitive are likely to have severe forms of labor control.
   2. In technologically sophisticated societies, owners find it more efficient to hire rather than to own their workers.

C. The sum total of these productive relations constitute the economic structure or "base" of the society.

D. The rest of the social structure Marx called the society's "superstructure" which is epiphenomenal to, or determined by, the economic base.
   1. This superstructure includes law, culture, philosophy, fine arts, and political institutions (but not science).
   2. This cultural superstructure will serve to legitimize the existing economic structure.

V. Based on his historical research, Marx offers several laws of development of the "modes of production" (i.e., the economic structure and its relation to the forces of production).

A. Marx identifies three distinct modes of production in Western history: slavery, characteristic of the ancient world; feudalism, characteristic of the Middle Ages; and capitalism, characteristic of the modern bourgeois epoch.

B. Marx proposed several laws of development of the modes of production.
   1. Every mode of production persists as long as it can foster the further development of the forces of production.
   2. When the social relations of production fetter the productive forces, a revolution will usher in a new mode of production.
   3. Every new mode of production gestates within society while the old mode of production is still regnant. "History never poses a problem that it cannot solve."
C. The capitalist mode of production is the first truly dynamic economic structure.
   1. Marx had profound respect for the bourgeoisie and for the productivity of capitalism.
   2. Competition forces the bourgeoisie constantly to revolutionize the means of production and become more efficient. Wealth creation becomes possible at an exponential rate.

D. The bourgeoisie mode of production makes it technologically possible to solve the problem of scarcity.
   1. Unfortunately, given disproportionate distribution of incomes, most people lack the material resources to consume the commodities that industrial capitalism can produce.
   2. This condition results in periodic recessions and depressions, which suggests that the existing relations of production have begun to fetter the development of productive forces.
   3. The inevitable result will be communist revolution.

VI. Communism represents the solution to the problem of history.
   A. By redressing the problem of disparate incomes, the last fetter to the development of productive forces is removed and the problem of scarcity is solved on a global basis.
   B. Under communism, there is no need for the state, which will wither away.

C. The strengths of Marx's historical determinism include its identification of law-like regularities in history and its ability to unify large parts of history.
   1. We judge past events on the basis of their present outcomes.
   2. Marx viewed capitalism as insufficient when he compared it to the perceived advantages of a hypothetical future state—communism.
   3. This prophetic quality of Marxism undermines its standing as a political project but not its standing as a mode of historical understanding.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Why does Marx believe that communism is the “solution of the problem of history”?
2. How does Marxian historicism differ from Hegelian?
Lecture Six
Kierkegaard's Christian Existentialism

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Soren Kierkegaard was almost unknown in his own time outside of his native Denmark. He stands, however, as a profound Christian thinker, the founder of existentialism, and a leading critic of Enlightenment rationality. He despised Hegel, abusing him continually and with great wit. Kierkegaard is best known for his view that one must take a "leap of faith" and believe in God without recourse to reason. This lecture focuses on Kierkegaard's disjunction between the aesthetic and ethical life, his insistence that we must choose one or the other of these lives without reference to rational criteria, and the contrast between Kantian rationalism and Kierkegaardian reliance on blind faith.

Outline

I. Kierkegaard's philosophy, like Marx's, is a reaction to the Hegelian synthesis—the idea that philosophy came to an end when Hegel comprehended the ultimate purpose of human life.

A. Kierkegaard rejected the smug certainty, the megalomaniacal comprehensiveness, the Promethean rationalism of Hegel's system.

B. Unlike Marx, Kierkegaard was both a religious believer and a comic poet, and these personal elements saturate his writings as a combination of caustic wit and morbid introspection.

C. He denied that it was possible to completely desystematize human existence. He saw as problematic the mixture of Promethean, humanistic Greek rationality with the strictly understood tradition of Biblical faith and religion.
   1. He refused to accept the facile compromises of Christianity with Greek rational philosophy; he insisted that we must choose between the life of faith and that of rationality.
   2. What criteria should govern this choice? What possible grounds for this decision would not presuppose the decision itself?

II. Kierkegaard sought to understand how humans make this choice between faith and rationality. He insisted that all people must choose whether to pursue the aesthetic life or the ethical life.

A. By the aesthetic life he means that of both physical/sensual and intellectual pleasure. It is the rational life identified with Athens.

B. By the ethical life he means that of faith, of one who pursues moral righteousness independent of pleasure.

C. Kierkegaard saw the aesthetic life as man's natural orientation. He saw this predisposition as an analogue of original sin.

D. Although Kant sought to synthesize reason with faith, Kierkegaard saw reason as at best superfluous to the life of faith.

E. Kierkegaard held in Either/Or that individuals must choose either the aesthetic or the ethical life.
   1. The effort to forge this compromise is the mark of the aesthetic man par excellence.
   2. Kierkegaard denies the existence of any rational decision procedure for making this supremely important choice. By adopting the criterion of rationality in making this decision, one presupposes the outcome. For this reason, he is considered the founder of existentialism.
   3. Kierkegaard was a tortured and agonized person who relished irony. He felt that those who have not suffered for their beliefs have no right to make the existential choice between faith and reason.

F. In Either, he sought to show the reader the distractedness of the aesthetic life.
   1. The aesthete eventually succumbs to boredom with the nothingness that pervades reality. Boredom is the root of all evil.
   2. The natural outcome of the aesthetic life is suicide.
   3. Kierkegaard saw himself as a joker who is deadly serious but is not taken seriously.

G. In Or, Kierkegaard described the life of the ethical man.
   1. Religious belief is attractive, but there is no proof. Arguments which purport logically to demonstrate God's existence are blasphemous attempts to make God's inscrutable nature seem accessible to human reason.
   2. The ethical man chooses to believe for its own sake, not for pleasure or for any reason. It is a criterionless choice and requires a "leap of faith."

III. Kierkegaard and Kant were Christians who worshipped different Gods.

A. In the Kantian view, the life of faith can be justified on rational grounds. In fact, God always operates in accordance with the categorical imperative.

B. There is an element of Promethean, Greek rationality in this Kantian view. It is not consistent with simple, arbitrary subjection to the will of God.

C. As described in Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard takes a Romantic view of God. He urges the reader to reject rationality and do as God asks, without question. He believes that faith in God is reason enough.
D. Kierkegaard has relevance because he forces us to confront the implications of being free, autonomous, and rational subjects. We face many subjective choices but lack rational criteria for making them.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Discuss Kierkegaard’s intellectual debt to the Book of Job.
2. Discuss the connection between the aesthetic and ethical approaches to life as developed in *Either/Or*.

Lecture Seven
Schopenhauer: *The World as Will and Idea*

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Arthur Schopenhauer resembled Kierkegaard in his talent and wit as a literary stylist and in his hatred of Hegel. Schopenhauer’s philosophy was famously pessimistic: he argued that the best thing is extinction and, failing that, art. His view that with art and the deepest ethics we come up against the limits of language has influenced such philosophers as Ludwig Wittgenstein. Schopenhauer also had great influence on Freud and Nietzsche. This lecture will examine Schopenhauer’s thought as set forth his great work, *The World as Will and Idea*.

Outline

I. Schopenhauer differs from other nineteenth-century Romantic writers in the pessimistic and morose character of his work.
   A. His unfortunate family background contributed to the grimness and disturbed quality of his psyche and world-view.
      1. His father committed suicide.
      2. His mother was cold and distant and eventually broke with Schopenhauer, leaving him almost perfectly alone.
   B. The German idealists, and especially Kant, had deep influence upon Schopenhauer’s thought.
   C. Schopenhauer might have drawn his negative view of the human condition from his wide reading in Indian philosophy and religion, including the Upanishads and the works of the Buddha.
   D. Schopenhauer’s teachers included Fichte and Schliermacher.
   E. The misogyny and racism evident in Schopenhauer’s writings make them hard to read today. While he writes in a pleasing literary style, the content is often unpleasant and offputting.
   F. Schopenhauer hated Hegel and competed with him for students at the University of Berlin during the 1820s. Eventually Schopenhauer left the university, complaining that he had not been understood.

II. Schopenhauer’s great work—*The World as Will and Idea* (1818)—inverts the main ideas of German idealism. As is characteristic of German idealism, he distinguishes between subject and object, and he examines what it means to be a self-conscious entity. He resembles Kierkegaard in his relentless negativity but departs from him in denying the possibility of redemption.
   A. The first part of Schopenhauer’s book is entitled “The World as Representation” (*Vorstellung*).
1. Hume and the British empiricists viewed the mind as a tabula rasa and denied the existence of abstractions such as space, time, and causality.

2. Kant rejected this Humean skepticism, arguing that the mind does not passively receive but actively constructs the external world. By means of the a priori forms of cognition, it imposes form and structure on our experience of the external world.

3. A good Kantian, Schopenhauer viewed the phenomenal world as a "Vorstellung"—as one big idea. The subject cannot know the noumena or ding an sich—the world as it really is—but only phenomena, the world as we experience it.

B. The second part is entitled "The World as Will."

1. Here Schopenhauer inverts and departs from Kant. He argues that the subject can know as noumen his own self-consciousness or will. The external world is mediated by the a priori forms of cognition, but the internal world of one's own will can be known directly.

2. Schopenhauer agrees with Hobbes that human beings are primarily desiring animals, and he rejects the Enlightenment confidence that reason can subdue and control the will. The will is more powerful than reason. It leads us where it would go, not where we would lead it.

3. Will is a blind, ateleological force that animates all nature, including the human psyche. This idea contains the anti-Socratic implication that we cannot know ourselves; we cannot know what we will until we have already acted. This idea greatly influenced Freud.

4. Schopenhauer views in wholly negative terms man's condition as a desiring animal. Our desires are incessant, and our satisfaction of them is only ephemeral. We would be far better off without them—i.e., it would be preferable not to exist at all.

C. The third section addresses the problem of the world as idea and is entitled "Beyond Representation/Phenomena." In it, Schopenhauer proposes two avenues of escape from our prison of subjectivity.

1. The first is aesthetics or art, which in the absence of spiritual redemption can provide an ersatz transcendence of subjectivity. Aesthetic apprehension and genius are purely objective.

   a. In an inversion of Plato, Schopenhauer views art as the highest cognitive activity. However, his idea of tragedy is perversive: terrible events that befall average people through no fault of their own. In Schopenhauer's view, this situation conveys the highest objectivity because it portrays the world as it really is—meaningless, chaotic, and filled with pain.

   b. Schopenhauer saw music as the direct apprehension and statement of the will. His musical ideas were very influential, especially with Richard Wagner.

2. Ethics provides the other means of escape from subjectivity. The practice of Buddhist or Christian universal compassion can break down the illusory bonds of the ego. The saint's compassion overflows the boundaries of the self; as he recognizes his own suffering in that of others.

D. The final section is entitled "Beyond Will"—i.e., beyond our noumenal self.

1. Schopenhauer finds nihilism to be edifying; it is good to know how horrible our condition is.

2. He proposes two solutions to the problem of desire.

   a. The first is asceticism, i.e., the abolition of self through denial of one's will.

   b. The second is mysticism, which collapses the distinction between will and idea.

3. Schopenhauer draws two conclusions from his view of the human condition.

   a. First, this is the worst of all possible worlds, since it is only with infinite suffering and striving that we continue to exist at all.

   b. Second, it is better not to have been born. We are bundles of desires and questions, but our desires cannot be satisfied and our questions cannot be answered. Since no God exists to whom we can pray, our only option is psychological suicide.

III. Schopenhauer made important contributions to modern psychology, philosophy, and aesthetic theory.

A. Freud derived from Schopenhauer the idea of unconscious motivation, the problem of desire, parapraxis (i.e., "Freudian slips"), and the idea of sex as the focus of the will.

B. Schopenhauer is also responsible for the idea that artistic creativity can provide a sort of secular redemption in the absence of Christian spirituality. He offered a philosophical formulation of German Romanticism revisited.

C. Schopenhauer's ideas regarding the primacy of the will influenced Bergson's Vitalism and Sorel's Voluntarism.

D. Schopenhauer is less important for his own achievements than he is for his posthumous influence on German high culture.:

   1. His thought influenced Freud's ideas regarding unconscious motivation and the problem of desire.

   2. Nietzsche borrowed from Schopenhauer his irrationalism and exaltation of the will.

   3. The chronically morose Ludwig Wittgenstein took from Schopenhauer the idea that aesthetics is at the boundaries of language and that ethics consists of myth, symbols, gestures, and noise.
Lecture Eight

The Classical Doctrine of Liberal Democracy:
John Stuart Mill's On Liberty and Utilitarianism

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines utilitarianism, an empiricist ethical system devised by Jeremy Bentham and heavily influenced by the ideas of Epicurus and David Hume. Its greatest advocate—and the main subject of this lecture—was John Stuart Mill. The basic principle of utilitarianism is this: "Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness." Happiness is in turn understood to be the greatest possible balance of pleasure over pain. This sort of position is often termed "teleological"—it judges acts by their consequences. Such positions contrast with "deontological" positions, such as that of Kant, which judge acts by their adherence to a set of rules or duties. Mill famously argued from his ethical system to democracy, liberty, and tolerance, and he was an early advocate of equal rights for women and other social reforms.

Outline

I. John Stuart Mill was the mature spokesman for utilitarianism, the dominant moral theory in the Anglo-American world.
   
   A. Utilitarianism reflected English Enlightenment beliefs in the universal efficacy of education; the need for social reform; the possibility of improving human life by reforming laws and institutions; the ability of reason to effect progress; and in the primacy of consequences rather than intentions as the key to moral judgments.
   
   B. Utilitarianism is a political as well as moral doctrine. Reforms advocated by the British "Radicals" included abolition of capital punishment in most cases, universal suffrage, and liberation of women.
   
   C. Utilitarianism provides a philosophical justification for democracy, in that it regards the greatest happiness of the greatest number as the highest good. It remains one of our own most familiar moral doctrines, and its presuppositions are present in much of our political discourse and criticism.

II. Mill did not invent utilitarianism. Instead, he systematized and amended the pioneering work of Jeremy Bentham. Bentham's utilitarianism was fundamentally an empiricist theory of morality, following in a long line of such theories within British empiricism. Bentham identified David Hume as the principal influence on his thought.
A. Hume held that our moral judgments are based on sentiment, and that these sentiments are triggered by an instinctual recognition of utility. This theory was descriptive and not prescriptive; it sought to explain how we actually arrive at moral decisions, not what we ought to do.

B. Bentham was primarily a legal reformer. He argued that the only legitimate criterion for law was whether it promoted the greatest happiness for the greatest number. His theory rested upon two premises:
   1. The Epicurean "greatest happiness" principle holds that one situation is desirable over another if it brings a greater degree of pleasure. All peoples' pleasures are presumed to be equal in value, and all people are presumed actually to desire pleasure as their primary good.
   2. The "principle of association" holds that we are subject to a psychological determinism based on the constant concurrence of conjoined ideas or events.
      a. We desire things that do not directly give pleasure because we associate with them a pleasure that we derived from similar things in the past.
      b. At the public level, the legislator must use the laws of psychological behavior to create legal codes that naturally induce individuals to act for the public good. In this way the law can harmonize the public and private good.

C. Mill addressed several problems associated with Benthamite utilitarianism.
   1. The principle of utility does not preclude sacrificing the pleasures of a minority for the majority, nor does it value liberties in themselves, except as they conduce to pleasure.
   2. The calculus of utility does not recognize qualitative differences among kinds of pleasures.
   3. Bentham's system is unsystematic and incomplete.

III. Mill's contribution to utilitarianism was to address the problems with Bentham's theory and flesh out the doctrine.
A. Mill's On Liberty attempted to deal with the first problem of utility by proposing the "principle of harm."
   1. The only justification for abridging one's freedom is to prevent physical harm to another.
   2. Mill acknowledges certain exceptions: e.g., one can exert "paternal" control over those who lack rational faculties.
B. Mill countered the second problem of utilitarianism by arguing that distinctions between higher and lower pleasures can be made only by those who are capable of experiencing both kinds of pleasures.
   1. If there is not unanimity regarding the choice of pleasures to pursue, the majority should prevail.

2. According to Mill, almost everyone is capable of enjoying higher pleasures, assuming they have adequate education. Thus utilitarians emphasize the need for universal education.

C. Mill argued that his principle of utility could be deduced from certain facts of psychological life.
   1. We can discover what is desirable by observing what people in fact desire: i.e., pleasure, happiness, or utility.
   2. People do not always desire utility directly, but they desire it indirectly through the principle of association.
   3. In this way Mill explains the origin of our system of virtues: they are associated either with our own or with other people's pleasures.

D. Mill believed that we live in a causally determined universe. With sufficient information, one should be able to predict any person's decisions and behavior.
   1. One consequence of this view is that human beings become freedomless automatons.
   2. Mill tried to escape this problem by offering a limited notion of human freedom. Although our actions are caused, a large part of that cause is our own character, which we shape through our own choices.
   3. However, those choices are themselves determined by other causes, such as one's upbringing or external society.

IV. Mill's improved version of utilitarianism presents several problems.
A. Utilitarians seek to generate a system of ethics from the contingent fact that we desire pleasure.
   1. But although we might desire something, it does not necessarily follow that the object of desire is in fact desirable.
   2. Put another way, if in fact we both do and ought to desire happiness, then there is no problem for ethics to resolve, and Leibniz was correct that we live in best of all possible worlds. This situation is counterintuitive.
   3. An ancillary problem posed by empiricist utilitarian ethics is the relation of the individual to society. If we each desire our own happiness, why should we care about the happiness of others?
B. The doctrine of higher pleasures undermines one of the principal goals of utilitarianism, i.e., to create an objective calculus to inform policy and action. How can you calculate the utilities of pleasures that are different in kind?
   1. Why should we conclude that the majority is correct in its preferences?
   2. Moreover, Mill is blind to the possibility that those who share higher pleasures might not be able to offer unbiased judgments about those pleasures.
C. Another problem concerns the inconsistency of liberty and utility.
   1. It is arguable whether the "principle of harm" is compatible with
      the principle of utility or is instead just an ad hoc addendum.
   2. If we desire pleasure above all, why should we not sacrifice our
      liberty in pursuit of maximum pleasure for the majority? Why
      should not we exchange our liberty for pleasure, as Huxley
      portrayed in Brave New World?

D. Like all consequentialist moral theories, utilitarianism suffers from the
   incalculability of consequences. It is very hard to calculate precisely
   the outcome of individual actions, to say nothing of social ones.
   Because we are very rarely, if ever, able to calculate satisfactorily the
   consequences of an action, we might be deterred from ever making a
   decision.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
York: Doubleday & Co., 1985 (pp.1-51).
Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy*. New York: Simon and
Schuster, 1972 (pp. 773-782).
Duncan, G. *Marx and Mill: Two Views of Social Conflict and Social Harmony.*
Walters, Ronald. *The Reform Movements in America, 1815-1860*. Hill and Wang,
1978.

Questions to Consider:
1. What, if anything, distinguishes utilitarianism from other eudaemonistic moral
   theories?
2. What are the implications of the psychological principle of association and the
   "greatest happiness" principle for the making of just laws?

Lecture Nine
William Graham Sumner: The Darwinian Revolution
in Social Thought

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the social-scientific movement known as Social
Darwinism and the thought of one of its premier exponents, the Yale
University sociologist William Graham Sumner. We will review the
contribution of Darwinian evolutionary theory to Social Darwinism, the
Social-Darwinian conception of capital and its central role in promoting
social development, and Sumner's understanding of the proper role and
moral standing of the state. The lecture concludes by examining
Sumner's advocacy of liberty as the supreme social value and his critique
of social reformism.

Outline

I. Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories made possible the emergence in the
   late nineteenth century of a tremendously influential social-scientific
   movement called Social Darwinism.
   A. Darwinian evolutionary theory undermined Christianity and its moral
      tradition by contradicting the Biblical account of creation as set forth in
      Genesis.
      1. While the Newtonian universe was mechanical, its orderliness and
         lawlike behavior encouraged a belief in an intelligence behind the
         creation.
      2. Darwin portrayed nature, by contrast, as wasteful, capricious, Irrational,
         and "red in tooth and claw."
   B. Darwin's evolutionary theory naturalized man by tracing his lineage to
      non-human primates.
      1. Thus human intelligence is not sui generis; aspects of it are evident
         in other higher primates.
      2. Human society also became "naturalized." It was seen as
         "inherently" dominated by the competitive struggle for survival that also
         characterized nature itself.
      3. Darwin was very influenced by Malthus' argument that higher
         wages would ultimately drive down wages by expanding the supply of
         workers.
   C. Social Darwinism achieved a level of influence in the American
      academy and culture that it never achieved in Great Britain. Late
      nineteenth-century America best approximated a Social Darwinist
      polity.
D. The Social Darwinism of William Graham Sumner combines several distinct cultural strains.
   1. His sociological writings epitomize late nineteenth-century American "positivism" in social science.
   2. Social Darwinism represents a "scientifically" grounded defense of industrial capitalism and the traditional doctrine of laissez-faire.
   3. It asserts the inevitability of social, political, and moral progress.

II. Sumner's Social Darwinism is based on a historically materialist conception of the relationship between capital and labor. Elements of this conception are shared by classical political economy and Marxism.
   A. Sumner's definition of capital resembles that of Marx and Engels. According to Sumner, capital includes all of the basic factors of production except labor.
   B. Sumner regards capital as the key to social development.
      1. It allows a society to use its productive forces as efficiently as possible in order to achieve mastery over nature and prevail in the struggle for existence.
      2. Capital in the form of tools and other technology is what distinguishes human beings from the beasts.
      3. Sumner concludes that civilized life and human progress depend ultimately on private property and capital.
      4. An industrial society must employ its capital in the most efficient manner possible in order to ensure that its poorest members do not lose the struggle for existence.
   C. The history of labor indicates a slow but steady increase in the freedom and dignity of worker.
      1. Slavery predominated in primitive society, and serfdom predominated in medieval times. Serfdom was eventually supplanted by guild organization.
      2. Free labor based on voluntary contract is the characteristic labor form of the modern world. This system is the triumph of Freedom.
      3. Whereas feudal society was based on hierarchy, status, birth, and sentiment, the new system of free labor is based on contract and rationality. The new system is cold and abstract and lacks the ennobling sentimenality of feudalism, but its greater freedom and productivity make it far superior to serfdom.
   D. Supply and demand in the labor market determines the wages of labor in modern society. Self-interested workers will realize that their best interests require them to limit the supply of workers, via birth control.

III. Sumner and other Social Darwinists examined the proper role and moral status of the state.
   A. Sumner seeks to demystify the state, which Hegel had enshrined as the essence of spiritual and moral life.
      1. Sumner avers that the state's principal legitimate concerns are the defense of the life, liberty and property of its citizens.
      2. According to Sumner, the defense of property allows one to accumulate capital and thus pursue happiness. Unlike utilitarians, who expected the state to provide happiness, Social Darwinists looked to the state to make the private pursuit of happiness possible.
   B. Sumner insists that civil liberty is desirable for its own sake, not as a means to achieve some other social goal.
      1. Civil liberty accrues only to individuals, not to groups or institutions.
      2. The purpose of the system of liberty is to restrain any class from using state power to exploit another class and restrict its liberty.
      3. This system of liberty is the key to modern democracy.
   C. The key to ensuring a sound polity is to maintain an equilibrium between rights and duties.
      1. Under democracy, the majority might be tempted to retain rights for themselves while shifting duties to others—i.e., they might want to plunder the wealthy minority.
      2. Nevertheless, Sumner believed that the plutocracy rather than the masses posed the biggest threat to American society in his time. He decried efforts by the rich to win public subsidization of their private ventures, and he looked mainly to the courts to restrain these efforts.
   D. Free men owe each other nothing more than civility and voluntary, self-interested cooperation. Under a free society, one cannot be obliged to help others who have misused their own freedom.

IV. Perhaps the most polemical part of Sumner's text is his critique of various schemes of social reform, especially those that rely on state intervention.
   A. He argues that social reformers are at best naive do-gooders who are sentimental and unscientific, despite their good intentions.
   B. Reformers invariably fail to distinguish natural from social ills. Much scarcity of income and wealth results from technological limitations rather than from social organization.
   C. All attempts to ameliorate social ills and fight for equality under the banner of social justice ignore the fact that equality of condition is incompatible with liberty.
D. The costs of social/state activism are ultimately borne by the “forgotten man,” which today we call “the middle class.” Sumner’s observations about the “forgotten man” highlight the injustice of the parable of the Prodigal Son, which he sees reflected in social welfare and tax legislation.

E. Sumner’s most damning critique of efforts to use state power to effect social reform is that large-scale social improvement is never won directly. Instead, it results indirectly from the growth of our productive powers through advances in technology.

V. What is the legacy of Social Darwinism?

A. It rejects the traditional Christian idea of organic social hierarchy. Like Nietzsche and Dewey, Social Darwinists revel in the individual and his or her willful self-creation.

B. Social Darwinism embodies the classic liberal critique of the state and political power.

C. It also affirms the productive powers of mankind and expresses an optimistic faith in progress.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do we have a duty to support those in society who are less capable than ourselves?
2. Can we fruitfully apply Darwin’s theory of natural selection to social policy making?

Lecture Ten
Weber’s Historical Sociology
Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: Max Weber is regarded by many as the founder of modern sociology. He studied power relations in societies as part of his effort to “demystify the world.” His writings examined the structure and development of capitalism, world religions, and bureaucracies. His greatest insights were into the varieties of authority (he distinguishes among charismatic, traditional, and formal-legal authority), and he offered a profound diagnosis of the ways in which power is legitimated and administered in modern bureaucratic societies. Weber’s greatest works included *The Protestant Ethic and the Theory of Capitalism* (1920), *General Economic History* (1924), and *Economy and Society* (4th ed. 1956).

Outline

I. Max Weber is the principal architect of modern sociology. In *Economy and Society*, he formulates three pure types of legitimate domination or authority.

A. Weber differs in important ways from the sociologists who preceded him.
1. His historical materialism is broader than that of Marx and Engels. Weber viewed power rather than economic relations specifically as the basic medium of human interaction and exchange.
2. The form of Weber’s theory was shaped more by the Darwinian than by the Newtonian revolution. Weber’s sociological taxonomies resemble those of biology and other natural sciences. They allowed him to perform cross-historical analysis.
3. He advocated value-neutral, politically unbiased, and passionless sociology.

B. Weber defined domination as "the probability that certain specific commands will be obeyed by given group of persons."
1. Domination is just one species of power. It can be supported by custom, by personal material interest, or by an ideal goal of solidarity. *Legitimate* domination, however, also requires that those subject to it believe in its legitimacy.
2. Because domination over many people requires the ruler to possess a “staff,” such domination involves a three-way relationship among ruler, staff, and subjects. Different sorts of domination will involve different types of staff, obedience, and modes of exercising authority.
C. Weber identifies three distinct grounds for claims to legitimacy.
   1. Rational grounds rest on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those in authority to issue commands. This form of legitimate domination is called legal authority.
   2. Traditional grounds rest on a belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority (traditional authority).
   3. Charismatic grounds rest on a devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism, and exemplary character of an individual and the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority).

D. These three archetypes are not mutually exclusive. They range over all imaginable institutions—private and public—in any given society.

III. Legal authority with a bureaucratic administrative staff (as opposed to a "collegial staff") is the archetype of legal domination.

A. This pure type of authority rests upon five beliefs.
   1. The staff must internalize the norm of obedience.
   2. The law must be seen as a consistent system of abstract rules that have been intentionally created.
   3. The staff officials and the ruler himself are subject to the universal legal norms.
   4. Those who obey do so as "members" of the organization. They obey not the ruler but the law.
   5. Superiors command obedience by virtue of their office, not ties of personal loyalty with the "members."

B. The pure form of legal authority has seven features.
   1. There is continuous rule-bound conduct.
   2. Legal authority has a specified sphere of jurisdiction.
   3. It is characterized by hierarchical officialdom with no overlapping jurisdictions.
   4. Officials have specialized training, and office is not inheritable.
   5. Staff members and owners are clearly distinguished.
   6. Staff members receive a fixed salary, which promotes career orientation.
   7. The ruler issues written orders.

C. This pure form of bureaucratic administration is "monocratic." It is technically the most efficient and formally the most rational means of exercising authority over people.

D. This pure type is found in a wide variety of institutions: corporations, hospitals, schools, priests in churches, political parties, and modern armies.

E. Bureaucratic domination has three social consequences.
   1. There is a social "leveling" in favor of technical competence.
   2. It produces "plutocracy" as bureaucratic officials prolong their training.
   3. Bureaucracies are characterized by cold, formalistic impersonality.

IV. The archetypal traditional ruler is not a "superior" but a personal master. The staff consists of personal retainers rather than officials, and the ruled are either "comrades" or "subjects," but not "members."

A. Personal loyalty binds the staff to the master, and one obeys not a set of rules but a person who holds a position of authority by tradition.

B. Some of the master's actions are bound by tradition, and his power is exercised with an awareness of such constrictions. If the master exceeds his customary authority, he might provoke a "traditionalist revolution."

C. New law requires not adoption by a legislature but an antique precedent that can endow the new law with customary legitimacy.

D. The traditional ruler's staff can be recruited either patrimonially or extrapatrially.
   1. The former sort of staff members are recruited from those who owe personal loyalty to the ruler: kinsmen, slaves, household officials, physicaians, eunuchs, clients, freedmen.
   2. The latter includes personal favorites, vassals, freemen who voluntarily become officials.

E. Jurisdictions overlap under traditional rule, and the master or lord personally adjudicates conflicts. Officials do not receive rational or technical training.

F. Another form of traditional authority is "estate domination."
   1. This is a form of patrimonial domination in which the staff appropriates particular powers and assets of administration and governance, which limits the lord's discretion in choosing his staff.
   2. Patrimonial retainers receive support from any of five sources: the lord's table; allowances from the lord's magazine; service land; appropriation of taxes, fees, or property income; or fiefs—a form of service land in which one owns his lands and can deed them to his heirs.

G. Traditional authority encourages traditional attitudes toward the economy—e.g., just price, just wage, natural income. Attitudes of noblesse oblige undermine the formal rationality of economic decisions and inhibit capitalism.

V. Pure charismatic authorities are accorded superhuman, supernatural, or at least exceptional powers and qualities.

A. Charismatic authorities include prophets, shamans, berserkers or warrior "heroes," and certain political "demagogues."
B. An organized group subject to charismatic authority is called a "charismatic community" rather than a staff. Community members are not promoted and have no real "career"; they respond to the leader's call.

C. New judgments are made on a case-by-case basis and are considered divine judgments or revelations. One can retain charismatic authority only by continually demonstrating his efficacy.

D. Because charismatic authority is "other-worldly," it opposes traditional or rational economizing and regular income or employment. Members of a charismatic community gain their means of sustenance through voluntary gifts, begging, or booty.

E. Charismatic authority is inherently unstable and tends to turn into either legal or traditional authority.

F. Charismatic leaders are identified in any of six ways: special indications of status (e.g., the Dalai Lama); designation by the previous leader; designation by a charismatically qualified staff with recognition by the community; hereditary charisma; or office charisma.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:


Questions to Consider:
1. What effect does charismatic authority have on economic norms?
2. Why is charismatic authority inherently unstable?

Lecture Eleven
Freud and Philosophy
Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is best known as the founder of psychoanalysis. This lecture will examine Freud's theory of the unconscious and his efforts to discern the purported meaning in apparently meaningless activity; his pessimistic view of human nature; his tripartite theory of the human psyche; his social theory and its relationship to the individual human psyche; and the unresolved tension between Freud's pretensions to scientific status and the inability of psychoanalysis to satisfy the criteria of scientific certainty.

Outline

I. The Freudian project marked a departure both from Cartesian epistemology and from Rousseauistic optimism in the benignity of human nature.

A. The work of Sigmund Freud fused the positivistic tendencies of late nineteenth-century German science with the introspective tendencies of nineteenth-century German speculation.
   1. Freud was neither a pure idealist nor a pure materialist.
   2. He rejected Descartes's belief that one can have certain knowledge of his own mind. For Freud, self-knowledge is ambiguous and problematic. He treated the manifest data of consciousness as systematically unreliable, partial, and distorted.
   3. Freud's investigation of the self entailed splitting the subject (the monadic Cartesian cogito), which is analogous to splitting the atom in the sense that it generated unexpected epistemological problems.

B. Freud naturalized and problematized the Cartesian cogito.
   1. He tried to discern the deep structure of the soul, especially the part that is unknown even to the individual.
   2. Freud thought that he could solve the problem that perplexed Descartes (i.e., how one can know other minds besides his own) by solving the problem of understanding one's own mind.
   3. We unconsciously keep our true desires a secret from ourselves as well as others, but we disclose our true motives in an encoded form in systematically distorted communicative behavior. This includes speech, but also dreams and parapraxes.
   4. Freud attempted to construct a translation scheme which allows the reading of the manifest accounts of intention (conscious desires) as latent accounts (unconscious desires).
      a. He "read" what his patients said and failed to say. He also "read" the symbolism in behavior that had previously been considered meaningless, like repeated hand washing.
b. Freud thought that the translation scheme he devised solved the problem of knowing the self and others because he had cracked the code of the unconscious.

C. Freud's thought entails a rather pessimistic, anti-Rousseauistic view of human nature. Humans are originally not benign and innocent but tyrannical and pleasure-seeking.

II. Freud never resolved the tension between his desire for scientific certainty and the fact that biochemical science cannot explain all human emotions and behavior.

A. Freud and other psychologists sought to explain the origins of hysteria, a material condition with apparently psychological origins.
   1. In 1895 Freud published his Studies in Hysteria, which discussed the case of Anna O.
   2. In 1896 he developed a seduction theory of hysteria, which attributed this condition to repressed sexual trauma.
   3. Freud abandoned the seduction theory in 1897 after concluding that his patients had fabricated their stories of seduction. He came to view hysteria as a symbolic representation of women's unconscious sexual fantasies.
   4. Freud developed a "talking cure" for hysteria.

B. In 1896 Freud undertook self-analysis and began his research on dreams.
   1. In The Interpretation of Dreams (1899), Freud held that dreams are the royal road to the unconscious. They are the means by which we project our otherwise censored feelings.
   2. Freud argues that the real meaning of dreams is rooted in the dreamer's unconscious sexual desires, which are censored by the superego during waking hours.
   3. Dreams are "condensed," i.e., various psychic states or longings can be condensed into one symbolic structure. Dreams are also "overdetermined," i.e., they have a plurality of causes.
   4. The unconscious reformulates the content of suppressed desires symbolically and thus gratifies those desires. This gratification maintains the economy of the psyche by releasing pressure on the psyche's repressive mechanisms.

C. Freud's theory of parapraxes held that one's mistakes are meaningful symbolic representations of one's unconscious desires. He set forth this theory in Jokes and Relation to the Unconscious (1901) and Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1904).

D. In Three Essays on Sexuality (1905), Freud developed his theory of infantile sexuality (undertoned broadly as pleasure). Driven by an instinctual demand for pleasure, the infant passes through oral and anal phases, then latency, puberty, and resolution of oedipal feelings. This progression culminates in the genital phase.

E. Freud's theory of the unconscious was the heart of his system. He did not originate the concept of the unconscious, which he borrowed from Schopenhauer, but he did originate the idea that the unconscious follows predictable law-like patterns.

F. In the New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1923), Freud developed a tripartite model of the psyche.
   1. The id is the repository of psychic energy.
   2. The ego is the conscious self, the cogito, which mediates between id and superego.
   3. The superego is the internalization of socially prescribed norms.

G. Later in his career, Freud extrapolated his pessimistic social theory from his ideas about the individual psyche.
   1. In The Future of an Illusion (1927), Freud explained monotheistic religion as a collective anxiety neurosis. We project onto a God our unconscious longings for love, security, and moral order.
   2. In Civilization and Its Discontents (1930), Freud elaborated his pessimistic social theory.
      a. The pleasure principle is the sole determinant of human behavior until it conflicts with the reality principle. Because the frustration of our desires is intrinsic to civilization, we develop "defense mechanisms" to mediate the inevitable conflict.
      b. We cannot find happiness either within civilization or outside it. At best, we can sublimate our unconscious sexual and violent desires into beautiful and socially desirable things such as art, philosophy, and religion.

III. Freudian psychiatry cannot attain scientific certitude.

A. It does not offer a set of falsifiable hypotheses, as is required of science. At best, it offers various possible interpretations rather than a single, certain interpretation.

B. Psychoanalysis requires judgment or phronesis, which is a subjective element

C. The German word for science—Wissenschaft—denotes a concept much broader than "science" as understood in English. Wissenschaft refers to any organized body of knowledge. Freud offers a Wissenschaft of the mind: an organized body of knowledge that interprets phenomena that had not previously been seen as meaningful and that connects various meaningful phenomena with one general idea.

D. Freud does not adequately explain the origins of the psyche and of such things as incest taboos. To explain the latter, he posits in Totem and Taboo (1914) the existence of the Primal Horde, who killed the Primal Dad and raped the Primal Mom, creating the Primal incest taboo. This explanation has as much empirical reality as Santa Claus.
Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. How does Freud’s tripartite theory of mind compare with Plato’s theory of soul?
2. Compare Rousseaus’ and Freud’s views of life in civil society.

Glossary

**bourgeoisie:** the class of owners in industrial capitalism.

**consequentialism:** the position that an act is to be assessed morally by its consequences. Hume, Bentham, and Mill advanced consequentialist ethical systems.

**dialectic:** In the writings of Hegel and Marx, this term refers to the progress from thesis through antithesis to synthesis.

**ego:** according to Freud, that part of the psyche which experiences the external world, or reality, through the senses, organizes the thought processes rationally, and governs action. It mediates between the id and superego.

**entelechy:** natural purpose. The notion is central to Aristotelian scholasticism, where it refers to the final cause of some object.

**forces of production:** For Marx, the forces of production are the means of production (tools and so forth) and labor power (both muscle power and skill).

**Geist** (German): Essentially untranslatable, it has been rendered as “mind” or “spirit” or “essence.” For Hegel, it encompasses all of reality and most particularly collective human consciousness. English derivatives include “ghost,” “gist,” and “geyser.”

**historicism:** a theory of history that holds that the course of events is determined by unchangeable laws or cyclic patterns.

**id:** according to psychoanalysis, the desiring and instinctive aspect of the human psyche, necessarily repressed in civilization.

**mode of production:** For Marx, the mode of production is the economic structure of a society in relation to the forces of production. He identifies three modes: slavery, feudalism, and capitalism.

**noumena:** things in themselves apart from any possible experience. According to Kant, such things are unknowable. According to Schopenhauer, one can know directly as *noumen* his own will or self-consciousness.

**overdetermination:** the condition of having more than one cause, each of which might be sufficient for explanation of the event or entity in question.

**parapraxis:** an action in which one’s conscious intention is not fully carried out, as in the mislaying of objects, slips of the tongue and pen, etc. Freud thought that these mistakes were generally due to a conflicting unconscious intention.

**phenomena:** In the philosophy of Kant, phenomena are the contents of sense experience, arranged by rational subjects through the a priori conditions of possible experience, including space, time, and causation.

**phronesis** (Greek): practical judgment.

**positivism:** the philosophy of Comte, which holds that the highest or only form of knowledge is the description of sensory phenomena.

**proletariat:** the working class in industrial capitalism.
relations of production: for Marx, the relations of production are the relations of persons to the means of production. The latter include ownership of factories, slavery, leases, and wage contracts.

solipsism: the position that the only thing that exists is oneself, or that the only thing that can be shown to exist is oneself.

sublimation: In Freudian psychology, sublimation is taking repressed unconscious drives and channeling them into creative activity.

superego: according to psychoanalysis, the internalized parent or perhaps cultural “conscience” that restrains one from unbridled pursuit of pleasure.

surplus value: according to Marx, surplus value is the difference between the product of labor and the compensation of the worker. This surplus is siphoned off as profit by the capitalist.

Wissenschaft (German): science. However, in German, the notion encompasses any systematized body of knowledge.

Biographical Notes

Comte, Isidore Auguste Marie Francois (1798-1857). Comte, the founder of “positivism,” was born at Montpellier, France, into a devoutly Catholic family. He strained relations with his family by declaring his atheism at a young age. After two years at the Ecole Polytechnique in Paris, Comte became secretary to the reformer and social theorist Saint-Simon, but the mentorship ended in a bitter dispute. In 1844 Comte fell madly in love with Madame Clothilde de Vaux; their romance lasted until her death in 1846. Comte never found a position teaching the history of science at a university. He spent the last years of his life in relative obscurity, relying on the goodwill of friends. In his later years, Comte sought to organize his secular “Religion of Humanity” and declared himself High Priest of Humanity.

Freud, Sigmund (1856-1939). Freud was born into a middle class family in Frieberg, Moravia. When Freud was five, his family moved to Vienna—the city in which Freud was to live, with some exceptions, for the next seventy-eight years. In 1885, Freud graduated from medical school and became a lecturer in neuropathology. After briefly studying hypnosis in Paris under Jean-Martin Charcot, Freud abandoned his earlier biological research and turned toward clinical practice. In 1893 Freud and the physician Josef Breuer published what is often considered the first paper on psychoanalysis: “On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena.” Freud later incorporated their "cathartic method" into his own theory. Freud published The Interpretation of Dreams in 1900, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life in 1904, and Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality in 1905. Although Freud’s work was at first poorly received, he collected he collected a small group of devoted followers by 1906—among them Carl Jung and Alfred Adler. During the 1920s Freud increasingly wrote about culture and religion. When the Nazis occupied Austria in 1938, Freud fled to London, where he died the following year.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1770-1831). Hegel was born at Stuttgart, the son of a civil servant. In 1788 he enrolled at the University of Tubingen, where he studied philosophy and theology. For six years after college, Hegel served as a private tutor. In 1801 he accepted an appointment teaching philosophy at the University of Jena, where in 1805 he attained the rank of professor. At Jena, he and Friedrich Schelling edited the Critical Journal of Philosophy. While at Jena, Hegel finished his Phenomenology of Mind. Hegel edited a newspaper during the Napoleonic occupation of Prussia, and from 1808 to 1816 he served as headmaster of an academy in Nuremberg. In 1818 he became a professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin, where he completed his architectonic philosophical system and published his Philosophy of Right (1821). Hegel died of cholera in 1831 at age 61.
Kierkegaard, Soren (1813-1855). Considered by many to be the founder of existentialism, Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen, Denmark into an austere Lutheran family. He earned a master's degree in 1841 from the University of Copenhagen; his thesis was entitled "On the Concept of Irony." Although he gave sermons for a time in the Lutheran pulpit, he appears to have been unwilling to enter the pastorate full-time. Instead, he led an hermetic and melancholy life. Among his most influential works are Fear and Trembling (1843) and Either/Or (1843). In 1844 he published his Philosophical Fragments, and, in 1846, Concluding Unscientific Postscript. Kierkegaard signed many of his books with pseudonyms, in part because he wished to attack his own work.

Marx, Karl (1818-1883). Marx was born in Trier. When he was six years old, his father converted from Judaism to Lutheranism. After studying law for one year at the University of Bonn, Marx transferred to the University of Berlin, where he studied philosophy. He received a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Jena in 1841, having written his dissertation on the ancient Greek thinkers Democritus and Epicurus. He then became editor of the newspaper Rheinische Zeitung, but the German authorities closed down the newspaper in 1843 because of the radical views expressed in it. Marx and his wife then moved to Paris. In 1844 Marx began a life-long friendship with Friedrich Engels, author of The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844 (1845). Marx was expelled from France in 1845 because of his radicalism. He settled in Brussels, from which he was expelled following publication of The Communist Manifesto (1848). He and his family finally settled in London, where they depended on Engels for money while Marx conducted his research. During the 1850s Marx wrote for The New York Daily Tribune. In 1864 he helped found the International Working Men's Association (subsequently known as the "First International"). Marx became a leading authority among European radicals following the publication of the first volume of Das Kapital in 1867.

Mill, John Stuart (1806-1873). Mill's father, the historian and philosopher James Mill, was a disciple of the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham. John Stuart Mill's Autobiography (published posthumously in 1873) recounts his extraordinary education, which took place entirely at home. At fourteen he spent a year in France at the home of the brother of Jeremy Bentham. Back in England, Mill established the Utilitarian Society in 1822. The following year he assumed a position in the East India Company, which he held for 35 years. He wrote often during the 1820s for the Benthamite Westminster Review, joined discussion clubs, and was active in the London Debating Society. In 1843 he published his System of Logic, and in 1844 his Principles of Political Economy. In 1831 Mill met and became an intimate friend of Harriet Taylor, the wife of a prosperous merchant. He married Mrs. Taylor in 1851 after her husband's death. Their years of marriage (she died in 1858) was a joyous and inspirational time for Mill. She may have collaborated with him in writing On Liberty. She also influenced Mill's Considerations on Representative Government (1861), Utilitarianism (1863), and The Subjection of Women (1869). Mill served in parliament during the mid-1860s and then retired to France, where he continued his writing and study.

Schopenhauer, Arthur (1788-1860). Schopenhauer was born in Danzig, the only child of a talented novelist and wealthy merchant. Schopenhauer was educated in Hamburg, Austria, England, France, and Switzerland. After his father's suicide, the teenage Schopenhauer and his mother moved to Weimar, where relations between them were strained and bitter. Having gained his inheritance and independence at age 21, Schopenhauer studied medicine at the University of Göttingen. He later abandoned medicine for philosophy, moving in 1811 to Berlin, the center of philosophical inquiry on the Continent. The World as Will and Representation (1818) established Schopenhauer's reputation as a distinguished philosopher and helped to gain him a lectureship at the University of Berlin. Schopenhauer's difficult personality expressed itself at Berlin—he never married and appears to have had no friends. Vexed by Hegel's superior popularity, he left the university after a year. Living comfortably off his inheritance, Schopenhauer dedicated himself to his writing. He published On the Will in Nature in 1836, The Basis of Morality in 1841, and Essays from the Parerga and Paralipomena in 1851. He died at age 72, having achieved the recognition he believed he deserved.

Sumner, William Graham (1840-1910). The leading proponent of "Social Darwinism," Sumner was born in Paterson, New Jersey. After graduating from Yale University, he continued his studies at Oxford University and in Switzerland and Germany. An Episcopal minister, Sumner took an interest in theology and political science. In 1872 he was appointed professor of political and social science at Yale, where he promoted his Spencerian interpretation of Darwinism in political science and economics. He developed the notion of "ethnocentrism" and outlined the development of human customs in Folkways (1907). His What Social Classes Owe Each Other (1883) was a provocative assertion of his ultra-laissez faire approach to political economy. His other works included Science of Society (with Albert G. Keller, 1927), Protectionism: the -ism which Teaches that Waste Makes Wealth (1888), Problems in Political Economy (1888), and Andrew Jackson as a Public Man (10th ed., 1887).

Weber, Max (1864-1920). Weber grew up in Berlin. His father was a lawyer active in the liberal politics of the day. His mother was a woman of humanitarian religious commitments. Weber received an excellent education in languages, the classics, and history. During his college years he studied law, philosophy, economics, and history, at universities in Heidelberg, Berlin, and Göttingen, as well as undergoing a year's military training. He passed the bar examination in 1886. He received his Ph.D. in 1889 and was married four years later. During these years he served as a government consultant, lectured in law at the University of Berlin, and continued a grueling schedule of research. In 1894 he was appointed to a professorship at the University of Freiburg and in 1896 to a similar position at the University of Heidelberg. He suffered, however, from a debilitating nervous illness, culminating in a nervous breakdown in 1898. Completely debilitated for
more than three years, he was never able to resume teaching. Instead, in 1903 he became the editor of a social science journal. During World War I he directed army hospitals at Heidelberg, and after the war he helped draft the memorandum on German war guilt and advised the commission that prepared the first draft of the Weimar constitution. He served briefly as a professor at the University of Vienna. At his death he had recently been appointed professor of economics at the University of Munich.
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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition: Part V

Scope:

In this series of lectures, we will examine the western philosophical tradition from the late nineteenth century until the post-World War II era. The lectures include contributions from the continental tradition and the Anglo-American tradition. Though it is an introductory course, this series does presuppose a certain amount of philosophical knowledge.

All of the philosophers discussed in these lectures wrestled with certain fundamental modern problems brought out by Nietzsche, Hegel, and Freud. One of these is the problem of representation. This period brought an increasing uncertainty to the idea that language could be an accurate representation of reality. This began with Hegelian historicism and Nietzschean perpectivalism and often led to relativism. In addition, this development also led to the fragmentation of the self and society. Interiority became a major concern for many of these philosophers, while others tried to reformulate ways to speak about the individual and the just society.

The first two lectures take up the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, who saw himself as the destroyer of the western philosophical tradition. He attacked the history of Christian morals as the attempt to favor the weak and inferior at the expense of the strong. This last category of people lived according to the will to power which, according to Nietzsche, led to the superior achievements of civilization, such as creativity and individuality. Yet Christian morality made the will to power “evil.” Furthermore, Nietzsche advanced the view that truth did not really exist. Our ideas, language, and cultures simply represent what we impose upon the world. This is called perspectivalism.

The third lecture looks at the writings of the nineteenth-century American philosopher and psychologist William James and the philosophy of pragmatism. James’s theory was an Americanized version of Nietzschean perpectivalism. While Nietzsche’s writings heralded snobbery, cruelty, and elitism, James’s writings emphasized the values of tolerance and democratic egalitarianism. His was a rebellion against accepted authority and truths in favor of the view that human beings constantly remake the world as a result of our experience in it.

Lectures Four and Five return to the continental tradition with Hans-Georg Gadamer and Henri-Louis Bergson. Gadamer introduced the idea of hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, which attempted to find a set of unifying principles for social science. It attempted to overcome historicism and man’s alienation from his cultural traditions. Bergson tried to look at the world in a way that was not analytical (viewing an object from “outside”), but intuitive, seeing the world from the “inside.” One example was Bergson’s idea of elan vital, which was the life force that shaped history.

The American philosopher and educator John Dewey is the focus of Lecture Six. Dewey extends the pragmatic tradition of James with its emphasis on democracy, progress, and openness. Dewey’s contribution to pragmatism was his historicization of the western philosophical tradition, showing how philosophical beliefs came into being. Dewey was skeptical of the idea of “truth” and believed that what we call truths are useful in that they are the ideas that work best at this time. Truth then becomes historically contingent.

Lecture Seven returns again to the continental tradition with the writings of the social anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. His writings attempted to create a structural anthropology that would examine the code of language that connects all cultures. Levi-Strauss’s theory was a form of cultural relativism. Lecture Eight discusses Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. Husserl’s theory was an attempt to examine the human psyche by a “reduction” of the elements of experience. Chapter Nine is an examination of the phenomenological project of Martin Heidegger, whose writings on the nature of “Being” had a great effect on existentialism.

One of the leading Anglo-American positivists was A. J. Ayer, whose theory is the focus of Chapter Ten. Ayer tried to rescue philosophy from the dead end of metaphysics and give language the same rigor as logic and mathematics. For Ayer, philosophy was simply to be a handmaiden of science, interpreting it rules and terms.

Ludwig Wittgenstein was the leading theorist of language in the twentieth century. Lecture Eleven discusses the two stages of Wittgenstein’s career. In his early career, he wrote one of the most important positivist texts, the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, which tried to set rules for what was and was not a meaningful sentence. Later in his life, Wittgenstein reconsidered his youthful text and accepted the inherent fuzziness of language.

The final lecture is an examination of the eclectic Marxist thinkers associated with the Frankfurt School: Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Max Horkheimer. Begun in reaction to the political and social collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of fascism, the Frankfurt School attempted to return a set of ends to political philosophy which they felt was absent in traditional liberal thought, such as capitalism, democracy, and positivism. They substituted a form of Marxism with a teleological end, arguing that freedom from socially imposed truths is the ultimate end of society.
Lecture One  
Nietzsche’s Critique of Christianity:  
The Genealogy of Morals  
Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.  
Princeton University

Scope: Friedrich Nietzsche is one of the most important philosophers in the tradition of western thought. He is also one of the most artistic, ruthless, and fascinating individuals in the intellectual history of the West. He viewed himself as the end of the Western intellectual tradition and saw himself as the destroyer of metaphysics and Christianity and as a combination philosopher/artist in the tradition of Plato. He offered a comprehensive critique of the Western intellectual tradition, not conceived narrowly as a philosophical tradition, but as a cultural tradition. Nietzsche examined the relationship between Christianity and morality and wanted to get beyond Christianity. He saw himself as the “Antichrist” and thought that he could supplant Jesus in the western tradition.

Outline

I. In Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche takes a skeptical approach to moral theory, offers a criticism of Christian values, and tries to replace Christianity with a new code of morals.
   A. Nietzsche asks two important questions.
      1. Where does Christianity and its moral values come from?
      2. How do human beings come to have a conscience?
   B. Nietzsche wants to see man as part of nature.
   C. He identifies two kinds of morality.
      1. The herd morality characteristic of the weak, feeble, inferior, and enslaved (Christianity).
      2. The master morality of the warriors, the predatory humans who make judgements based on their strength rather than their weakness.

II. Who created Christianity?
   A. It is a revolt of the oppressed slave class in Rome. It was designed to have revenge upon masters and warriors and turn the tables by offering a scale of values that was independent of the master class. The triumph of Christianity is the triumph of the weak.
   B. Romans were fierce, independent, warlike men who made their own scale of values based upon power and the desire to dominate and showed no reluctance to inflict pain on the inferior. Nietzsche seeks to revive these values as we get beyond Christianity.

C. The main characteristic of Christianity is the distinction between good and evil.
   1. Good in Christian morality means kindness and love. Nietzsche believes morality means pity, which raises feelings for the weak.
   2. The master morality makes distinction between the good and bad, the capable and incapable, the potent and the impotent. Nietzsche believes this will produce the highest type of human being. He borrows this from Darwin, believing that humans have no intrinsic meaning.
   3. Christianity inhibits the development of genius and creativity because it mythologizes the envy of the inferior.
   4. Nietzsche’s master morality is oriented towards doing things. He believes mankind can only be judged by its highest examples.

IV. Nietzsche examines the differences between the warrior/aristocrat and the priest.
   A. Both types are superior types of men. The warrior/aristocrat will adopt the master morality and will be opposed by the priest. Both have the will to power, but they will express it differently.
   B. The warrior takes what he wants, uninhibited by conscience. Nietzsche wants us to reassess our disapproval of such behavior. He argues that there are no moral phenomena, only interpretations of moral phenomena.

V. In the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche asks how humans developed their conscience. Man is an animal with a will to power to dominate other people and a desire to cause pain in others. (Relation to Darwin)
   A. What happens when you frustrate the will to power? Nietzsche says that when the will to power is frustrated, people begin to impose pain on themselves. This pain is called conscience. In German, it is called “gewissenbiss,” which means the bite of conscience.
   B. When priests come on the scene, this pain of conscience becomes worse. The priests harness slave morality and use if for their own purposes.
   C. Priests are dangerous because they control culture and have chosen the slave morality.
   D. Christianity explains away human suffering as part of God’s plan. The worst thing priests have done is to sell the world on the idea that suffering has meaning. This only makes suffering worse because not
only are the weak being oppressed, but morality teaches that it is their fault. Guilt enters the world.

E. Nietzsche wants to liberate us from this self-imposed misery.

V. Problems with Nietzsche’s theory.
A. The ideas of good and bad do not come from ideas of masters and slaves, but they derive from feelings of pleasure and pain.
B. What happens when we go beyond good and evil?
1. ‘Philosophizing with a hammer.’ There is a gleeful malice and destructiveness to Nietzsche’s thought. It crosses over into intellectual vandalism.
2. Still, Nietzsche’s philosophy is one of the most significant developments in moral theory since the Enlightenment. Nietzsche and Plato are the two greatest figures who combine art and philosophy.
3. Is Nietzsche a proto-Nazi? The warrior type easily descends into the barbarian.

VI. Conclusion.
A. Nietzsche’s theory fails as history but succeeds as poetry.
B. Nietzsche’s poetry offers a multitude of possible interpretations and a freedom from dogma and metaphysics.
C. He forces us to think in ways we had not previously thought. He demands that we have the courage to question our convictions.

Essential Reading:
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*.
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*.

Supplemental Reading:
Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*.
Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*.

Questions to Consider:
1. To what extent are our moral values based on Christianity?
2. What would a society based on the morality of the warrior class resemble?
III. *Gay Science* is a book about creating and cherishing of individuality against commonality.

A. The book is an allusion to the “Gay Saber” of Provence troubadours. They were the chivalric knights who created love poems, but they were destroyed during a papal crusade. The first people who created “individuals” against authority.

B. The book is a response to Romanticism and a psychological study of Nietzsche’s world-weariness and its philosophical results.

C. The text suggests a studied superficiality. Rather than being profound and deep, Nietzsche suggests, we should adore mere appearance.

IV. Explanation of the text of *Gay Science*.

A. The major themes of the text are found in the introduction, “Joke, Cunning, and Revenge.” It is a series of playful poems.
   1. Nietzsche was troubled that in our culture, moral duty trumped other values. Why should our virtues be grave, Nietzsche asked. Morality is not the measure of all things.
   2. Nietzsche offered an aesthetic critique of Christianity. Eternity in heaven would be boring because all of the interesting people would be in hell. What is now the decisive argument against Christianity is no longer reason, but our tastes.

B. Book One constitutes a species of shock therapy. Nietzsche is trying to preach tough love.
   1. Hatred and evil are indispensable for the survival of the species, but we have reached a point where we cannot even think such bad thoughts and break out of the herd mentality.
   2. Nietzsche believes the growth of humanitarianism is a form of happy-go-lucky totalitarianism.
   3. Human beings have developed the need to find a purpose for life.
   4. Nietzsche believes the noble can also be unjust. They assume that everyone is just like them and do not judge common people by the proper standards. Common people must be judged by their own standards and rationality. The ultimate noblemindedness is for those who are noble to be the exception and not the rule. The bulk of humanity must be seen as common. And there is nothing wrong with that.
   5. Nietzsche is dismissive of unconditional duties, such as Kant’s moral imperative.
   6. Nietzsche offered a critique of women. When the weak and feminine individuals see a problem, they make it more beautiful and profound. The masculine makes the problem better. Yet, if the feminine had not been abundant in Europe since the Middle

V. Conclusion.

A. The greatest wait is Nietzsche’s doctrine of eternal return. Based on a Hindu concept, everything that happens will happen again. For most people, such a concept is a nightmare. Eternal return is an excellent test of whether you have the ability to be an *ubermensch* who will leap at the chance to live life again. Life is not a problem, but an opportunity for delightful possibilities.

B. The “ubermensch” is not some sort of proto-fascist, but a cultivated, refined person who does not need a spiritual narcotic to get through life. He is compassionate out of strength, not weakness and pity. He judges the weak not as inferior, but as common.

Essential Reading:
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*.

Supplemental Reading:
Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*.
Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you believe your values and beliefs represent the truth or merely your own unique perspective?
2. What is the *ubermensch*?
Lecture Three
James' Pragmatism

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Scope: Influenced by the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James created his theory of pragmatism, which held that the meaning of any idea can only be found in experience. James melded Nietzschean perspectivalism with the American though of Emerson. James's project was a philosophical "Protestant Reformation," with the individual rebelling against the authority of accepted truths and absolutes. The world is not fixed, James argued, but is constantly remade by us. Therefore, it makes independent analysis of the world from a priori assumptions impossible.

Outline

I. The pragmatism of William James is one of the most important and enduring philosophical projects of the last hundred years. Richard Rorty has argued that James is not the beginning of the philosophical road, but rather the end of the road.

A. James' pragmatism was the American version of Nietzschean perspectivalism. Both James and Nietzsche had many common influences and views.
   1. Both were influenced by Ralph Waldo Emerson.
   2. Both were influenced by Romanticism.
   3. Both were influenced by Darwin.
   4. Neither man was a trained philosopher.
   5. Both shared an interest in psychology. James was a psychological philosopher; Nietzsche was a philosophical psychologist.

B. Both men shared a perspectivalism that argued that reality is somehow unfixed and that the self is a posit. Both were anti-realists. Both looked at truth and culture as a tool for life. Both saw metaphysics hanging on psychological consolation.

C. While Nietzsche has a morbid fascination for cruelty, elitism, and a snobbish contempt for the herd, James celebrates tolerance, openness, and democratic egalitarianism.

D. What Nietzsche calls perspectivalism, James calls pragmatism. While Nietzsche argues that truth is about the power principle, James argues that truth is a belief's "cash value." Nietzsche sees truth as a lie;

James sees the idea of truth as serviceable and helpful. Nietzsche's theory is full of adolescent insights; James's theory is more mature. James is not scandalized by the loss of truth.

II. The democratic ethos of Pragmatism (1907). The text was originally delivered as a series of lectures pitched to the average lay person. Such people, James felt, should be the ultimate judges of philosophical issues.

A. James opened his discussion with the lecture entitled: "The Present Dilemma in Philosophy." He reframed the long-running debate between the rationalist/German idealist and the empiricist/positivist traditions as one between the tender-minded temperament and the tough-minded temperament.
   1. Tender-minded people tend to go by principles and a priori truths. They are intellectualistic and idealistic. They are optimistic, religious, and believers in free will. They are monistic and dogmatic.
   2. Tough-minded people believe only facts count. They do not appeal to rational facilities, but to your senses. They are materialistic, pessimistic, irreligious, pluralistic, and skeptical.

B. If Nietzsche's perspectivalism was tough love for the average person, James' pragmatism was tough love for philosophers. They must realize that their texts are nothing more than a reflection of their personalities.

C. The rational person wants the good things in both temperaments. Pragmatism allows one to have one's cake and eat it too.

III. For James, pragmatism is both a method and a theory of truth.

A. The meaning of an expression is determined by the experiences or consequences that would ensue if that expression were true (Charles Sanders Peirce).
   1. James tells the story of the man chasing the squirrel around the tree. Does the man go around the squirrel? James argued that it depends on how you define "go around." There is no correct answer.
   2. James applies the pragmatic method of truth to a number of philosophical disputes.
      a. Materialism vs. Spiritualism.
      b. Free will vs. Determinism.
      c. God vs. Random design.

B. The pragmatic theory of truth is genetic. We invent new truths to cope with anomalous experiences.
   1. Such inventions are limited by the desire to change as few of our beliefs as possible (Schiller and Dewey).
2. True beliefs are those that marry new experiences to the old stock of truths. The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief and good for definite, assignable reasons.

C. For James, pragmatism represents a philosophical “Protestant Reformation” or rebellion against authority on behalf of the individual.

IV. James and the pragmatic or “instrumental” theory of truth. James, like Nietzsche, rejected the correspondence theory of truth.

A. True ideas are those we can assimilate, accommodate, corroborate, and verify. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true by events and is not an eternal, fixed goal. True beliefs are instruments of action. This is a Darwinian view of culture.

B. The world is not a fixed given to which we must correspond, but it is made over in our image as we parse it and work on it. It is impossible to weed out the human contribution to the world.

C. We have no awareness of a world that is prior to us.

D. Culture changes according to evolutionary dictates. Beliefs are called true only when they have a survival value for the species.

V. Conclusion.

A. Pragmatism is the mediator between scientific rationality and one’s most profound psychological, moral, and spiritual needs.

B. The pragmatic thinker is not someone in a philosophy department, but the average person going about his business in a rational and self-conscious way. It is the philosophy of a democratic culture.

Essential Reading:
William James, Pragmatism.

Supplemental Reading:
David Marcell, Progress and Pragmatism: James, Dewey, Beard, and the American Idea of Progress.
Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism

Questions to Consider:
1. Why is James’s pragmatism so distinctively American?

2. Is truth merely those beliefs which work best for a society?

Lecture Four
Gadamer: Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences

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Scope: For Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Everything that is, is language.” He believed there was no bias-free position from which to interpret the world or a text. The theory of hermeneutics argues that all experience is conditioned by history. It seeks to free interpretation from being science-bound, and instead it sees science as one perspective from which to interpret the world.

Outline

I. Gadamer’s hermeneutic project is an attempt to find a set of unifying principles that connects the soft sciences and avoids historicism and positivism.

A. Effective historical consciousness. Hermeneutics tries to bring a person to a level of understanding that is not entirely consistent with reason. It might be described as a sense of tact, taste, or good judgement. Wisdom over knowledge; judgement over certainty; a sense of proportion over mathematical certainty.

B. The horizon of an individual is linguistically constructed. Gadamer attempts to reassess the formulaic theory of knowledge of positivism and construct a more encyclopedic theory of knowledge, like Aristotle.

II. Gadamer’s intellectual sources.

A. From Aristotle he derived the encyclopedic reach and phronesis.

B. He drew on Schliermacher’s interpretation of legal and biblical texts and his efforts to extend the domain of hermeneutics.

C. He drew from Schopenhauer and Kant the notion that aesthetic apprehension is not entirely relativistic or subjective.

D. From Dilthey he drew the distinction between nomothetic knowledge (laws) and ideographic knowledge.

E. Gadamer also drew on Husserl’s phenomenological investigation of the domain of knowledge, and his critique of positivism and historicism.

F. From Heidegger (Gadamer’s teacher), he drew the notions of “Dasein” (that being and time are bound together), the Hermeneutic Circle, and the idea of temporality.
III. Definition of hermeneutics.

A. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. The definition of science is in the broader sense of the word, as found in German, as that of an organized body of knowledge.

B. *Dasein* means that we live in temporality. Therefore, we are constantly alienated from cultural traditions and must constantly reinvent, reabsorb, and reinterpret the cultural tradition.

C. Hermeneutics is the constant attempt to overcome this alienation from our cultural tradition. This process holds all of our knowledge together.

D. Gadamer directs us towards a soft form of Hegelianism. The culture progresses not towards some eschaton, but away from our permanent alienation.

IV. *Truth and Method* (1960). Gadamer tries to show that truth exists outside of “method” and that science and positivism hold no special place, but are just one language game among many.

A. Section One is devoted to Art.
   1. Art discloses a human truth that is undeniable.
   2. It emphasizes the ideas of play and re-creation.
   3. The point of our aesthetic activities is the appropriation of cultural tradition such as literature.
   4. The idea of interpretation as the transparency of apprehension. A good interpretation is when you no longer hear or see the interpreter (Vladimir Horowitz).
   5. Positivism is the idea that knowledge is limited. Historicism allows for an extensive domain of knowledge, but one that is relative. Certainty vs. Skepticism. Hermeneutics calls this into question.

B. Hermeneutics is guided by language.
   1. It moves from nature to man and from object to subject.
   2. It moves from *vernuft* to *verstehen*, from reason to understanding, from externality to internality.
   3. The Hermeneutic Circle. The logic of question and answer. We interrogate our culture and get a set of answers. When we get a new answer, we need to reformulate our questions and go back to work.

V. Conclusion. Influences of Hermeneutics.

A. Gadamer wants to achieve *Bildung*, or cultivation.

B. The idea of clarity.

C. Communitarianism.

D. Gadamer offers us a new way out of postmodernism.

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplemental Reading:**


Joel C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Is science objective?
2. What is the difference between reason and understanding?
Lecture Five

Bergson's Elan Vital and Vitalism

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Scope: Henri-Louis Bergson's *elan vital* is his definition of the dynamic life force that is the opposite of mere matter. It is a refinement of Darwin's evolutionary theory, which Bergson argued was too mechanistic. He argued that time and space do not represent a continuum and that intuition was the way we truly comprehended the world, unmediated by symbols and grasped from the "inside" rather than understood from an analytical "outside" position.

Outline

I. Bergson's *elan vital* is the life force, the opposite of mere matter. It has a creativity, dynamism, and motion. It is the essence of all living things and constitutes Bergson's answer to Darwin.
   A. Bergson tried to distinguish between our scientific knowledge of the world from our knowledge of our immediate experience. He is concerned with the interiority of the self.
   B. Bergson's problem is that it is hard to create literal speech about interiority. Therefore, he gives the reader metaphors, images, analogies.

II. The following were Bergson's major works.
   A. Bergson held in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903) that metaphysics is the science that claims to dispense with symbols.
   B. In *Creative Evolution* (1907), he interpreted Darwinian evolution in a non-mechanistic way. The *elan vital* gives evolution dynamism and motion.
   C. *Laughter* (1910)
   D. In *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson attempts to distinguish between the intuitive versus the analytical approach to religion and morals. One leads to dead, stultifying, static morality and religion. The other leads to openness and creativity.

III. Bergson goes back to Zeno's Paradox to show that our scientific conceptions of space and time are inadequate.
   A. At each instant in the flight of an arrow, it occupies a space equal to its size. At no instant can it occupy space larger than its size, so there is no instant when it can change its location. Zeno concludes that motion is therefore impossible.

IV. Collingwood theorizes about looking at an event from the "outside" or from the "inside." Intuition is prior to analysis.
   A. Analysis looks at an object from the "outside." It moves around the object. Therefore we need measuring instruments, such as clocks, to impose concepts on the external world. These concepts are pragmatic fictions which we use to manipulate the world, but which do not represent the world.
   B. Intuition is how we experience the world directly. It enters into the object, which does not need to be mediated by symbols. This is our direct comprehension of the world.

V. *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.
   A. *Elan vital* works through history, but it is not mechanistic. It is the *Geist* without the *telos*.
   B. The first source of morality and religion is the external world. We impose an analysis on the external world to get what we want.
      1. This analysis generates the first stage of religion: static religion. These are myths manufactured by human intellect to defend against life's misery.
      2. Corresponding to this stage of religion is closed morality. These are the rules generated by human intellect to create the social solidarity necessary for survival.
   C. We get the second source of religion from *elan vital* and intuition.
      1. Dynamic religion. Mystics are spiritual pioneers who shatter the conventions of locally useful myths.
      2. Open morality.

VI. *Laughter* (1910)
   A. Bergson offers an insightful interpretation of comedy. He argued that laughter is a function of intelligence and serves a moral function.
   B. Comedy is universal. Tragedy individuates (i.e., Othello, Hamlet), but comedy is about generalities and abstract types of human deformity.
   C. Rules for comedy include repetition, inversion of roles, and reciprocity.
   D. The essence of comedy is spirit behaving like matter. We laugh at people to remind them that they are souls, rather than bodies.

VII. Conclusions
Lecture Six
John Dewey's Reconstruction in Philosophy: The Pragmatic Critique of Traditional Philosophy

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Scope:
John Dewey represents the stereotypical American philosopher. He had influence not just on philosophy, but on American education. His instrumentalist version of pragmatism represented the American values of democracy, progressivism, and optimism. Dewey's main philosophical contribution was his historical deconstruction of philosophy, which showed that certain philosophical theories—such as those of Plato and Aristotle—merely represented the social situation of these philosophers at that time. Dewey was skeptical of truth, believing that what we call "truth" is simply what works best for us at this time. Man's moral ends are not eternal truths, but are formed through customs and habits that change over time.

Outline
I. John Dewey is the prototypical American philosopher. He is democratic, progressive, optimistic, and pragmatic. His thought represents much of what is best in the character of New England liberalism.

II. Pragmatism was a philosophical movement founded by Charles Sanders Peirce.
   A. Pragmatism is based on a theory of meaning, which stated that a meaning of a statement or sentence is based on its logical consequences. If this sentence were true, what would we expect to experience?
   B. Sentences are true when they successfully predict our experience.
   C. William James popularized Peirce's theory and added a theistic and morally progressive element to it.

III. Dewey's contribution to pragmatism is to historicize philosophy.
   A. Dewey's project was made difficult because pragmatism is not really a philosophy at all.
      1. It rejects the search for eternal truths.
      2. It offers no epistemological certainty.
      3. It offers no necessary metaphysical doctrines.
B. Dewey tries to show how we came to practice traditional philosophy rather than to provide a reason for a particular philosophical system.

IV. At the center of Dewey’s historical criticism is an interpretation of the origins of philosophy and a critique of the traditional philosophical fixation with the contemplative or spectatorial view of knowledge.

A. Philosophy emerges when breakthroughs in practical knowledge come into conflict with traditional beliefs. Philosophy tries to secure a new, more rational foundation for our moral beliefs.

B. Dewey finds a problem with the spectatorial view of human knowledge, in which a passive knowing subject is set apart from the inert world of objects.

C. Dewey believes this philosophy arose from ancient Greece, where philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle came from an aristocratic group whose members lived lives of aesthetic contemplation. The other group included slaves and artisans who worked with their hands. Therefore, Greek philosophers saw knowledge as akin to aesthetic apprehension. They sought the eternal at the expense of the temporal. This interpretation was inherited by the philosophers of the Middle Ages and later by Descartes.

D. This philosophy produces many quandaries.
    1. The distinction between a knowing subject and a known object gives rise to the larger distinction between subject and object as metaphysical categories.
    2. Since true knowledge as opposed to practical knowledge is purely contemplative, there emerges the distinction between theory, which gives us truth, and practice, which only gets results.
    3. Contemplative philosophy also distinguishes between mind and matter. It simply bootstraps us out of nature.

E. The result of traditional philosophy has been to divorce inquiry from actual historical conditions and needs, and attempt to stand on fixed moral verities. The problem is that those truths were designed for a different era.

V. Dewey’s historical deconstruction of traditional philosophy is a preparatory phase to the reconstruction of post-traditional philosophy.

A. Dewey’s philosophy is naturalistic empiricism or empirical naturalism. It always begins and ends in experience, and it treats the world as natural.

B. Dewey wants to replace the distinction between subject and object with a naturalistic relationship between organism and environment.

C. Dewey conceives of our culture as part of nature. Knowledge is a natural relation between a biological entity and its environment.

D. Dewey is an epistemological idealist who held that the objects of our knowledge are constructed by our inquiry.

E. Dewey’s epistemological naturalism dramatically changed the traditional philosophical situation.
    1. Skepticism, the inevitable consequence of the spectatorial view of things, is finally banished.
    2. We are better off forgetting about truth and concentrating on the warranted assertability of sentences or theories.

F. Dewey’s empiricist naturalism also has profound effects on the practice of moral and political philosophy.
    1. Humans are creatures of habits and disposition. Customs are widespread and useful uniformities of habits. We sometimes outgrow these customs. This sometimes leads to revolutions.
    2. There are no fixed and final moral ends. Our ends arise from our culture, customs, and habits, and they change over time.
    3. Dewey has his own historically contingent ends, which are progressive and democratic. He believes in change and growth. Dewey’s project is that of self-creation of every single member of society.

VI. Dewey’s pragmatism is a combination of American attitudes towards democracy, work, progress, and practicality and a set of philosophical dispositions that constitute a dissenting theme in the modern philosophical genre.

Essential Reading:
John Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy.

Supplementary Reading:
Matthew Festenstein, Pragmatism and Political Theory: From Dewey to Rorty.
Alan Ryan, John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism.

Questions to Consider:
1. How did Dewey’s class and social status influence his philosophy?
2. What role does experience and custom play in the forming of our values?
Lecture Seven
Levi-Strauss: Structuralist Anthropology

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Scope: The French social anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss attempted to find the underlying regularities of human behavior. He argued for a structuralist interpretation, rather than a functionalist interpretation. Structuralists want to examine the code of language; functionalists want to examine the message of language. Levi-Strauss wanted to find the code of communication that connects all cultures.

Outline

I. Claude Levi-Strauss is a founder of structuralist anthropology. He attempted to find the underlying regularities of human behavior.
   A. The human world is made up not of matter, but of symbols. We construct our symbols according to structural laws.
   B. Linguistics is one example of structuralist interpretation.
   C. Piaget, the structuralist psychologist, describes the three properties of structural method.
      1. Structures must be wholes.
      2. Structures must be transformable.
      3. Structures must be self-regulating.
   D. Vico attempts to grasp the structure of the human mind and historicize it.

II. Structuralism is the opposite of functionalism.
   A. Functional anthropology was empirical; structural anthropology is abstract and rationalistic.
   B. Functionalists ask why the pig is unfit to eat in Israel, why the cow is sacred in India, and why dog is not served in America. There must be some function served by these animals in these countries. Structuralists are interested in the category of the inedible and how it relates to what we are allowed to eat, what it says about us, and whether it is put together according to a set of rules.
   C. Functionalists, like Malinowski, see a dog as an animal; structuralists like Levi-Strauss see a dog as a noun.
   D. Functionalists want to examine the message; structuralists want to examine the code.

III. Levi-Strauss’s structuralist anthropology.
   A. He tries to find the unalterable source of human communicative activity that connects all cultures.
   B. Levi-Strauss’s method is as follows.
      1. Define the phenomenon as a relation between two or more terms.
      2. Construct a table of possible permutations.
      3. Take this table as your general object of analysis.
      4. It is systemic and has ordered transformations.
   C. For de Saussure, all of culture is encoded in language. For Levi-Strauss, all of culture is seen as a field of language.
   D. Levi-Strauss would come up with a linguistics of action.
      1. Kinship, food, clothing, exchange, and mythology are all symbolic structures
      2. Transgressing the structures is like constructing ungrammatical sentences (or like eating your dessert at the beginning of the meal.)
      3. There are homologies (connections) between the structures.

IV. Levi-Strauss’s works include the following.
   A. Elementary Structures of Kinship (1949)
   B. The Savage Mind (1962). Since a cultural system is a kind of grammar for constructing different elements, asking which is the best culture is like asking which is the best language.
   C. Totemism (1962). Within a given culture, the construction of myths is the essential poetic. All myths can be translated into regularly recurring structures (Freud on dreams).
   D. Introduction to the Science of Mythology (1964-1971). Structures are homologous and they argue for the unity of thought, reason, and consciousness across cultures.

V. Problems with Levi-Strauss.
   A. He believes that science is just a construct or myth.
   B. Cultural relativism is internally incoherent. What is more provincial and western than cultural relativism?
   C. Levi-Strauss makes some arbitrary distinctions (i.e., the opposite of honey is tobacco).
   D. Structural anthropology is ahistorical. Who created structures, and how were they created?

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Questions to Consider:
1. Are all cultures equal?
2. Does American cuisine have its own “grammar” or rules?

Lecture Eight
Husserl: Phenomenology and the Life-World

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Scope: Edmund Husserl was the founder of the school of philosophy known as phenomenology. He believed that the role of the philosopher was to contemplate the essence of things. To do this, Husserl attempted to bracket the outside world and examine the inner being. Before we know the outside world, he argued, we must know ourselves. Husserl called this phenomenological reduction whereby the philosopher could reflect on the meanings the mind employs in contemplating an object. Phenomenology is a philosophy of interiority that tends toward solipsism.

Outline

I. Like Descartes, Husserl want to create a new foundation for knowledge and create certainty in the face of contingency.
   A. Husserl assumes that the self is self-evident and that the knower comes before the known
   B. He begins with the ideas of certainty and intuition.
   C. He borrows from Brentano the idea of intentionality. The facts of mental life are irreducible and come first.

II. Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man (1936)
   A. Husserl was opposed to historicism, relativism, scientism, and psychologism. He believed that he was renewing the tradition of Greek rationalism in which our logos applies to the whole domain of human experience. We must first know ourselves before we can know the external world.
   B. The method for examining the psyche is phenomenology. He tries to bracket the external world to examine the psyche. He is left with the pure, raw data of being a human being.
   C. Husserl is looking for a descriptive theory of the introcosm. There must be absolute certainty without presuppositions.
   D. His method for searching for essences is free imaginative variation. How do we know which predicates or truth conditions are essential?

III. Husserl’s process of rigorous self-examination is like boiling down the elements of experience.
A. Phenomenological reduction is a skeptical suspension of judgment. It excludes from consideration all scientific and logical inferences. Pure phenomena get sifted out and result in purified subjectivity, which yields to absolute certainty. This allows for the disclosure of authentic reality.

B. After the phenomenological reduction, the residue is shown to be universal though a process of eidetic reduction.

IV. Problems with Husserl's theory.
A. Instead of essences being qualities intrinsic to the human mind, they are intrinsic to a particular language. Husserl becomes trapped within the introcosm and can't get out. Phenomenology becomes very nebulous.

B. How can we know others' minds? He answers that we do so through empathy, but does not sufficiently explain where empathy comes from.

C. It is tempting to see Husserl as German Romanticism "Cartesianized." It ultimately fails to disclose the essential being.

Essential Reading:
Edmund Husserl, Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology.

Supplementary Reading:
David Bell, Husserl.
Emmanuel Levinas, The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology.

Questions to Consider:
1. Can our experiences be boiled down and reduced in order to come up with true Being?
2. What is the danger of dwelling in the introcosm?

Lecture Nine
Martin Heidegger: Being and Time

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Scope: Martin Heidegger extended Husserl's phenomenological project. He wanted to create a theory of existence or "Being," which he called Dasein. Mankind is thrown into a world not of its own making, and it must strive towards authenticity. Heidegger has had a profound influence on existentialists like Sartre with his belief that to really get to the idea of Being, one must confront the angst and Sorge associated with the confrontation of death.

Outline

I. The Heideggerian Project.
A. Heidegger was a student of Husserl who took Husserl's phenomenology seriously.
B. He had an influence on the twentieth-century existentialism of Sartre and Camus.
C. Heidegger wants to revive ontology, the science of Being.
D. He wants to return to the sophisticated naiveté of pre-Socratic thought.

II. The Problem of Human Existence: Dasein.
A. You can only find out about Being from the perspective of a human being, and that is by being a human being. It tends towards circular reasoning.
B. Dasein has a threefold structure.
   1. Understanding. We must accept Dasein's projection of a context of purposes and relationships that lends meaning to any particular experience.
   2. Mood. Happiness and sadness are literally modes of existence.
   3. Discourse. Language is constitutive of Dasein. Things can only be understood when they are formulated in speech and then made subject to our moods.
C. Heidegger wants us to give up on little "beings" and search for "Being." His theory retains a hint of theology. Like T.S. Eliot, Heidegger warns of being distracted from distraction by distraction.

III. Being and Time (1927).
A. Freedom has to be earned by confronting the facts of existence and Dasein.

B. Volume One deals with the hermeneutics of Being. It contains an analysis of the unreflective state of being. There are three related aspects to existence.
   1. Facticity or geworfenheit means that we are thrown into a world not of our own making.
   2. Existentiality entails appropriating the world for our own purposes.
   3. Forfeiture or verfallen means there is something wrong with the human condition. To be human means to confront the world as it is. Verfallen resembles original sin.

C. In Volume Two, Heidegger tries to sketch out what an authentic being would look like. He creates a phenomenological deconstruction of prior concepts of ontology. Heidegger wants to examine human existence not from a God’s eye view, but from a temporal view and discover what defines human existence.
   1. Amor Fati is the acceptance of one’s fate and death.
   2. The importance of conscience. Dasein demands a life that faces, and does not deny, death.
   3. Death as the horizon of our possibility. Temporality is the main imperative of human existence.
   4. Authenticity and angst reveal Dasein. Sorge or concern is a condition of Dasein.
      a. Dasein projects itself into the future, causing angst.
      b. Dasein projects itself into the past, causing guilt at what we could have been.
      c. We confront Dasein in the present and find out that we have the potential for freedom that we have not completely realized.
   5. Historicity of human beings is a great concern to Heidegger. When we are oriented towards the future, we think about nothing.

IV. Heidegger in the Nazi years.

A. Upon Husserl’s retirement, Heidegger took over his university chair.
   In 1933, Heidegger disassociated himself from his mentor, Husserl, because he was Jewish.

B. Heidegger believed philosophy could only be written in German.

V. Problems with Heidegger’s theories.

A. Heidegger is so impenetrable that he often comes close to self-parody.

B. The problem of morality, mysticism, and nihilism. When you retreat into interiority, you often end up talking to yourself. Discussions of “nothing” are often very fancy ways of not saying anything.

C. This nebulous collection of insights are a kind of theology with God left out. Our one obligation to ourselves is to be ourselves. This comes close to self-worship and solipsism.

D. Heidegger has had little influence in the Anglo-American world. The one place Heidegger has had influence is in theology (Tillich and Bultmann).

E. The enigmatic being so central to Heidegger’s thought might easily be interpreted as the silence of God.

Essential Reading:
Martin Heidegger, Being and Time.

Supplementary Reading:
Pierre Bourdieu, The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger.

Questions to Consider:
1. How is Dasein revealed?
2. What are the Christian influences on Heidegger’s theory?
Lecture Ten
A. J. Ayer’s Language, Truth, and Logic
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Scope: A. J. Ayer was one of the leading logical positivists. In Language, Truth, and Logic, Ayer argued that philosophy should abandon the study of metaphysics and take up a detailed analysis of language. He argues that assertions that cannot be verified in empirical experience are “nonsense.” Ayer believed that all of our talk of the world is a logical construct of our phenomenal and sensual experience. Philosophy was to be the handmaiden of science and the job of the philosopher would be to explain the meaning of scientific terms and logic.

Outline

I. Ayer is a major proponent of logical positivism. Positivists were reacting to two important developments.

A. The first phenomenon was the profusion of speculative metaphysical systems in the post-Kantian epoch. This development threatened to turn philosophy into a laughing-stock. Positivists wanted to preserve philosophy and bring it into the scientific age of the twentieth century. Positivism means pro-science.

B. The second phenomenon was the culmination of a revolution in symbolic logic that had begun in the nineteenth century and really took over with the foundational mathematical research of Russell and Whitehead in Principia Mathematica. They wanted to give logic the same sense of precision and rigor that one finds in mathematics.

II. Language, Truth, and Logic (1936) is a young man’s book full of bluff and bluster. It is a logical positivist manifesto of the doctrines associated with the Vienna Circle, whose lineage was traced by Ayer to Berkeley and Hume.

A. Ayer begins the text with a chapter entitled “The Elimination of Metaphysics.” He achieves this by analyzing the forms of metaphysical sentences and demonstrating that they violate the criteria for literal significance and are thus nonsensical.

1. Metaphysical sentences fail to express propositions. Propositions are either factual/synthetic or tautological/analytic.
2. Factual statements must pass the test of verifiability. Given any sentence, would any observation be relevant to the truth or falsehood of that sentence?

3. Factual propositions are empirical hypotheses that provide a rule for prediction of experience.

4. Metaphysical sentences are linguistic expressions without cognitive content. They are neither true nor false. They are literal nonsense. Any sentence is metaphysical if and only if it purports to express a proposition and it is neither a tautology nor an empirical hypothesis.

5. Metaphysics is merely a misconceived view of grammar.

B. Having dispatched metaphysics, Ayer argues that real philosophy is critical rather than speculative. It is not a science and can offer no knowledge of the world. Philosophy should analyze various problems and issues and clarify our linguistic uses.

1. The nature of philosophic analysis is to offer definitions for terms. Unlike the lexicographer writing a dictionary, the philosopher does not give explicit definitions that are based on synonymy, but rather definitions in use.

2. Such definitions will translate a symbol into equivalent sentences that contain neither the symbol nor any of its synonyms.

C. All meaningful sentences express propositions that are the sole bearers of truth values. Such propositions are either analytic/tautological or synthetic/factual.

1. Analytic, a priori propositions are raised for the empiricist by the problem of accounting for mathematics and logic. We hold them to be true because of the conventional rules we have on how to use them. They have no factual content and only tell us how we use symbols according to our semantic rules. Truth as fiat (i.e., 2 plus 2 equals 4, either “p” or not “p”).

2. Synthetic propositions are empirical hypotheses. We test such hypotheses by seeing whether it enables us to predict experience. Such predictions do not prove the truth of the hypothesis, but rather they increase its probability. It is rational because it has worked so far. Our grounds for factual beliefs are purely pragmatic.

D. Having delimited the range of literally significant sentences, Ayer turns to an analysis of ethics and theology. There are four types of ethical statements.

1. Definitions of ethical terms.
2. Descriptions of moral phenomena. The social sciences.
3. Exhortations to virtue, and commands such as: “Do the right thing!”

4. Ethical judgements. Ayer argues such statements express neither analytic nor synthetic properties. They are meaningless, pseudo-concepts. The same can be said for aesthetical judgements.
5. Ayer proves that it is impossible to prove demonstrably that God exists. The concept of God is neither an analytic proposition nor a synthetic proposition. Whenever you are talking about God, you are either talking about everything or nothing. It is neither true nor false, just literal nonsense.

III. Ayer's final chapter is entitled "The Self and the Common World."

A. Ayer constructs "radical reductionism," an attempt to take all sentences about physical objects and translates them into sentences about sense contents.
   1. All of our talk of the world is a logical construct of our phenomenal and sensual experience.
   2. All of our sense contents are prior to objects. Therefore, mind and body are analytically posterior to sense contents.

B. The self is not a substance, but it is a logical construct that comes out of sense experience. The self is a posit, merely a useful notion.

IV. For Ayer, philosophy is the handmaiden of science.

A. The philosopher shows how the scientist is using the logic of his terms.

B. Science is blind without philosophy; philosophy is empty without science. We should distinguish between the speculative and logical aspects of science. Philosophy must become the logic of science.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Oswald Hanfling, Logical Positivism.
Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.

Questions to Consider:
1. What are the flaws in metaphysical statements?
2. What is the relationship between science and philosophy?

Lecture Eleven
The Latter Wittgenstein

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Scope: Originally trained in mathematics and engineering, Ludwig Wittgenstein became one of the leading theorists of language in the twentieth century. Wittgenstein's early work, the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, was an important positivist text that attempted to set hard rules about what a meaningful proposition is. Later in his life, Wittgenstein grew skeptical of his earlier theory and wrote the Philosophical Investigations, which gave a more flexible view of the nature of language. Wittgenstein argued that we use language through a series of "language games" which we learn as children. The latter Wittgenstein accepted the fuzziness of language and the impossibility of a perfect, unified theory of language to describe reality.

Outline

I. Wittgenstein's first published work, the Tractatus Logico Philosophicus (1921), is one of the great manifestos of positivism. It is decisive in its skepticism in regard to logic and thought. The text is an elaboration of seven sentences.

A. The Tractatus is a theory of the declarative sentence, of what can be put into a proposition and what can not. Anything that can be said can be said clearly or not at all.

B. First sentence: "The world is all that is the case." This means that there will be no metaphysics in the book. The simple facts we find around us are what the world is for us.

C. Last sentence: "What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence." Wittgenstein has expelled many different kinds of discourse into the realm of nonsense.

D. The young Wittgenstein believed he had solved all philosophical problems.

II. Later in his career, Wittgenstein had second thoughts about the Tractatus. His most important work, Philosophical Investigations (1953), is an exercise in philosophical humility. Instead of talking about the logical necessity of language, it talks about the logical contingency of language. The text is a series of paragraphs that Wittgenstein admitted was incomplete.
A. Instead of seeing language as a picture, Wittgenstein wants to see language as a game, as a set of social practices that overlap and do not have one universal skeletal key which allows us to open all linguistic doors.

B. The following are two of Wittgenstein’s favorite questions.

1. How is a word learned? When you find out about how a word is taught, you learn about what the word means.

2. How is the word used? If you want to know what “x” means, find out what people do with “x.” When you find out how people use it, then you will know what it means.

C. Definition of a “language game.”

1. When Socrates asks about virtue, he does not want examples of virtue, he wants to know some quality that every virtue has and only virtue has. This is called “essential definition.”

2. We often learn by being giving examples. Children learn games like checkers, tag, peek-a-boo. But do they have one universal characteristic which allows us to call them all “games”?

3. Plato might ask for logical precision. (The definition of a chair: Is a throne a chair? Is a boulder a chair?) Wittgenstein responds by asking if a fuzzy photo is a photo. Of course it is. Then a fuzzy definition is still a definition. The problem is not with ambiguous definitions or language, but with an unreasonable demand for an unreasonable degree of certainty.

4. Wittgenstein must find a connection between things that holds the world together. This is the idea of family resemblance. Common nouns refer to groups and kinds of things that are united not by a Platonic definition, but by a rough resemblance between them, like that of family members. Philosophy is the battle against bewitchment of our intelligence by language.

III. Problems with Wittgenstein’s theory.

A. Whether you understand the word “game” has little to do with your inner psyche. Wittgenstein’s theory almost turns into philosophical behaviorism. He drives the ego or psyche back to a level where it is a dimensionless point that takes up no space and contains nothing. It is impossible to know other minds.

B. What about someone who claims to know addition or Swedish without having done it or spoken it? How do we know that he or she is telling the truth, and what criterion can we use since we can’t prove it by behavior? This tends to lock us into our own psyche.

C. The investigation into language is incomplete. There is no ultimate finale to the enterprise.

IV. Wittgenstein rescues us from centuries of unnecessary worry. In the *Tractatus*, he held there was no way to express ethical, theological, or aesthetic judgements. Later on, he believes we can talk about these things despite their fuzziness. Is the fuzziness of our discourse an impediment to understanding? No. Wittgenstein represents a retreat from philosophical hubris. Our problems do not lie with language, but with the unreasonable demands for rigor and certitude.

**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Does philosophy require absolute certainty?
2. Why is philosophy so concerned with language?
Lecture Twelve
The Frankfurt School
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Scope: In 1923, the Institute for Social Research was founded at the University of Frankfurt as a center for the study of Marxist theory. Within a few years, its leading members had partially redirected its focus to include elements of psychoanalysis and existentialism. This intellectual amalgam, which came to be known as “critical theory,” emphasized aesthetics and cultural analysis. Prominent members of the Frankfurt School included Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse. During the Nazi takeover of Germany, these scholars dispersed, and many regrouped in New York City. Some returned to Germany at the end of World War II. Soon thereafter, Jurgen Habermas emerged as the leading second generation member of the Frankfurt School.

Outline

I. The Frankfurt School is one of the most important twentieth-century extensions of the traditions of Marxism and continental philosophy.

A. To understand the Frankfurt School, one must understand its historical context. It is impossible to understand German intellectual life without understanding this catastrophic political history.

Key events in this history include:
1. Germany’s humiliation at Versailles in 1918.
2. The Nazi seizure of power in Germany in 1933.
3. The Soviet occupation of eastern Germany in 1945.

B. During the Weimer Republic, there was great polarization between the Left and the Right. The Center collapsed.

C. Looking at the wreckage of their culture, German intellectuals asked: What went wrong? The Frankfurt School took a teleological approach, believing that rationality can tell us the ends we should achieve.
1. Assess the current problem.
2. Ask what went wrong.
3. Create a theory that will allow us to fix the problem.

D. The Frankfurt School treated Fascism and Nazism as the necessary totalitarian development of capitalist society. It was a consequence of the destruction of reason by the ideological necessities of capitalism.

1. Capitalism is a truncated form of reason, called instrumental reason. It tells us what the world is, but not what it ought to be. It creates an ought/is dichotomy.
2. The intellectual forms of capitalism—positivism, neo-classical economics, and liberalism—tell us how to get things done, but not the ends to which they should be directed. They are the techne without the telos. If you leave out the ought, the Frankfurt School argues, you are left with nihilism, which leads one down the road to Fascism.

II. The intellectual heritage of the Frankfurt School.

A. Rousseau—Nostalgia for lost innocence before capitalism.
B. Kant—Moral universality and teleological reason.
C. Hegel—Historicism and the idea that progress is the realization of freedom.
D. Marx—Praxis and political voluntarism.
E. Freud—Social psychology.
F. Heidegger—Technophobia, hatred of mass man, elitism.
G. Gramsci/Lukacs—Rejection of the late, positivistic Marx.

III. The Frankfurt School’s main theme is that freedom is reason.

A. Reason is substantive, not formal. It tells you not just how things are, but how things are meant to be.
B. Freedom, for the Frankfurt School, is freedom from the socially imposed bondage and necessary illusions of the society into which we were socialized.

IV. The leading figures of the Frankfurt School.

A. Herbert Marcuse left Germany and emigrated to the United States.
1. Reason and Revolution (1941) is a revival of left-wing Hegelianism. In it, Marcuse asks how positivism and scientism came to reign in the twentieth century.
2. Eros and Civilization (1955) is a mixture of Freud and Marx, without Freud’s pessimism. Marcuse argues that restrictions on our libido only serve society’s oppression of the individual.
3. In Soviet Marxism (1958), Marcuse rejects Stalinism because it is not true Marxism.
4. One Dimensional Man (1964) was mostly written while Marcuse was in California.
   a. It points out the false consciousness of American society. Americans think they are happy with liberal democracy. But if they were truly happy, they would not be alienated and chasing after fads.
b. Technological rationality, linguistic philosophy, and liberal politics make domination necessary and unquestionable.

B. Theodor Adorno was a musicologist.

1. *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947, co-written with Horkheimer) is a critique of the Enlightenment as a source of mass culture.

2. *Authoritarian Personality* (1950, co-written with others) is a fusion of Marx and Freud and asks what produces the kind of person who follows Hitler. The authors find that Germany was full of authoritarian personalities. They were rigidly conformist, sado-masochistic, and anti-Semitic.

3. *Minima Moralia* (1951) is a series of Nietzschean epigrams.

C. Max Horkheimer.

1. *The Eclipse of Reason* is a collection of essays that provide a good introduction to his thoughts.

2. *The Critique of Instrumental Reason* is an attack on Humean, Anglo-American reason.

V. Significance of the Frankfurt School.

A. The Frankfurt School had a profound effect on Jurgen Habermas, a second-generation leader of the Frankfurt School.

B. The Frankfurt School had an effect on the Critical Legal Studies movement, which tried to show the intrinsic biases built into law and tried to get around bourgeois law.

C. The Frankfurt school also influenced the trend that has become known as political correctness. Marcuse’s *Critique of Pure Tolerance* is an attack on the idea of free speech. Free speech is really a restriction of freedom. He argued that the only way to have real freedom of speech is to restrict speech.

D. It helps us to see that the social sciences are the battlegrounds for philosophical arguments in the twentieth century.

VI. Problems with the Frankfurt School

A. The interpretation of fascism as the final stage of capitalism either ignores liberal democracy in America or it collapses the difference.

B. The Frankfurt School claimed universality, but in reality it was very provincial. They never understood American society.

C. There is lots of arbitrary dogmatism in the writings of the Frankfurt School. For example, see Adorno’s writings on jazz.

D. The Frankfurt School is the ideology of German mandarins. Humanistic intellectuals have become superfluous, so they create a theory to explain why the people are stupid. The humanistic elite got left out of the coalition of labor, capital, and technology, and they have plotted their revenge. The implication is that the philosophers must become kings, not because they have a will to power, but rather because autonomous reason requires rule by an intellectual elite saturated in gnostic resentment.

Essential Reading:
Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. How would you compare the political polarization of the Weimar Republic to America today?
2. Are there any benefits to mass culture?
Glossary

**Dasein:** Martin Heidegger's description of the spirit of human existence. There is a threefold structure of *Dasein:* understanding, mood, and happiness.

**Elan vital:** In the philosophy of Henri-Louis Bergson, *elan vital* is the life force that is the opposite of mere matter. *Elan vital* has creativity, dynamism, and motion. It is the essence of all living things and represents Bergson's attempt to modify the mechanistic aspects of Darwinian evolution.

**Hermeneutics:** Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, with science defined in the broader sense of the word, as found in German, as that of an organized body of knowledge. Hermeneutics is the constant attempt to overcome our alienation from our cultural tradition. It is a process that holds all of our knowledge together.

**Logical Positivism:** Logical positivism, also known as scientific empiricism, attempted to introduce the methodology and precision of mathematics to the study of philosophy, much as had been done in symbolic logic. Logical positivists held that metaphysical speculation is nonsensical, that logical and mathematical propositions are tautological, and that moral and value statements are merely emotive. Logical positivists believed that philosophy should merely clarify the terms and language of science.

**Perspectivalism:** Perspectivalism is the belief that all of our concepts, language, and cultures represent perspectives we impose on experience to create a "world." There is no "truth," only the perspective which works for each individual.

**Phenomenology:** The twentieth-century philosophical movement dedicated to describing the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines such as the natural sciences.

**Pragmatism:** A doctrine developed by nineteenth-century American philosophers Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and others. According to pragmatism, the test of the truth of a proposition is its practical utility; the purpose of thought is to guide action; and the effect of an idea is more important than its origin. Pragmatism was the first independently developed American philosophy.

**Structuralism:** Structuralism is the analysis of aspects of culture as interconnected signs that can be studied to reconstruct the underlying systems of relationships (e.g., the formal units and rules of a language, or the elements of myths and how they enable a society to frame an understanding of the world). No single item in such a system has meaning except as an integral part of a set of structural connections.

**Tautology:** A logical statement in which the conclusion is equivalent to the premise.

**Teleology:** Teleology is the study of ends, purposes, and goals. (In Greek, *telos* means "end" or "purpose"). In cultures which have an teleological world view, the ends of things are seen as providing the meaning for all that has happened or that occurs.

**Uhermensch:** The Nietzschean "superman" is a representative of the warrior class, as distinct from a member of the herd. The *uhermensch* is able to get beyond the dictates of good and evil and resort to man's true nature, before it was corrupted by Christian morality. His basic motivation in life is the "will to power," and Nietzsche believes that this impulse will foster the creativity and individuality that marks superior human beings.
Biographical Notes

Adorno, Theodor (1903-1969). Adorno, the philosopher, sociologist, and literary critic, was a leading member of the Frankfurt School. He obtained a degree in philosophy the University in Frankfurt in 1924. After teaching two years at the University of Frankfurt, Adorno immigrated to England in 1934 to escape the Nazi persecution of the Jews. He taught at the University of Oxford for three years and taught at Princeton (1938-41) and then was co-director of the Research Project on Social Discrimination at the University of California, Berkeley (1941-48). Adorno and Max Horkheimer returned to the University of Frankfurt in 1949 to rebuild the Institute for Social Research and revive the Frankfurt school of critical theory, which contributed to the German intellectual revival after World War II.

Ayer, Alfred Jules (1910-1989). Ayer, the British proponent of logical positivism, was born in London. He was educated as a King’s scholar at Eton, studied classics at Oxford, and studied philosophy at the University of Vienna where he was affiliated with the Vienna Circle. In 1933, he was appointed to a lectureship at Oxford. After service in the Welsh Guards and in military intelligence during World War II, Ayer returned to Oxford where he was appointed dean of Walham College. In 1946, he became a professor of philosophy at the University College in London, but returned to Oxford as a professor of logic at New College from 1960 to 1978, and for five years thereafter he was a fellow of Wolfson College. In 1970, Ayer was knighted by the British crown.

Bergson, Henri-Louis (1859-1941). Bergson was born in Paris of Jewish parents and spent most of his life in Paris. He attended the Lycee Condorcet as a youth and later studied at the Ecole Normale Superieure. He subsequently taught at Clermont-Ferrand for five years and, beginning in 1900, at the College of France. In 1914, suffering from arthritis, he resigned his teaching post. During World War I, he was a member of French diplomatic missions designed to persuade the United States to enter the war. After the Treaty of Versailles, Bergson supervised the establishment of the Committee for Intellectual Cooperation (later UNESCO). In 1927, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Dewey, John (1859-1952). Dewey was born in Burlington, Vermont, into a family of modest means. Both his parents were raised on farms in rural Vermont and his father was a grocer. Dewey attended public school and received his undergraduate education at the University of Vermont. After graduation, he taught high school for a few years before going to graduate school at Johns Hopkins University, where he studied philosophy with Charles Sanders Peirce and George Sylvester Morris. He received his Ph.D. in 1884 and accepted a position at the University of Chicago. In 1894, he went to the University of Chicago and in 1904 became a professor of philosophy at Columbia University.

He was a leading figure in the progressive education movement and a prominent social democrat.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1900- ). Gadamer was born in Marburg, Germany, and educated at the Universities of Breslau, Marburg, Freiburg, and Munich. He studied for a time with Martin Heidegger. He is considered one of the founders of modern philosophical hermeneutics. He taught philosophy at the Universities of Kiel (1934-1935), Marburg, Leipzig (1939-1946), Frankfurt (1947-1949), and Heidelberg (1949-1968). After his retirement, he was a visiting professor at Vanderbilt University, Catholic University, University of Dallas, Boston College, and McMaster University in Canada.

Heidegger, Martin (1889-1976). Heidegger was born in Messkirch, Germany. His father was a Catholic sexton. After finishing high school, he joined the Jesuits as a novice and studied theology and philosophy at the University of Freiburg, where he studied with Husserl and the neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert. Heidegger began to lecture at Freiburg in 1915 and in 1923 became a professor at the University of Marburg. In 1928, he published his seminal work, Being and Time. The following year, Heidegger was appointed to Husserl’s vacant chair at the University of Freiburg, where he remained until 1951. In the 1930s, Heidegger joined the Nazi Party and gave speeches in support of Hitler. He grew disillusioned with the Nazis and his wartime activities were investigated after the war, but his support of Hitler was not found to be serious and he retained his position at Freiburg.

Horkheimer, Max (1895-1973) The German sociologist and member of the Frankfurt School was born in Stuttgart. He was Director of the Institute for Social Research from 1930 to 1958 and rector of the University of Frankfurt (1953-8).

Husserl, Edmund (1859-1938). Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology, was born to a Jewish family in Moravia. He studied at the Universities of Berlin, Leipzig, and Vienna and received his doctorate in mathematics in 1882. He then turned his interest to philosophy and psychology and converted to Evangelical Lutheranism. In 1887, he became a lecturer at the University of Halle where he remained until 1901, when he received an appointment at the University of Gottigen. Among his students were Jean-Paul Sartre, Rudolf Carnap, and Martin Heidegger. He retired in 1928, and Heidegger took Husserl’s position at the University. When the Nazis took power in 1933, Husserl was excluded from the university and silenced. His relationship with Heidegger ended. He took ill in 1937 and died the following year.

James, William (1842-1910). James was born into a wealthy family in New York City. His father, Henry James, Sr., was a member of the New England Transcendentalist movement and a principal supporter of Emmanuel Swedenborg’s Church of the New Jerusalem. William James’s brother, Henry, became a famous novelist. He studied medicine at Harvard Medical School,
accompanied the naturalist Louis Agassiz to the Amazon River in Brazil, and conducted research in Germany. He was constantly in poor health and lived with his father, doing little but reading until he was thirty. In 1872, James became a lecturer in anatomy and physiology at Harvard, but within a few years switched to teaching psychology and philosophy. He married Alice Howe Gibbens in 1878 and his health began to improve. He retired from Harvard in 1907.

Levi-Strauss, Claude (1908- ). Levi-Strauss, the prominent French social anthropologist and leading exponent of structuralism, was born in Brussels, Belgium, and educated at the University of Paris where he studied law and philosophy. For a time he taught high school and was part of the circle of existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre. In 1934, he was appointed professor of sociology at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil, where he did research on the Brazilian Indians. Levi-Strauss was visiting professor at the New School for Social Research in New York City during World War II. From 1950 to 1974 he was director of studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études at the University of Paris. In 1959, Levi-Strauss became professor of social anthropology at the Collège de France.

Marcuse, Herbert (1898-1979). A political philosopher and member of the Frankfurt School, Marcuse was born in Germany. His Marxist critical philosophy and Freudian psychological analyses of twentieth-century Western society were popular among student leftist radicals in the late 1960s. Marcuse received his Ph.D. from the University of Freiberg in 1922. He was a co-founder of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Marcuse fled to Geneva and then to the United States the following year where he taught at Columbia University. He became an American citizen in 1940. During World War II, Marcuse served as an intelligence analyst for the U.S. Army and headed the Central European Section of the Office of Intelligence Research after the war. He returned to teach at Columbia in 1951 and then went to teach at Harvard. He later taught at Brandeis University (1954-65) and the University of California at San Diego (1965-76).

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm (1844-1900). Nietzsche was born in Rocken, Germany, the son and grandson of Lutheran ministers. His father died when he was four years old and he was raised by his mother, grandmother, and two aunts. Trained in theology and classical philology as an undergraduate in Bonn, he received his Ph.D. from the University of Leipzig without writing a dissertation, based on the strength of his published writings. The University of Basel appointed him professor of classical philology and he became a Swiss citizen. There, Nietzsche befriended Richard Wagner. Nietzsche obtained leave to serve as a volunteer medical orderly in August 1870, after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. Within a month, he contracted dysentery and diphtheria, which ruined his health permanently. He returned to Basel to resume teaching, but his health continued to deteriorate. He resigned his professorship and, suffering from migraine headaches and partial blindness, continued to write while living in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. In January 1889, Nietzsche suffered a complete mental breakdown, brought about by syphilis, and spent the last eleven years of his life in a complete vegetative state.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1889-1951). Wittgenstein was born in Austria to a wealthy family. Though of Jewish descent, Wittgenstein was baptized in the Catholic Church. He was educated at home before studying engineering and mathematics in Linz, Berlin, and Manchester. He soon became interested in pure mathematics and its philosophical foundations and became a pupil of Bertrand Russell at Cambridge in 1912. Wittgenstein served in the Austrian army during World War I and was captured in Italy at the end of the war. During the war, he continued work on the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, which was published in 1921. After the war, he gave away his inherited fortune and became an elementary school teacher in Austria. By 1929, Wittgenstein had returned to Cambridge. During this time, he reconsidered his earlier philosophy of the Tractatus and wrote voluminously, although he refused to publish anything in his lifetime. His major work of this latter period is his posthumously published Philosophical Investigations (1953). In 1939, he was appointed to the chair of philosophy at Cambridge, succeeding G.E. Moore. During World War II, he worked as an orderly in a London hospital. He resigned his university post in 1947 and died of cancer four years later.
Bibliography

Essential Reading:


Supplementary Reading:


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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part VI
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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition
Part VI: Modernism and the Age of Analysis:
Conclusions

Scope:

This series of lectures discusses the major developments of western philosophy since World War II.

The series begins with Thomas Kuhn’s groundbreaking text, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn examines the history of sciences and calls the theoretical framework under which normal science is practiced a “paradigm.” Such paradigms are challenged and sometimes overthrown when a crisis occurs because of new evidence. This is called a paradigm shift. Kuhn’s model is helpful not only for thinking about science, but also for human knowledge in general. It gives the idea of “truth” a historical contingency.

Lecture Two examines the work of a second-generation member of the Frankfurt School, Jurgen Habermas. Unlike his elders, Habermas is less dogmatic in his Marxism. He seeks to understand the rationale for legitimation crises in advanced capitalist societies. He argues that ideal speech situations, where human beings realize perfect freedom, get distorted by coercive norms that have not been rationally decided to be in the general interest.

The critique of the foundation of knowledge leads to the postmodernism of Roland Barthes. Lecture Three examines Barthes’s decontextualizing project, which is an attempt at liberating the self from any limitation. Reality is something that must be unmasked, and in Barthes’s theory of semiotics, the critic has the ultimate power over the text.

In contrast, Lecture Four looks at the political theory of John Rawls who sought to provide the philosophical underpinning for the social welfare state. Combining social contract theory with Kantian teleology, Rawls constructs the “original position” where rational individuals are put behind the “veil of ignorance.” Here they can choose, without bias, the system of government that will provide the greatest liberty with the greatest social justice.

Lecture Five examines the work of renegade Marxist Alvin Gouldner, who attempted to explain the flaws in Marxism, such as why industrial western societies never experienced the revolution of the proletariat. Gouldner analyzed the “new class” of intellectuals who were often in the forefront of revolutions. According to Gouldner, it was the complaints of this “new class” that drove much of the radical activity in the West.

Lecture Six deals with Michel Foucault, another postmodern thinker. Foucault examined such transgressive ideas as criminality, insanity, and homosexuality.

He argued that such definitions of individual identity were coercively imposed by society so as to limit individual freedom. They were social constructs.

Lecture Seven explains the work of Willard Van Orman Quine, who was critical of the positivist attempt to create a foundational first philosophy that would establish the meaning of language. Instead, Quine argued that language was not a mirror in the world, but rather a causal connection between a person and the world.

Lecture Eight examines the work of Richard Rorty, who extends pragmatic theory another step forward. He, too, is skeptical of the notion of “truth” and believes that philosophers should cease their pursuit of it. Truth is simply culturally and historically contingent. Instead, Rorty’s hero is the ironist, who understands the contingency of truth and instead seeks to be sensitized to life’s cruelties through art and literature and thereby create the social solidarity needed for a postmodern bourgeois liberalism.

Lecture Nine presents the ideas of Jean-Francois Lyotard, another leading postmodern thinker. Lyotard argues against the great metanarratives of the modern era, arguing instead for an endless diversity of human beliefs in the hope of maximum human freedom. The postmodernist is suspicious of any accepted truth or authority. In the final lectures, Professors Sugrue and Staloff sum up the major themes of the series.
Lecture One
Kuhn's Paradigm

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.
City College of New York

Scope: This lecture presents the ideas of Thomas Kuhn, whose groundbreaking book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, is one of the most influential philosophical texts of the twentieth century. His theory of normal and revolutionary science and his theory of paradigm shifts have had an influence in a wide variety of disciplines. In Kuhn’s theory, a paradigm is a generally shared theoretical framework within which “normal science” is carried out. During times of scientific “crisis,” old paradigms are challenged and replaced by new paradigms.

Outline

I. Thomas Kuhn’s landmark study, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, is perhaps the most influential high cultural text of the twentieth century. Kuhn’s study of the history of science led him to conclude that the positivist theory of science could not adequately account for the actual historical development of the natural sciences.

A. Kuhn argues against the received conception of science as the steady and incremental accumulation of observation, data, discoveries, and inventions.

B. Instead, he argues that the history of science is really characterized by periods of peaceful and normal research punctuated by epochs of crisis and transformations. He calls these crises “scientific revolutions.”

C. Kuhn’s theory of science replaces the logical positivist’s conception of science as a rational reconstruction with a historical sociology of scientific communities and problems.

II. Kuhn’s divides history of science into early, “immature” science with modern, “normal” science.

A. The early, “immature” development of science is characterized by continual competition between distinct views of nature. Scientists argue at cross-purposes, and there is no way to prove which theory is right or wrong.

B. Modern, “normal” science cannot begin until a community of scientists or practitioners agree about the basic entities that they are talking about. They must agree on what are the legitimate questions and what would demarcate the range of legitimate answers to those questions. This agreement is reached by means of one or many paradigms. Without paradigms, all facts seem equally relevant.

III. Kuhn’s definition of a paradigm.

A. A paradigm is a universally recognized scientific achievement that, for a time, provides model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners.

B. Such achievements must be unprecedented enough to gain adherents.

C. They must be open-ended enough to allow these adherents to solve problems that had been postulated but had not been completely resolved.

D. Paradigms present standard cases of the various theories and observations of the paradigm’s application.

IV. Aristotle, Galileo, and Newton provide three distinct paradigms of the same problems: the study of dynamics.

V. Normal science is paradigm-based. Kuhn describes such normal science as “mopping up,” tightening the fit between the facts displayed by the paradigm and the paradigm’s predictions.

A. Normal scientific research and experimentation pose the following three problems.

   1. The first involves investigation of facts that the paradigm says are exemplary or particularly revealing about the paradigm. (Newton’s examination of pendulums)
   2. The second involves investigation of esoteric facts that can be compared to the paradigm’s predictions (Newton’s astronomy).
   3. The third involves research done to extend or articulate the paradigm, resolve its ambiguities, and solve problems which had earlier only drawn attention (The search for mathematical constants, quantitative laws such as Maxwell’s Laws on electromagnetics, experiments in optics).

B. Normal science is a sort of puzzle-solving.

   1. Both are designed to be solved.
   2. Both have rules.
   3. Preparadigmatic science is like mixing the pieces of two separate jigsaw puzzles.

VI. The undermining of a paradigm. Anomalies are facts or phenomena that violate the facts or expectations of the paradigm. The persistence and proliferation of anomalies generate scientific crises.

A. Scientific crises can be resolved in three ways.

   1. Normal scientific research solves the problem.
   2. No solution is found and the problem is ignored.
3. A new paradigm emerges. This is a “paradigm shift.” (e.g. Newtonian physics to Einsteinian physics)

B. No paradigm is ever destroyed by its anomalies. You can never go back to preparadigmatic science. A bad paradigm is better than no paradigm. However, an old paradigm can be replaced by a new one.

VII. Implications of Kuhn’s theory.
A. It devalorizes science.
B. It emphasizes consensus.
C. Preparadigmatic discussions occur in books. Paradigmatic discussions occur in articles.

VIII. Kuhn’s paradigm is a paradigm of science. Scientific paradigms are unidirectional. There is rarely a reverse shift in science to a prior interpretation. Yet Kuhn’s theory is self-referentially coherent. It teaches us that science may not be the ultimate litmus test. This allows more intellectual free play. Openness, flexibility, and the creation of new conceptual schemes might be the values of a large amount of human intellectual endeavor.

Essential Reading:
Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

Supplemental Reading:
Barry Barnes, T.S. Kuhn and Social Sciences
Karl Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery

Questions to Consider:
1. How scientific is Kuhn’s theory of science?
2. Does science advance at a steady pace or by revolutionary spurts and stops?

Lecture Two
Habermas’s Critical Theory

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.
Princeton University

Scope: This lecture presents the ideas of German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, the most prominent heir of the Critical Theory school associated with the Frankfurt School. Habermas attempts to reconnect science and ethics without resorting to metaphysics; i.e., he seeks to return to a teleological conception of reason. His purpose is to create a philosophical overview that will provide a critical analysis of advanced capitalism. Habermas is a non-dogmatic Marxist who seeks to explain the reasons behind the crises of legitimation in advanced capitalist societies. Though all societies rest on coercion, he argues that coercion can only be justified if it serves the general interests. Habermas’s philosophy has been influential on the radical critique of law called Critical Legal Studies.

Outline

I. In Legitimation Crisis (1976), Habermas offers an expanded conception of rationality that allows us to criticize reasonably our present society. His goal is a rational, critical analysis of advanced capitalism. Reacting against positivism, he tries to reconnect science and ethics without resorting to metaphysics. His approach appropriates Freudian psychoanalysis, Hegelian Marxism, and modern linguistic philosophy.

II. Habermas breaks society down into three parts that make up an organic whole: the state, the economic system and the socio-cultural system.
A. There is a homeostatic relationship between state and economy. The economic system gives revenues to the state, and the state tinkers with the economy ("steering performance"), which helps the economic system thrive.
B. The socio-cultural system is the way we legitimize the political system, most importantly by socializing and educating children.

III. The equilibrium of this system sometimes breaks down. Tensions emerge and a social crisis develops. Habermas is interested in what might be done to prevent these crises from overwhelming society.
A. Example of a legitimation crisis. Problems may be found in the socio-cultural system, but they are caused by a political or economic breakdown.
1. One example is provided by the counterculture of the 1960s. Any mass defection from the characteristic norms of a society means there is something wrong in the socio-cultural system. For Habermas, the cause might be found in the economic or political system (e.g., the Vietnam War).

2. Another example is provided by homelessness in the 1980s and 1990s. The homeless have not been properly socialized. There is a political unwillingness to spend money on education.

B. Marx was wrong about the economic demise of capitalism. The political system stepped in and restored equilibrium.

IV. Coercive norms can be legitimized on a universal, rational basis without resorting to metaphysics. Every society must coerce people. Question: How will we know which coercion is rationally legitimate? Answer: We can rationally legitimize coercion if it serves the general interest.

A. Examples of legitimate coercion include protection of the ozone layer and promotion of free trade (e.g., the GATT).

B. Illegitimate coercion that does not meet these standards is exemplified by the former government of South Africa.

V. The ideal speech situation.

A. Habermas rescues us from fact/value distinctions. He revives the teleological conception of reason, which tells us what the ends of society should be. How will we know when we have sufficiently legitimized coercion? It is an ongoing rolling process.

B. Habermas comes up with the ideal speech situation (never actually realized). Some situations more or less approximate this. One cannot deform the speech of people by coercion. (Your boss asks you whether you like his tie. This is the opposite of the ideal speech situation. You are forced to alter your speech to satisfy some other need.)

VI. Habermas has had an influence on the Critical Legal Studies movement in America.

A. Critical Legal Studies seeks to analyze the structure of American law. Since law is backed up by coercion, it asks: Who benefits from this coercive law? Law should not benefit a small section of society.

B. Examples of coercive law are provided by slavery and women’s rights.

C. A society is truly just when coercion is legitimate in all eyes or in the eyes of all that can reason. Habermas’s philosophy represents a return of the Platonic ideal, “Logos uber alles,” which makes moral discourse legitimate again.

D. Habermas wants to create a system that redeems the judgments of “should” and “ought.” It is universal and global, but especially apt for advanced capitalist societies.

Essential Reading:
Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*.

Supplemental Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Can political questions be decided rationally?
2. How can we tell when “coercion” has been sufficiently legitimized?
Lecture Three
Barthes, Semiotics, and the Revolt Against Structuralism

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.
Princeton University

Scope: Roland Barthes was an influential literary critic and proponent of semiotics, the theory of signs. He broke with structuralism and Marxism. He was also a major influence on the postmodernist movement. Barthes was an outsider in France: Protestant, homosexual, and without a terminal academic degree. This propelled his demythologizing project and made him more sensitive to the hidden coercion in society. His book *Mythologies* (1957) is the best example of this project, in which Barthes examines the myths of popular culture such as wrestling and detergent.

Outline

I. Barthes’s demythologizing project is a reading of mass culture.

   A. Barthes’s reading of mass culture raises the following questions.
      1. Where are the hidden messages, and how are they discovered?
      2. Who generates these myths?
      3. What coercive purpose do these myths serve?
      4. In the demythologizing project, Barthes hopes to liberate us from the tyranny of mass-produced culture.

   B. Barthes retreats into interiority.
      1. He exemplifies the critic as the lonely ego.
      2. The external world is constructed by us, not given to us. Nature is a social and linguistic aesthetic.
      3. Barthes is liberating the self and the critic from pre-conceived identities. His is a poetic protest against human limitations.
      4. Barthes’s demythology project quickly becomes reflexive and ironic. The demythologizer ends up demythologizing demythology. After the unmasking of reality, we see that reality is just a mask all the way down. There is no substantial reality.
      5. Barthes is an exponent of the pleasure principle. He withdraws into his mind to escape the oppressive reality of the external world.
      6. Critics therefore have complete free play with the text. The critic becomes like the creative artist.

II. *Mythologies* (1957) is a combination of Marxist *Kulturkritik* and ironic self-reference.

A. Semiotics is the science or theory of signs. It is a subset of structural linguistics.
B. It views the human domain as made up of signs, and it attempts to read these symbols and look for their internal coherence. Semiotics is concerned with the internal coherence of the relationship between signs.
C. Examples of semiotic systems include Freudian psychoanalysis, Marxism, advertising, and clothing (Barthes tells the story of the two women—the nun and prostitute—who greet the sailor).
D. Targets of Barthes’s demythologizing project include wrestling, detergent, striptease, Einstein’s brain, and plastic.
E. Barthes describes the relationship of the sign to that which it signifies by means of the following examples.
   1. The photo of a black soldier saluting a French flag. On one level, it is a surface image of a soldier saluting the flag. On a deeper level, it is an apology for French colonialism.
   2. *Rambo*. On one level it is a film about an American Achilles. On a deeper level, it is statement of American invincibility, suggesting that America did not lose the Vietnam War.
   3. Semiotics is an open-system. There is a multitude of conclusions one can come up with. There is no clarity of interpretation. A Freudian critique does not disprove a Marxist critique. Barthes is liberating the connection between the signifier and the thing signified. There is an infinitude of criticism and interpretation. There is no privileged representation of the world. This undermines the authority of the author and gives the critic complete free play. Barthes undermines structuralism and Marxism.

III. The ironic ubiquity of myth.

   A. By demythologizing all myths, Barthes also demythologizes the demythology project. This is akin to intellectual vandalism. Nothing is left except for the ego, but there is not even a complete self left over. The self becomes dubious and contingent. The advantage is that it allows the critic complete free play. The disadvantage is that it is a hopeless attempt to avoid the external world.

   B. Barthes is an anti-Daedalus. There is no way out of the labyrinth. Everyone is locked in his own subjectivity, and the domain of everyone’s universe is at his fingertips.

   C. Barthes makes readers little gods and gives them omnipotence over an infinite domain called the literary text.

Essential Reading:
Supplemental Reading:
Michael Moriarty, *Roland Barthes.*
Mary Bittner Wiseman, *The Ecstasies of Roland Barthes.*

Questions to Consider:
1. What are some other references from popular culture that lend themselves to being “demythologized”?  
2. When one myth is demystified, is it always replaced by another?

**Lecture Four**

*A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls

*Darren Staloff, Ph.D.*

*City College of New York*

**Scope:** John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* has been the most influential work of social philosophy in the twentieth century. Drawing upon the theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, Rawls argues that the best society would be founded upon principles chosen by rational citizens in the “original position.” Making decisions behind a “veil of ignorance” that prevents social position or natural talents to skew their choice, these rational citizens, according to Rawls, would then choose a system that would grant the most extensive liberties to its citizens while ensuring the maximum justice. The text has served as a philosophical defense of the modern welfare state.

**Outline**

I. Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) attempted to give a philosophical and moral foundation for constitutional social democracy, a society that is both procedurally and substantively just.
   A. Earlier defenses of democracy were based on utilitarian philosophy.
   B. Rawls's theory is a combination of social contract theory (Hobbes and Rousseau) and Kantian philosophy (human autonomy, universality, theory of ends).
   C. Rawls is interested in the idea of social justice, a set of principles that legitimates the division of advantages and primary social goods in a society.
      1. Rights and liberties.
      2. Opportunities and power.
      3. Income and wealth.
   D. Social institutions generate inequalities.
   E. A well-ordered society is one that is designed to promote the good of its members and at the same time is regulated by a public conception of justice.
   F. Reflective equilibrium begins with the existence of strong views, and it tries to develop theories why those strong views are true. It then applies those views to more uncertain views.
      1. Racism is bad.
      2. Religious intolerance is bad.
G. The “original position” is the equivalent of Hobbes’s state of nature. It is where free and rational agents find themselves before they constitute a society.

1. Rational citizens will arrive at the best principles of justice for society.

2. Rawls admits that the original position is non-historical, but he explains it as a hypothetical thought experiment.

3. He thinks people will be able to form universally agreed-upon forms of justice based on reason. Rawls calls it “justice as fairness.”

4. Conditions for the original position include the following.
   a. Veil of ignorance states that each of us in the original position does not know what our social position is within that society, and that we do not know what our talents or goals will be.
   b. In the original position, people will have access to all the general laws of social science.
   c. Since parties are rational, they will unanimously agree to the principles adopted. (This is similar to Habermas’s ideal speech situation.)

5. Rawls claims that rational, disinterested persons would always agree to two basic principles in the original position if they were to maximize social goods and minimize injustice. The first principle is prior to the second, and the benchmark for all principles of justice is the case of complete social and economic equality. All proposed inequalities must improve upon this benchmark for every prospective social position.
   a. The first principle states that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. (Political liberties)
   b. The second principle states that any social and economic inequalities must be to everyone’s advantage and must be attached to positions and offices that are equally open to all. (Class differences)

6. The second principle can be interpreted in four ways. The first two are based on “efficiency principles,” and the last two are based on the “difference principle.”
   b. A system of liberal equality (twentieth-century liberalism).
   c. A system of natural aristocracy (Founding Fathers, Plato’s Republic).
   d. A system of democratic equality (Rawls’s preferred interpretation).

A. It precludes the constitution of a callous meritocracy or technocracy and treats hereditary gifts not as an individual advantage, but as a social resource.

B. It is good for the well-off, whose goal is continued social stability and who need agreement from the less-well-off. How better to arrive at this state than by showing that agreement is in their interest and the system is socially just?

C. It gives flesh to the notion of fraternity.

D. It avoids the problems of relying on utilitarianism for the moral-philosophical foundation of constitutional social democracy.

V. The problems with Rawls’s philosophy.

A. His theory assumes the univocality of reason and social science. Rawls’s rationality of agents resembles the “homo economicus” of neo-classical economics, which seeks to maximize returns and minimize risks.

B. Because it is a universal, Kantian moral theory, it is ahistorical. It ignores the fact that codes of justice might be relative.

C. Rawls’ theory is fraught with a methodological individualism. It sees society as a collection of individuals. It ignores the ideas of “nation,” “state,” and “culture.” It ignores the possible contributions of Michelangelo’s art.

Essential Reading:

Supplemental Reading:
Roberto Alejandro, The Limits of Rawlsian Justice.

Questions to Consider:
1. Should the justice of society be judged from the perspective of the least advantaged?
2. Is the “veil of ignorance” a plausible philosophical construct?
Lecture Five
Alvin Gouldner's Dark Side of the Dialectic

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.
City College of New York

Scope: Alvin Gouldner was often called a “renegade sociologist.” He was a self-professed ridge-rider between traditional academic sociology and critical Marxist social theory. In the trilogy The Dark Side of the Dialectic, Gouldner presented a Marxist critique of Marxism itself. He became an “outlaw Marxist.” He uses the dialectic to show the flaws in Marxism, calling himself a “Marxist Socratic.” His analysis of the “new class” of intellectuals and others who earn their living from their education and not their ownership of capital, provides a necessary corrective to the Marxist idea of class struggle and helps explain why so many Marxists and radicals were not proletarians, but intellectuals.

Outline

I. The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology (1976) focuses on the historic conditions that give rise to ideology.
   A. Ideologies emerge in the modern period as a response to the breakdown of the discursive credit of traditional authorities.
      1. The modern epoch (American and French Revolutions) destroyed the traditional authority of aristocracy and clerics.
      2. How do we replace this authority? With a new culture of rational discourse.
         a. All assertions must be justified without reference to authority.
         b. Assent must be voluntary.
         c. Assumptions must be made explicit.
      3. Ideologies were able to respond to a crisis in “credit” that the overthrow of the ancien regime brought about because of the communications revolution in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
         a. The development of cheap rag paper made possible the printing of inexpensive newspapers and journals.
         b. The decentralization of the modes of production of newspapers allowed for a vast number of small, privately owned newspapers and journals. They provided a venue for the new ideologies.
      4. Ideologies unmask each other by exposing the hidden, occluded interests that lay behind them.

   5. Ideologies appeal to college-educated people who are familiar with the culture of rational discourse. If Marxism is the philosophy of the working class, why are so many Marxists trained academicians and other well-educated people?

II. The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class (1979) explains the major flaw in the Marxist scenario: Why did no major social revolutions occur in the advanced capitalist countries of western and central Europe between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, but occurred instead in less advanced countries and involved the peasantry, not the proletariat, mobilized by a vanguard party of intellectuals?
   A. The real class struggle of the modern era, which Marxism misses, is between the old class and the new class.
      1. The old class is the moneyed bourgeoisie.
      2. The new class is made up of the technical intelligentsia who make their income based on their education (doctors, lawyers, engineers) and traditional humanistic intellectuals.
   B. Part of what constitutes this class is its human or cultural capital, and what unifies it is its shared culture of critical discourse.
   C. Though Gouldner sees the new class as flawed (arrogant and hubristic), he also sees it as a universal class committed to certain positive principles. Among these are social justice, public rationality, and constant critique of authority.

III. In Two Marxisms (1979), Gouldner examines the division in Marxist thought between critical and scientific Marxism. Each argues that it is the real Marxism.
   A. The two Marxisms.
      1. The philosophy of early Marx is Hegelian and romantic, and it lives on in most twentieth-century Marxists in their belief in free will and voluntarism. Critical Marxists include Lenin, Habermas, and Gramsci.
      2. Scientific Marxism is that of Das Kapital and it is found in economistic writers who believed Marxism was a science. It is found in the structuralism of Althusser.
   B. This dispute exists because there is a true disparity in Marx’s work.
   C. Gouldner wants to examine Marxism as a paradigm.
      1. Phase One: The basic elements of Marx’s thought: historical materialism, the problem of scarcity, the class struggle, the withering away of the state, the idea of the proletariat.
      2. Phase Two: Apply their new paradigm to other cases. Find anomalies with the paradigm. (Class struggles in France, Asiatic modes of production)
Lecture Six

Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Post Structuralism

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.
Princeton University

Scope: Michel Foucault was a leading postmodernist thinker. Influenced by Nietzsche, his work dealt with such subjects as psychiatry, prisons, medicine, and sex. He claimed that the fundamental concepts that constitute an individual's identity are contingent. His work emphasized issues of power. Foucault believed concepts like punishment, insanity, and homosexuality were coercive attempts by society to limit individual freedom.

Outline

I. Michel Foucault was one of the most controversial thinkers of the twentieth century. He possessed a deep interiority and was obsessed with death and power. Foucault's thought was basically anti-humanist, and he took Nietzsche's "will to power" as far as it could go. To Foucault, there is merely power, desire, and our relationship to the utterly contingent. He studied madness, sexuality, and criminality. His focus was negative and on the macabre.

A. The only way to extend human freedom is a ruthless analysis of power that seeks out all coercion by one person over another and eliminates it.

B. Foucault's philosophy undermines, interrogates, and delegitimizes all prevailing moral, political, and epistemological codes. He calls into question the category of the transgressive (the criminal, the insane, the homosexual), because he believes that anything that limits our absolute freedom and marks off the transgressive from the morally praiseworthy is a self-imposed limitation. He is an anarchist who declares war upon any such limitations.

C. Foucault's intellectual heritage included the following components.
   2. Kant's critical stance towards knowledge.
   3. Marquis de Sade's concentration on self and limit experiences.
   5. Sorel's defense of violence and terrorism.
   7. Structuralism's abolition of human agency.

II. Foucault's Madness and Civilization (1961) studies madness in the Age of Reason and argues that the humanitarian reforms of the Enlightenment were insidiously and covertly coercive.
A. The idea of “madness” is socially constructed. By examining what
gave rise to the idea of madness, Foucault could unmask the power
relations behind stigmatization and coercion.

B. Foucault influenced the anti-psychiatry movement and the recent
move towards deinstitutionalization of the insane.

III. *The Order of Things* (1966) is perhaps Foucault’s greatest, and most
difficult, work.

A. It examines the soft sciences in western history in the last 500 years.
Foucault finds four distinct “epistemes.” An episteme is a stance of
looking at the world, a grammar of interpretation analogous to
Kuhn’s paradigm. There are no rules for the change from one
episteme to another. It is a discontinuity, arbitrary and irrational.
Epistemes are epistemological breaks. They included:
1. Renaissance (1500-1650). The age of the analogy.
3. Modern era (1800-1950). Knowledge, ethical judgements, and
   politics are legitimized by reference to a totalizing meta-
   narrative.
4. Postmodernism (1950-present). Grand meta-narratives are
   forsaken, and we can no longer legitimize our moral, political,
   and aesthetic principles. We become “beyond good and evil.”

B. Foucault’s ambitious argument transforms Kant’s *a priori* categories
into a historically contingent set of socially constructed, arbitrary
presuppositions.

C. With the end of modernism, we lose our conception of human
existence. Our idea of man becomes contingent. “The twilight of the
human beings.”

IV. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault extends his inquiry into the
social construction of criminality.

A. Foucault criticizes Bentham’s Panopticon as unnecessarily limiting
human freedom.

B. Construction of criminality is merely a method of social control so
that capital is able to have a docile workforce.

V. Foucault’s three-volume *History of Sexuality* (I 1976, II 1983, III 1984) is
his final encounter with the historical development of subjectivity. He
argues for the social construction of nature.

A. Foucault emphasizes homosexuality. He believes homosexuality was
an invention of the nineteenth century.

B. Sexuality is a social construct. Prior to the nineteenth century, there
was just the pleasure of the flesh.

VI. Problems with Foucault’s theory.

A. His philosophy tends towards a powerful nihilism. Liberation and
   coercion seem equally acceptable.

B. His philosophy tends toward radical historicism. Nature is dependent
   on our will for its existence.

C. Foucault has constructed a Pyrrhonic skepticism that dissolves all
   claims to authority and obligation. This turns into a philosophical
   “me-tooism” which delegitimizes other discourses without inquiring
   into the lack of foundations that we construct.

Essential Reading:
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*.
Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.

Supplementary Reading:
Gary Gutting, *Foucault’s Archaeology: Science and the History of Reason*.
James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*.

Questions to Consider:
1. Is the social construction of madness, criminality, and homosexuality an
   attempt to limit human freedom?
2. Does Foucault’s theory necessarily lead to nihilism?
Lecture Seven
Quine’s Ontological Relativism and the End of “Philosophy”

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Scope: Willard Van Orman Quine is among the most profound and important philosophers of the twentieth century, as well as one of its most eminent logicians. He made major contributions to ontology, epistemology, and mathematical logic. Quine’s philosophy came at a time when logical positivism suffered a series of setbacks in its attempt to reduce mathematics to logic. He attacked positivism’s attempt to create a foundational first philosophy that would establish the meaning of language.

Outline

I. The context for Quine’s philosophy is a series of setbacks to the positivist attempt to reduce mathematics to logic.
   A. The anomaly of Russell’s paradox.
   B. Gertel’s incompleteness proof.

II. Quine directed his criticism at the foundational or “Kantian” elements of logical positivism.
   A. Positivist linguistic analysis and epistemology tried to constitute itself as a first philosophy that foundationally and unequivocally established the meaning of expressions or discourse prior to scientific analysis of truth or verifiability.
   B. Positivists set out to limit the range of legitimate discourse.
   C. Positivists presupposed that language and theory possess a determinate meaning or contain fixed structural or conceptual features.

III. Quine’s first large-scale attack on positivism came in the article entitled, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism.”
   A. The first dogma is the belief that there is a basic and fundamental distinction between analytic and synthetic truths. An analytic sentence is true solely on the basis of its meanings rather than on any factual state of the world. Quine believes this is an insupportable view since synonymy is a dead end.
   B. The second dogma is that of reductionism, that every meaningful statement about the world is equivalent to some statement which is a logical construct of terms referring to a sense experience. Quine states that some statements are true, even if they have no factual basis.
   C. The positivists allowed pragmatic considerations to rule over only our choice of synthetic beliefs. By destroying the analytic/synthetic distinction, however, Quine allows for a more thoroughgoing pragmatism.

IV. Quine’s most powerful attack on positivism is Ontological Relativity and Other Essays (1969). He argues that when we specify the entities of some theory or language (the object language), we do so by translating sentences with those entities into another background theory or language (the metalanguage) that is richer and more inclusive. The outcome is an ontological relativity.
   A. The reference or ontological import of an object language is relative to the metalanguage into which it is translated.
   B. Radical translation is relative and indeterminate.
   C. One must find out the referential apparatus of the object language, the “logical particles” (“a,” “and,” “not,” plural endings, etc.).
   D. In translating a language, one must posit an analytic hypothesis that explains the first rough guesses as to how to individuate terms. We could come up with more than one analytic hypothesis, meaning there could be more than one translation.
   E. The ontology of language is not only relative to the metalanguage into which one translates, but also to the analytic hypothesis one uses for translation.
   F. Meaning merely refers to a move in a language game.
   G. Language is not a mirror of the world, but rather a causal connection between you and the world.

V. The result of Quine’s work is that a foundational analysis of linguistic meanings is rendered impossible.
   A. Quine’s theory means that there is nothing left called “philosophy” that is distinguishable from science.
   B. Quine offers a theory of epistemology naturalized, which needs no foundation, but instead he explains how man uses his symbolic systems to erect scientific theories and explanations.

Essential Reading:
W. V. Quine, Ontological Relativity and Other Essays.
Lecture Eight
Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism

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Scope: Rorty argues that philosophers have traditionally sought to escape from history by providing searching for “truth.” Rorty believes that truth can never be found imbedded in language, but is merely a statement that we approve of. He believes philosophers should end their pursuit of the truth. Rorty admires “ironists” who see the contingency of truth and instead aim for self-creation and the elimination of cruelty by means of cultural edification. Rorty’s pragmatism is the basis of his defense of the postmodern bourgeois liberalism of the West.

Outline

I. Richard Rorty is one of the most profound and influential philosophers on the current high-cultural scene.

A. He is attempting to move post-analytic American philosophy in a pragmatic direction.

B. His pragmatism is deeply informed by a commitment to democracy, naturalism, tolerance, and intellectual openness, as well as a profound awareness of the contingency of such values and institutions.

II. In Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (1979), Rorty examines the notion of truth as correspondence.

A. Rorty suggests that the history of modern epistemology can be seen, from Descartes to the present, as based on the notion that there is a medium standing between ourselves and the world which, either adequately or inadequately, mirrors the world.

1. Descartes introduced the idea of the positive mind as the medium between the individual and the world—i.e., the mind as a mirror. A philosopher examines the mirror to find which representations are true. Locke continued this tradition.

2. The problem with the idea of the veil of ideas is skepticism. It is hard to know if our ideas correspond to the way the world really is.

3. Kant tried to solve the problem of skepticism by making epistemology the “first philosophy.”

4. Hegel undermined Kant’s scheme by pointing out the historical contingency of such ideas. This led to the profusion of speculative metaphysics, which in turn led to the positivists who,
wanting to return to “first philosophy,” turned to linguistics for a philosophical foundation.

B. Rorty claims that what underlies such projects as seeking a philosophical foundation and what unites them with their Platonic forerunners is the desire to constitute philosophy as a metacultural criticism—the desire to have a “God’s eye view.”

1. The philosopher’s goal is to stand above all other intellectual disciplines and tell them what is meaningful and what is not.
2. Rorty argues that a truly secular culture will have no such architectonic structure, but will allow free play between the various intellectual disciplines and fields.

III. In *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982), Rorty argues that pragmatism is the ultimate enemy of philosophy in both its metaphysical and positivistic/analytic forms.

A. Rorty thinks it is time to stop searching for “truth.” A “true” sentence is one of which we approve. Truth is a primitive, normative concept, a compliment you pay to a sentence that is working for you.

B. Correspondence theories of truth assume that language is a medium of representation that we can compare to some fixed and final reality. Rorty believes language is part of the world, not a mirror of the world.

C. Rorty argues for an “anti-realism.” The notion of a final, fixed reality has zero explanatory power. There is no way to compare your conceptual scheme to a fixed and final world because you always experience the world under some paradigm or conceptual scheme.

D. Philosophy should try to show how our various descriptions and actions “hang together,” rather than try to offer epistemological foundations for our beliefs. He wants to turn western society from a debate into an ongoing, edifying conversation.

IV. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1988), Rorty tries to show how his edifying pragmatic discourses “hang together” with the contemporary democratic project of the West called “postmodern bourgeois liberalism.”

A. Rorty does not try to ground democracy, give it philosophical foundations, or prove that it is the best form of government. Instead, he offers a view on how things cohere with our democratic practices. He offers support short of justification.

B. Democracy has priority over philosophy. Philosophy does not have to support democracy.

C. Post-Hegelian inquiry has shown us the contingency of our language, beliefs, values, and institutions.

D. It allows us to redescribe ourselves and our institutions.

E. The “strong poet,” who allows us to redescribe ourselves in a new way, is the hero of Rorty’s utopian, postmodern liberal society (e.g., Emerson, Douglass, Einstein).

F. “Ironists” are people who understand the contingency of final vocabularies and have doubts about it. They know that their present vocabularies cannot resolve these doubts. They do not think that language corresponds to reality or taps into a metaphysical power.

G. The greatest fear for the ironists is that they might be a copy or replica, and that their final vocabularies might not be of their own choosing, but rather imposed upon them by society. Therefore, ironists are constantly redescribing themselves so that they can be Nietzschean self-creators.

H. Rorty believes that liberals believe that humiliation is the worst thing that we can do. One is humiliated when he is forced to perform an act or affirm a statement such that he can no longer describe himself consistently. Humiliation is the ultimate purpose of torture.

I. Rorty finds that we achieve moral education through literature, movies, and the theater. Such works sensitize us to the suffering of others. They transform “others” into “us.” Such a sense of solidarity holds society together.

J. Our culture is the most tolerant because it is the only culture that mistrusts itself.

**Essential Reading:**

Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*.

Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*.

**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. How would Rorty defend the principles of liberal democracy?
2. Is self-creation an interesting project or is it narcissism made respectable?
Lecture Nine
Jean-Francois Lyotard: The Postmodern Condition

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.
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**Scope:** Jean-Francois Lyotard is a leading postmodernist thinker. He argues against the philosophical search for metanarratives or truth that characterized the modern era. Instead, postmodernism is, by definition, suspicious of all forms of power in the world. It calls for the endless diversity of human beliefs in the hope of maximum human freedom. For Lyotard, any attempt to silence this *differend*, or multitude of untranslatable discourses, is, “terroristic.”

**Outline**

I. Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) crystallizes some of the main themes of contemporary thought.

A. Lyotard is an anti-essentialist and anti-foundationalist thinker who rejects the idea that there is some fundamental reality we can disclose through some demythologizing principle.
1. Postmodernism believes we cannot have a totalizing discourse or one unified theory. Instead, Lyotard bases his theory of “little narratives” on Wittgenstein’s theory of language.
2. The first goal is to satisfy the desire for justice. The second goal is respect for the unknown.
3. There is a connection between romanticism and postmodernism.
   a. Heroic individuals
   b. Unrestrained narcissism
   c. Powerful internal activities
4. Postmodernism is not a logically coherent system, but rather an organized system of emotions, systematic distrust, organized mistrust. It suspects all sites of power in the world. It mistrusts everything except itself.

B. Lyotard seeks to inquire into the status of knowledge. Intellectuals can no longer take seriously the legitimizing grand narratives that had held together the modern world. The legitimization of science and the state are always bound together.

C. Modernist metanarratives have no place in the postmodern project. Examples include Hegel’s *Geist*, Marxist class conflict, the *Volk*, and Habermas’s attempt at the rational legitimation of ethics.

III. Lyotard offers a critique of two leading modernists: Habermas and Luhmann.

A. Lyotard takes issue with Habermas’s ideal speech situation. In generating a consensus, Lyotard argues, you are enforcing a totalitarian myth on people. Instead, Lyotard calls for a polymorphous perversity of discourses. His goal is to maximize difference and diversity.

B. Lyotard attacks Luhmann’s systems theory, which is an attempt to talk about the world as a large cybernetic system. Lyotard’s problem with Luhmann is that systems theory is a closed system. Also, this theory legitimizes “performativity,” which is maximum output for minimum input. This is the underpinning for advanced capitalism. Luhmann finds such a theory rational; Lyotard calls it just another coercive myth, a social construct.

C. Instead, Lyotard wants to give up on the theory of science and examine the practice of science and turns to paralogy. He wants to undermine consensus and encourage an infinite number of interpretations to exist. We must resist the terrorist modernist desire to silence difference.

IV. Problems with the Lyotard, “the postmodern gamester.”

A. How is communication possible if this infinite number of language games is not held together by a totalizing metadiscourse? Aren’t we then all playing our own language game and making noise like scat singing? Example: Should abortion be made illegal? There is no neutral ground in language to answer that question. It depends on whether one considers it murder or a matter of choice.

B. Is postmodern legitimation an oxymoron? Postmodernism dissolves the domain of communication into a giddy, self-indulgent laughter. Postmodernism is both serious and facetious.

C. Is the silencing of the *differend* really “terroristic”? Is Singaporean authoritarian government really “terroristic,” no matter how much Singaporeans support their government? America does not provide free air time to all political candidates. Does this mean Americans are toiling under “terrorism”? One man’s dystopian terror is another man’s utopian happiness. This is analogous to the Marxist problem of false consciousness.

D. Postmodernism is a posture of studied suspicion, an exaggerated intellectual scrupulosity. The result is not intellectual cleanliness, but rather intellectual sterility.
Lecture Ten

Conclusion: The Theory of Knowledge and Language

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.
City College of New York

Scope: In this first concluding lecture, we will examine the distinguishing marks of twentieth-century epistemology: the problem of representation and the search for the foundation of knowledge of the external world. Both Hegel’s historicism and Nietzsche’s perspectivalism pulled the rug out from under previous understandings of representation. We will then look at four different approaches to the problem of representation that twentieth-century philosophers have taken. But such responses have usually led to cultural and moral relativism and we look at whether that has been a positive or negative development.

Outline

I. What distinguishes twentieth-century epistemology from previous epistemological epochs has been the search for a certain foundation for knowledge of the external world and the problem of representation (“the linguistic turn”).

A. Part of the project of twentieth-century epistemology has been to establish a foundation for our knowledge that is itself absolutely certain. From such a foundation, we can distinguish those cultural precincts which can make truth claims from those which are purely relativistic.

1. Twentieth-century philosophy came about in response to Hegel’s historicism and Nietzsche’s perspectivalism, which showed the contingency of many of our beliefs.

2. This gave rise to the modern problem of relativism.

3. Part of the project of twentieth century epistemology has been to establish a foundation for our knowledge that is itself absolutely certain. From such a foundation we can distinguish those cultural precincts which can make truth claims from those which are purely relativistic.

B. Theories of knowledge in the twentieth century have also been characterized by an awareness of the presence and significance of language as a medium of representation. Our understanding of the world is encoded through language. How do we know that our descriptive schemes reflect the nature of the universe?
II. There have been four approaches in dealing with the problems of certainty and representation. One approach to the problem of epistemology in the twentieth century has been to get behind representation and marshal various philosophical methods and procedures to generate the necessary foundations for criticizing the culture.

A. Phenomenological reduction. Husserlian phenomenology offers the method of phenomenological and eidetic reduction to remove the historically contingent elements of our linguistic consciousness. Heidegger’s quasi-Kierkegaardian meditation on dread, death, and conscience.

B. Habermas and the Frankfurt School attempt to eliminate the distortions in our speech caused by the hidden irrational interests of particular groups—elites, classes—by means of an ideological critique grounded in Marxist scientific understanding, a dialectical understanding, and by an emancipatory critique.

III. The second approach is to clarify representation and understand our medium of representation instead of either superseding or correcting it.

A. Logical positivism classes all truth-bearing sentences into two classes: the analytic and the synthetic.

B. Structuralism offers an analysis of language distinguishing between the necessary (synchronic) and the contingent (diachronic).

IV. The third approach to the problem of representation is the post-structural attempt to note the failure of representation. The postmodern condition is that of a speaker caught in a failed representational scheme, where even this knowledge is subject to criticism once it is encoded in language.

V. The final approach is that of the pragmatists who go one step further than the poststructuralists in rejecting the idea of representation. While the poststructuralists claim that language fails to represent the world accurately, the pragmatists deny that language is representative at all.

A. Kuhn’s attempt to sociologize epistemology says: If you want to know what scientific truth is, watch what scientists do. The procedures they come out with are probably as close to the truth as you will get. If they come up with different procedures next year, then scientific truth has also probably changed.

B. Quine’s attempt to naturalize epistemology asks: How do humans use markings and sounds to control their world? The explanation should be purely causal.

VI. All of these twentieth-century positions generate a sense of cultural and moral relativism. Such relativism can be read in different ways.

A. You can read relativism as a bad sign. Without moral and philosophical foundations, our cherished democratic and liberal traditions cannot survive. Relativism leads to nihilism. This has been the basis for recent “culture wars.”

B. You can read relativism as a good sign. Relativism is nothing other than contingency, which means the freedom of individuals and groups to choose their own beliefs and values. Relativism is then the culmination of the Western tradition. It allows individuals to choose their own values, opinion, and even their own identities.

C. You can choose to read the rise of relativism as an irrelevant sign. Our democratic and liberal traditions do not really need an epistemological foundation because they were not based on such a philosophical foundation. Instead, it was the beliefs and practices of practical politicians and the experience of everyday life that generated liberal democracy. Rorty called this “democracy without foundation.” In addition, few outside of academia have actually noticed the rise of relativism.
Lecture Eleven
Conclusion: Political, Social, and Cultural Criticism and Theory

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.
Princeton University

Scope: In the final concluding lecture, we sum up the major strands of twentieth-century political, social, and cultural theory. The theories of Nietzsche and Freud both shattered inherited conceptions of the self. We summarize the twentieth-century responses to this problem, including Marxism, existentialism, positivism, pragmatism, structuralism, and poststructuralism. We will next examine how various philosophers have dealt with the problems of technology. Finally, we will ask what influence twentieth-century philosophy has had on the everyday, practical world.

Outline

I. Contemporary philosophy exists in the shadow of Freud and Nietzsche—the masters of distrust—who shattered inherited conceptions of self and society.
   A. The effects of Nietzsche's political theory.
      1. Nietzsche offered the idea that "God is dead" which not only signaled the end of theology, but also the end of metaphysics.
      2. Ethics becomes aesthetics, and there is a collapse of moral universality.
      3. Politics is transformed into an exclusive domain of the will to power. The reason we advance certain political projects is that they advance our will to power. Chaos ensues where politics cannot be reasoned out, but must be fought out.
   B. The effects of Freudian psychoanalysis.
      1. Freudian psychoanalysis split the subject into component parts (id, ego, superego). Introspection becomes deprivileged.
      2. The interrogation of the content of language makes communication problematic.
      3. The fragmentation of the self and society seems to preclude coherent discourses about the self and society and leads to the fragmentation of knowledge that is found in postmodern thought.

II. Contemporary philosophers have had to cope with the problems of the machine. Specifically, there are the advances in communications technology which have allowed for a wider and quicker dissemination of information.

A. Technology offers new prospects for human freedom, but it also creates unanticipated problems.
   1. It appears that technology pushes man around more so than man uses technology to affect nature.
   2. With this technology, there is a feeling that our options are being limited and our privacy is eroded. More people can know more about us with greater ease and the mechanism of social control becomes more effective with such information.

B. Problems with technology give the philosopher new questions to ponder.
   1. Whose responsibility is global warming and other environmental problems?
   2. Will environmental limits prevent Third World development?
   3. Will the developed countries then need to redistribute their wealth to undeveloped nations?

C. The reaction of the philosopher to technology.
   1. Heidegger inveighed against the distraction of gadgets and the lack of authenticity of modern man.
   2. The Frankfurt School extended its criticism to the ideological manipulation of public opinion through the media of mass communications.
   3. For Habermas, technology is potentially liberating when used to extend the communicative rationality of an enlarged speech community.
   4. Foucault found the increase in the power of science a Trojan Horse that would bring more state-authorized coercion, thereby diminishing human freedom (i.e., the penitentiary).
   5. Lyotard believed that science is ideologically tainted and skews truth and justice toward wealth. The differend is then terroristically silenced.
   6. Gouldner argued that postmodernism is merely a power play by humanistic intellectuals who, deprived of political power, construct an elaborate vocabulary to delegitimize scientific and political power because they resent their own growing irrelevance.

III. In twentieth-century philosophy, moral and political legitimation becomes problematic.
   A. Existentialists such as Sartre and Heidegger substitute legitimacy with free play. Sartre becomes an anti-fascist, and Heidegger becomes a Nazi. They aestheticize ethics. Romantic notions of commitment become the only legitimizing force.
   B. Marxism is still alive and well in the universities, while it has collapsed everywhere else. This legitimizes Marxism and its stance of
defiance against the world at large. Gouldner stands apart, though, as a "renegade Marxist."

C. Beyond Marxism are various forms of efficiency arguments or utilitarianism that are sympathetic to capitalism and found in the Anglo-American tradition. Rawls stands as a critic of this type of Utilitarianism, and he defends the welfare state.

D. Pragmatism is an attempt to muddle through the fact that we do not have any grounds for our moral and political judgements. Scratch a pragmatist and you will find a positivist with a broken heart. Pragmatism is the second-choice philosophy for many people. You can have left-wing pragmatists like Rorty or right-wing pragmatists like Quine.

E. Poststructuralists, like Barthes and Levi-Strauss, take us from the earlier, modernist standpoint of structuralism. They turn the demythologizing process of structuralism against itself and find that the inner reality of structuralism is just another myth. Structuralism demands poststructuralism.

F. Gadamer's hermeneutics does not really fit into this postmodern paradigm. It believes it is possible to know a real external world which exists independent of our feelings about it. It allows us to avoid solipsism.

IV. A major irony of the humanistic intellectuals' negative, antagonistic stance towards science, technology, and the theory of knowledge is that the everyday practical world is blissfully unaware of the contemporary developments in intellectual life. Even noteworthy political actors—Gorbachev and Lee Kwan Yu—and moral influences—Desmond Tutu and Mother Teresa—have probably ignored recent philosophical debates. Postmodern intellectuals have become provincial and conventional. The political ground occupied by most professional intellectuals is a small and self-contained infinity which marginalizes itself and makes a virtue out of its own alienation.

Glossary

Episteme: An episteme is a stance of looking at the world, a grammar of interpretation analogous to Kuhn's paradigm. There are no rules for the change from one episteme to another.

Epistemology: The branch of philosophy that deals with the origin, nature, and limits of human knowledge.

Metaphysics: Metaphysics originally referred to the writings of Aristotle that came after his writings on physics. Traditionally, metaphysics refers to the branch of philosophy that attempts to understand the fundamental nature of all reality, whether visible or invisible. It seeks a description so basic, so essentially simple, so all-inclusive that it applies to everything, whether divine or human or anything else.

Nihilism: The denial of all real existence or the possibility of an objective basis for truth.

Ontology: The branch of metaphysics that studies the nature of existence or being, as distinct from material or spiritual existence.

Paradigm: A paradigm is a universally recognized scientific achievement that, for a time, provides model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners.

Phenomenology: The twentieth-century philosophical movement dedicated to describing the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines such as the natural sciences.

Postmodernism: The belief that there are no totalizing metanarratives or unified theories that describe the world. Instead postmodernism is, by definition, suspicious of all forms of power in the world. It calls for the endless diversity of human beliefs in the hopes of maximum human freedom.

Pragmatism: A doctrine developed by the nineteenth-century American philosophers Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and others. According to pragmatism, the test of the truth of a proposition is its practical utility; the purpose of thought is to guide action; and the effect of an idea is more important than its origin. Pragmatism was the first independently developed American philosophy.

Semiotics: Deriving from linguistics, semiotics is the science or study of signs and signifying practices.

Solipsism: The theory that only the self exists or can be proven to exist.

Veil of Ignorance: John Rawls, in his A Theory of Justice, describes the original position where free and rational citizens would meet before they constitute a
society to decide upon the best principles of justice for a society. The veil of ignorance states that people in the original position do not know what their social position is within that society and do not know what their talents or goals will be. Therefore, an objective creation of a just society is possible.

Biographical Notes

Barthes, Roland (1915-1980). Barthes was born in Cherbourg, France. During his twenties, he suffered from tuberculosis. During this time, Barthes read voraciously. Through his writings, he became an influential literary critic. He taught in Rumania and Egypt and three years prior to his death, he received an appointment to the College of France.

Foucault, Michel (1926-1984). Foucault was born in Poiters, France, and was educated at the Ecole Normale Superieure and the University of Paris. He taught in the philosophy department at the University of Clermont-Ferrand from 1962 to 1968. From 1968 to 1970, he was professor at the University of Paris-Vincennes and subsequently became professor of the history and systems of thought at the College de France in Paris.

Gouldner, Alvin (1920-1980). Gouldner, a prominent sociologist and educator, received his B.A. from Bernard Baruch College in 1941. He received his Ph.D. in 1953 from Columbia University. From 1954 to 1959, Gouldner taught at the University of Illinois at Urbana. Thereafter, he was a professor of sociology at Washington University in St. Louis, where he remained until his death. He was founder and editor of Transaction and was a co-founder and editor-in-chief of Theory and Society.

Habermas, Jurgen (1929- ). Habermas was born in Dusseldorf, Germany. Educated at the Universities of Gottingen, Bonn, Zurich, and Marburg, he is the most prominent heir of the school of Critical Theory associated with the Frankfurt School. In the late 1950s, he was an assistant researcher at the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt. In 1961, he was appointed professor of philosophy at Heidelberg, and three years later became professor of philosophy and sociology at the University of Frankfurt. During the 1970s, he was director of the Max Plank Institute.

Kuhn, Thomas (1922- ). Kuhn was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and received his B.A. and his Ph.D. in physics from Harvard University. He has taught at Berkeley, Boston, Harvard, and Princeton Universities. At present he teaches at MIT.


Quine, Willard Van Orman (1908- ). Quine was born in Ohio into a middle-class American family. His autobiography, The Time of My Life (1985), describes his happy childhood in Akron. He received his B.A. from Oberlin College in 1930. Four years later, he received a Ph.D. from Harvard University where his supervisor was the British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. Quine became a Junior Fellow of the Society of Fellows at Harvard from 1933 to 1936, an
instructor from 1936 to 1941, and an associate professor from 1941 to 1948. In
1948, Quine was made full professor at Harvard.

Rawls, John Boardley (1921- ). Rawls was born in Baltimore, Maryland. He
studied at Princeton University and received his Ph.D. there in 1950. After
completing his doctorate, he stayed at Princeton for two years as an instructor.
He then taught at Cornell University and became a full professor there in 1962.
Since 1976, Rawls has been the John Cowles Professor in the department of
philosophy at Harvard University.

Rorty, Richard (1931- ). Rorty was born in New York City and educated at the
University of Chicago and Yale University. He taught at Yale (1955-1957),
Wellesley College (1958-1961), and Princeton University (1961-1982) before
becoming professor of humanities at the University of Virginia in 1982. Most
recently, he has been awarded the MacArthur and Guggenheim fellowships.

Bibliography

Essential Reading:


Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.


Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Minneapolis: University


Quine, W. V. *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*. New York: Columbia


Rorty, Richard. *Consequences of Pragmatism*. Minneapolis: University of
Minnesota, 1982.


Supplementary Reading:

Alejandro, Roberto. *The Limits of Rawlsian Justice*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins


Gutting, Gary. *Foucault’s Archaeology: Science and the History of Reason*.


