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HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY: COURSE BRIEFLY

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Подано розгляд історичного розвитку в західній філософії від античності до сучасності. Виділено найважливіші проблеми й ідеї у генезі філософського мислення від появи філософського знання до осмислення сучасних проблем глобалізації. Для перевірки знань кожний розділ завершується питаннями для самоконтролю. Для поглиблення знань до кожного розділу пропонується список літератури, рекомендованої до читання.

Навчальний посібник може бути використаний для вивчення курсу філософії англомовними студентами і аспірантами всіх напрямів і спеціальностей навчання.

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This teaching aid is assigned for studying course of philosophy for english-speaking students. Teaching material offers a narrative survey of the historical development basically of Western Philosophy from Ancient to Modernity and covers the most important ideas and problems in genesis of philosophical thinking from the appearance of philosophical knowledge to the understanding of contemporary issues of globalization. Tutorial contains questions for self-testing and list of suggested reading in the end of each part.

The book can be used by undergraduate and postgraduate students in all fields and professions.

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INTRODUCTION

Every of us may be tempted to ask, «Well, what of it?» Do we really need philosophy? Is it really necessary for us to bother about complicated questions of science and philosophy? To such a question, two replies are possible. If what is meant is: do we need to know about such things in order to go about our daily life, then the answer is evidently no. But if we wish to gain a rational understanding of the world in which we live, and the fundamental processes at work in nature, society and our own way of thinking, then matters appear in quite a different light.

Strangely enough, everyone has a «philosophy». For a philosophy is a way of looking at the world. We all believe we know how to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad. These are, however, very complicated issues which have occupied the attention of the greatest minds in history.

Philosophy is a controversial subject which deals with the most fundamental aspects of reality and value. Every area of inquiry and endeavour – from physics and mathematics through to art and history – generates philosophical problems.

So, Philosophy is the science about the most general tends and study of general and fundamental problems, such as those connected with existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind.

And if subject of privat scince is narrow slices of the studying, in the same time the subject of philosophy is the whole reality. Ordinary sciences pay attention to distinct things, but philosophy is aim to reflect links and interdependence different things. So plilosophy is researching in multidiscipline area and it uses special notes – categories. It means high level abstract sciense.

The word «philosophy» comes from the Greek φιλοσοφία (philosophia), which literally means «love of wisdom». This definition has given us the Pythagoras. And the other great Greek Heraclitus said that wisdom is when we all know as one.

So philosophy is the ability to know about the world in a holistic way.

1 STRUCTURE OF PHILOSOPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

Traditional parts of philosophy are ethics, metaphysics and logic. The Stoics were compared these parts with an egg or a garden, where the ethics is the fruits or the yolk, the metaphysic is white egg or trees, and logic is the shell or fence.

The modern parts of philosophy are the next branches: ontology, epistemology, logic, philosophy of history, history of philosophy, social philosophy, philosophy of science, ethics, aesthetics.

Epistemology – the study of the origins, nature & limitations of knowledge :

- empiricist – trace truth of propositions to observations & experience;
- sceptic – deny any knowledge is possible because our senses & reasons are so misleading;
- pragmatist – knowledge comes from practical action;
- rationalist – humans have innate ideas that are prior to experience & necessarily true.

Metaphysics – the search for reality beyond what we know from our senses:

- materialist – reality is what we can grasp with our hands;
- idealist – only ideas are real;
- monist – only one kind of stuff exists;
- dualist – two kinds exist – mind & matter;
- determinist – events are caused by other events & are predictable according to laws;
- libertarian – uncaused events exist – human free will.

Ethics – the study of how man should behave toward each other:

- existentialist – man's existence precedes his essential nature which is not given to him, but is made by him in the choice he makes;
- stoic – emphasise the practical aspect of philosophy as a guide to living, thus reason & not our desires should be our guide to action;
- hedonist – the only thing good in its own right is the experience of pleasure;
- utilitarian – measure the goodness of an act by its utility;
- deontologist – an action is right or wrong regardless of the value of its consequences;
- teleologist – the concept of good is more basic than right thus right action is determined by its consequences.

Logic – the study of the rules and methods of correct reasoning.

Aesthetics (also spelled æsthetics or esthetics) is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste, and with the creation and appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgments of sentiment and taste.

Philosophy of science is concerned with the assumptions, foundations, methods and implications of science. It is also concerned with the use and merit of science and sometimes overlaps metaphysics and epistemology by exploring whether scientific results are actually a study of truth. In addition to these central problems of science as a whole, many philosophers of science also consider problems that apply to particular sciences (e.g. philosophy of biology or philosophy of physics). Some philosophers of science also use contemporary results in science to reach conclusions about philosophy.Philosophy always should be a strong science and as a science requires the following procedure to be science such as conceptual, uncontradiction, sequence, consistency, validity, logical reasoning, proof, explicit links and interdependence between concepts.

Social philosophy is the philosophical study of questions about social behavior (typically, of humans). Social philosophy addresses a wide range of subjects, from individual meanings to legitimacy of laws, from the social contract to criteria for revolution, from the functions of everyday actions to the effects of science on culture, from changes in human demographics to the collective order of a wasp's nest. Social philosophy deals with the concept and principles regarding the society in relation to moral, spiritual and cultural standards. There is often a considerable overlap between the questions addressed by social philosophy and ethics or value theory. Other forms of social philosophy include political philosophy and jurisprudence, which are largely concerned with the societies of state and government and their functioning. Social philosophy, ethics, and political philosophy all share intimate connections with other disciplines in the social sciences. In turn, the social sciences themselves are of focal interest to the philosophy of social science.

We can comprise a numerous **functions of philosophy** but the two main of these are worldview and methodological.

Worldview helps us distinguish periods of philosophy and understand making contemporary age from past times. Methodological function controls changing paradigm in multidiscipline area.

Questions for self-testing:

1. What is philosophy in everyday consciousness?
2. What is particular of philosophy as a science?
3. How many periods of history of philosophy do you know?
4. Why do we need study philosophy today?

Recommended reading:

1. Nagel, Thomas. What Does It All Mean? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy, 1987.
2. Sinclair, Alistair J. What is Philosophy? An Introduction, 2008.

2 ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY

2.1 General information

This period is characterised by amazing discoverys and ideas that presented for us by harmony world of ancient philosophical schools and significant persons. Ancient Greek philosophy arose in the 6th century BC. This period consist of: Pre-Socratic philosophy, Classical Greek philosophy, Hellenistic philosophy.

Pre-Socratic philosophy:

1. Milesian School: Thales (624 BC–ca. 546 BC), Anaximander (610–546 BC), Anaximenes of Miletus (c. 585–c. 525 BC).
2. Pythagoras (582–496 BC), Pythagoreans: Philolaus (470–380 BC), Alcmaeon of Croton.
3. Heraclitus (535–475 BC).
4. Eleatic School: Xenophanes (570–470 BC), Parmenides (510–440 BC), Zeno of Elea (490–430 BC), Melissus of Samos (c 470 BC–unknown).
5. Pluralists: Empedocles (490–430 BC), Anaxagoras (500–428 BC).
6. Atomists: Leucippus (first half of 5th century BC), Democritus (460–370 BC).
7. Sophists: Protagoras (490–420 BC), Gorgias (487–376 BC), Antiphon (480–411 BC), Prodicus (465/450–after 399 BC), Hippias (middle of the 5th century BC), Thrasymachus (459–400 BC), Callicles, Critias, Lycophron, Diogenes of Apollonia (c. 460 BC–unknown).
8. Euclid of Megara (450–380 BC), Antisthenes (445–360 BC), Aristippus (435–356 BC).

Classical Greek philosophers:

1. Socrates (469–399 BC).
2. Plato (428–347 BC).
3. Aristotle (384–322 BC).

Hellenistic schools of thought:

1. Cynicism: Diogenes of Sinope (400–325 BC), Xenocrates (396–314 BC).
2. Neo-Platonism: Plotinus (AD 204–270), Proclus (AD 412–485).
3. Stoicism: Zeno of Citium (333–263 BC), Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC), Marcus Aurelius (AD 121–180), Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC–AD 65).
4. Skepticism: Pyrrho (365–275 BC).
5. Epicureanism: Epicurus (341–270 BC).

2.2 Pre-Socratic philosophy

2.2.1 Milesian Speculation

The first philosopher was Thales who impressed contemporaries that for the first time began to prove their knowledge. He said that all comes from water. It was a big win because, in contrast to the mythology period thinkers began to look for causes of nature in the nature.

Why water like the pre matter? May be most of the earth is covered with it, it appears in solid, liquid, and gaseous forms, and it is clearly essential to the existence of life. More important circumstance is that period of rational discussion was started.

Followers paid proper attention to the changing face of the universe, they supposed a great variety of philosophical views on the arrangement of the universe and represented a lot of guesswork and assumptions.

Among them Anaximander who sad about changing face of the universe, he supposed, requires us to consider the cyclical interaction of things of at least four sorts: the hot, the cold, the dry, and the wet. Anaximander held that all of these elements originally arise from a primal, turbulent mass, the Boundless, or the Infinite (Gk. apeirôn). It is only by a gradual process of distillation that everything else emerges – earth, air, fire, water, of course – and even living things evolve.

The next Milesian, Anaximenes returned to the conviction that there must be a single kind of stuff at the heart of everything, and he proposed vapor or mist as the most likely candidate. Not only does this warm, wet air combine two of the four elements together, but it also provides a familiar pair of processes for changes in its state: condensation and evaporation. Thus, in its most rarified form of breath or spirit, Anaximenes's air constitutes the highest representation of life.

2.2.2 Pythagoras

Pythagoras is one of the most remarkable figure in the history of mankind. He invented name for philosophy. His name means life style for many followers. Life is union of truth, goodness and beauty.

The aim of human life, then, must be to live in harmony with this natural regularity. Our lives are merely small portions of a greater whole. Pythagoras supposed, it is naturally immortal; its existence naturally outlives the relatively temporary functions of the human body. Pythagoreans therefore believed that the soul «transmigrates» into other living bodies at death, with animals and plants participating along with human beings in a grand cycle of reincarnation.

In each aspects of the world, Pythagoras saw order, a regularity of occurrences that could be described in terms of mathematical ratios. All is number for him.

2.2.3 Heraclitus and the Eleatics

Heraclitus of Ephesus earned his reputation as «the Riddler» by delivering his pronouncements in deliberately contradictory paradoxical form. The structure of puzzling statements, he believed, mirrors the chaotic structure of thought, which in turn is parallel to the complex, dynamic character of the world itself.

Rejecting the Pythagorean ideal of harmony as peaceful coexistence, Heraclitus saw the natural world as an environment of perpetual struggle and strife. «All is flux», he supposed; everything is changing all the time. As Heraclitus is often reported to have said, «Upon those who step into the same river, different waters flow». The tension and conflict which govern everything in our experience are moderated only by the operation of a universal principle of proportionality in all things.

Against this position, the Eleatics defended the unity and stability of the universe. Their leader, Parmenides supposed that language embodies a logic of perfect immutability: «What is, is». Since everything is what it is and not something else, he argued in (On Nature), it can never correct to say that one and the same thing both has and does not have some feature, so the supposed change from having the feature to not having it is utterly impossible. Of course, change does seem to occur, so we must distinguish sharply between the many mere appearances that are part of our experience and the one true reality that is discernible only by intellect.

Other Eleatics delighted in attacking Heraclitus with arguments designed to show the absurdity of his notion that the world is perpetual changing. Zeno of Elea in particular fashioned four **paradoxes about motion**, covering every possible combination of continuous or discrete intervals and the direct motion of single bodies or the relative motion of several:

1. **The Dichotomy**: It is impossible to move around a racetrack since we must first go halfway, and before that go half of halfway, and before that half of half of halfway, and . . . If space is infinitely divisible, we have infinitely many partial distances to cover, and cannot get under way in any finite time.

2. **Achilles and the Tortoise**: Similarly, given a ten meter head-start, a tortoise can never be overtaken by Achilles in a race, since Achilles must catch up to where the tortoise began. But by then the tortoise has moved ahead, and Achilles must catch up to that new point, and so on. Again, the suppostition that things really move leads to an infinite regress.

3. **The Arrow**: If, on the other hand, motion occurs in discrete intervals, then at any given moment during its flight through the air, an arrow is not moving. But since its entire flight comprises only such moments, the arrow never moves.

4. **The Stadium**: Similarly, if three chariots of equal length, one stationary and the others travelling in opposite directions, were to pass by each other at the same time, then each of the supposedly moving ones would take only half as long to pass the other as to pass the third, making 1=2!

The patent absurdity that results in each of these cases, Zeno concluded, shows that motion (and, hence, change of any sort) is impossible.

What all of this raises is the question of «the one and the many». How can there be any genuine unity in a world that appears to be multiple? To the extent that a satisfactory answer involves a distinction between appearance and reality and the use of dialectical reasoning in the effort to understand what is real, this pursuit of the Eleatics set important standards for the future development of Western thought.

2.2.4 Empedocles and Anaxagoras

In the next generation, Empedocles introduced the plurality from the very beginning. Everything in the world, he supposed, is ultimately made up of some mixture of the four elements, considered as irreducible components. The unique character of each item depends solely upon the special balance of the four that is present only in it. Change takes place because there are two competing forces at work in the world. Love is always putting things together, while strife is always tearing them apart. The interplay of the two constitutes the activity we see in nature.

His rival, Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, returned in some measure to the Milesian effort to identify a common stuff out of which everything is composed. Matter is, indeed, a chaotic primordial mass, infinitely divisible in principle, yet in which nothing is differentiated. But Anaxagoras held that order is brought to this mass by the power of Mind, the source of all explanation by reference to cosmic intelligence.

Although later philosophers praised Anaxagoras for this explicit introduction of mind into the description of the world, it is not clear whether he meant by his use of this word what they would suppose.

2.2.5 Greek Atomism

The inclination to regard the world as pluralistic took its most extreme form in the work of the ancient atomists. Although the basic outlines of the view were apparently developed by Leucippus, the more complete exposition by Democritus, including a discussion of its ethical implications, was more influential. Our best source of information about the atomists is the poem On the Nature of Things by the later Roman philosopher Lucretius.

For the atomists, all substance is material and the true elements of the natural world are the tiny, indivisible, unobservable solid bodies called «atoms». Since these particles exist, packed more or less densely together, in an infinite empty space, their motion is not only possible but ineveitable. Everything that happens in the world, the atomists supposed, is a result of microscopic collisions among atoms.

Thus, as Epicurus would later make clear, the actions and passions of human life are also inevitable consequences of material motions. Although atomism has a decidedly modern ring, notice that, since it could not be based on observation of microscopic particles in the way that modern science is, ancient atomism was merely another fashionable form of cosmological speculation.

2.2.6 Epicurus

Epicurus was born in the Greek colony on Samos, but spent most of his active life in Athens, where he founded yet another school of philosophy. At «the Garden» Epicurus and his friends lived out their ideals for human life, talking about philosophical issues but deliberately detaching themselves from active involvement in social affairs. All objects and events — including human lives — are in reality nothing more than physical interactions among minute indestructible particles. As they fall toward the center of the earth, atoms swerve from their paths to collide with each other and form temporary compound beings. There is no necessity about any of this, of course; everything happens purely by chance. In his Letter to Menoeceus and Principle Doctrines, Epicurus discussed the consequences of this view for the human attempt to achieve happiness. Since death is a total annihilation that cannot be experienced, in our present lives we need only live a simple life and seek always to avoid physical pain. It is pleasure, understood in this negative sense, that is the highest good for Epicurus. Freedom from mental disturbance (Gk. ataraxia) is the very most for which one can hope.

Very interesting is Epicurean ethics. Philosophy was described by Epicurus as «the art of making life happy», and he says that «prudence is the noblest part of philosophy«. His natural philosophy and epistemology seem to have been adopted for the sake of his theory of life. It is, therefore, proper that his ethics should first be explained. The purpose of life, according to Epicurus, is personal happiness; and by happiness he means not that state of well-being and perfection of which the consciousness is accompanied by pleasure, but pleasure itself. Moreover, this pleasure is sensuous, for it is such only as is attainable in this life. This pleasure is the immediate purpose of every action. «Habituate yourself», he says, to think that death is nothing to us; for all good and evil is in feeling; now death is the privation of feeling. Hence, the right knowledge that death is nothing to us makes us enjoy what there is in this life, not adding to it an indefinite duration, but eradicating the desire of immortality.

His idea of the pleasurable differs from that of the Cyrenaic School which preceded him. The Cyrenaics looked to the momentary pleasures of gaiety and excitement. The pleasure of Epicurus is a state, equably diffused, «the absence of [bodily] pain and [mental] anxiety». That which begets the pleasurable life is not [sensual indulgence] but a sober reason which searches for the grounds of choosing and rejecting, and which banishes those doctrines through which mental trouble, for the most part, arises.

The wise man will accordingly desire «not the longest life, but the most pleasurable». It is for the sake of this condition of permanent pleasure, or tranquillity, that the virtues are desirable. «We cannot live pleasurably without living prudently, gracefully, and justly; and we cannot live prudently gracefully, and justly, without living pleasurably» in consequence; for «the virtues are by nature united with a pleasurable life; and a pleasurable life cannot be separated from these». The virtues, in short, are to be practiced not for their own sake, but solely as a means of pleasure, «as medicine is used for the sake of health». In accordance with this view, he says that «friendship is to be pursued by the wise man only for its utility; but he will begin, as he sows the field in order to reap». «The wise man will not take any part in public affairs»; moreover, «the wise man will not marry and have children». But «the wise man will be humane to his slaves». «He will not think all sinners to be equally bad, nor all philosophers to be equally good». That is, apparently, he will not have any very exacting standard, and will neither believe very much in human virtue, nor be very much surprised at the discovery of human frailty. In this system, «prudence is the source of all pleasure and of all virtue».

The defects of this theory of life are obvious. In the first place, as to the matter of fact, experience shows that happiness is not best attained by directly seeking it. The selfish are not more happy, but less so, than the unselfish. In the next place the theory altogether destroys virtue as virtue, and eliminates the idea and sentiment expressed by the words «ought», «duty», «right», and «wrong». Virtue indeed tends to produce the truest and, highest pleasure; all

such pleasure, so far as it depends upon ourselves, depends upon virtue. But he who practises virtue for the sake of the pleasure alone is selfish, not virtuous, and he will never enjoy the pleasure, because he has not the virtue. A similar observation may be made upon the Epicurean theory of friendship. Friendship for the sake of advantage is not true friendship in the proper sense of the word. External actions, apart from affection, cannot constitute friendship; that affection no one can feel merely because he judges it would be advantageous and pleasurable; in fact he cannot know the pleasure until he first feels the affection. If we consider the Epicurean condemnation of patriotism and of the family life, we must pronounce a still severer censure. Such a view of life is the meanest form of selfishness leading in general to vice. Epicurus, perhaps, was better than his theory; but the theory itself, if it did not originate in coldness of heart and meanness of spirit, was extremely well suited to encourage them. If sincerely embraced and consistently carried out, it undermined all that was chivalrous and heroic, and even all that was ordinarily virtuous. Fortitude and justice, as such, ceased to be objects of admiration, and temperance sank into a mere matter of calculation. Even prudence itself, dissociated from all moral quality became a mere balancing between the pleasures of the present and of the future.

2.2.7 The Sophists

Fifth-century Athens was a politically troubled city-state: it underwent a sequence of external attacks and internal rebellions that no social entity could envy. During several decades, however, the Athenians maintained a nominally democratic government in which (at least some) citizens had the opportunity to participate directly in important social decisions. This contributed to a renewed interest in practical philosophy. Itinerate teachers known as the sophists offered to provide their students with training in the effective exercise of citizenship.

Since the central goal of political manipulation was to outwit and publicly defeat an opponent, the rhetorical techniques of persuasion naturally played an important role. But the best of the Sophists also made use of Eleatic methods of logical argumentation in pursuit of similar aims. Driven by the urge to defend expedient solutions to particular problems, their efforts often encouraged relativism or evan an extreme skepticism about the likelihood of discovering the truth.

A Sophist named Gorgias, for example, argued (perhaps ironically) that:

1. Nothing exists;
2. If it did, we could not know it;
3. If we knew anything, we could not talk about it.

Protagoras, on the other hand, supposed that since human beings are «the measure of all things», it follows that truth is subjectively unique to each individual. In a more political vein, Thrasymachus argued that it is better to perform unjust actions than to be the victim of the injustice committed by others. The ideas and methods of these thinkers provided the lively intellectual environment in which the greatest Athenian philosophers thrived.

2.3 Classical Greek philosophy

2.3.1 Socrates

The most interesting and influential thinker in the fifth century was Socrates (469-399 BC), whose dedication to careful reasoning transformed the entire enterprise. Since he sought genuine knowledge rather than mere victory over an opponent, Socrates employed the same logical tricks developed by the Sophists to a new purpose, the pursuit of truth. Thus, his willingness to call everything into question and his determination to accept nothing less than an adequate account of the nature of things make him the first clear exponent of critical philosophy.

Although he was well known during his own time for his conversational skills and public teaching, Socrates wrote nothing, so we are dependent upon his students

In his use of critical reasoning, by his unwavering commitment to truth, and through the vivid example of his own life, fifth-century Athenian Socrates set the standard for all subsequent Western philosophy. Since he left no literary legacy of his own, we are dependent upon contemporary writers like Aristophanes and Xenophon for our information about his life and work. As a pupil of Archelaus during his youth, Socrates showed a great deal of interest in the scientific theories of Anaxagoras, but he later abandoned inquiries into the physical world for a dedicated investigation of the development of moral character. Having served with some distinction as a soldier at Delium and Amphipolis during the Peloponnesian War, Socrates dabbled in the political turmoil that consumed Athens after the War, then retired from active life to work as a stonemason and to raise his children with his wife, Xanthippe. After inheriting a modest fortune from his father, the sculptor Sophroniscus, Socrates used his marginal financial independence as an opportunity to give full-time attention to inventing the practice of philosophical dialogue.

Our best sources of information about Socrates's philosophical views are the early dialogues of his student Plato, who attempted there to provide a faithful picture of the methods and teachings of the master. Although Socrates also appears as a character in the later dialogues of Plato, these writings more often express philosophical positions Plato himself developed long after

Socrates's death. In the Socratic dialogues, his extended conversations with students, statesmen, and friends invariably aim at understanding and achieving virtue through the careful application of a dialectical method that employs critical inquiry to undermine the plausibility of widely-held doctrines. Destroying the illusion that we already comprehend the world perfectly and honestly accepting the fact of our own ignorance, Socrates believed, are vital steps toward our acquisition of genuine knowledge, by discovering universal definitions of the key concepts governing human life.

The Socrates of the Meno tries to determine whether or not virtue can be taught, and this naturally leads to a careful investigation of the nature of virtue itself. Although his direct answer is that virtue is unteachable, Socrates does propose the doctrine of recollection to explain why we nevertheless are in possession of significant knowledge about such matters. Most remarkably, Socrates argues here that knowledge and virtue are so closely related that no human agent ever knowingly does evil: we all invariably do what we believe to be best. Improper conduct, then, can only be a product of our ignorance rather than a symptom of weakness of the will (Gk. akrásia). The same view is also defended in the Protagoras, along with the belief that all of the virtues must be cultivated together.

2.3.2 Plato

Plato (427-347 BC) began his philosophical career as a student of Socrates. When the master died, Plato travelled to Egypt and Italy, studied with students of Pythagoras, and spent several years advising the ruling family of Syracuse. Eventually, he returned to Athens and established his own school of philosophy at the Academy.

Plato employed the conversational structure as a way of presenting dialectic, a pattern of argumentation that examines each issue from several sides, exploring the interplay of alternative ideas while subjecting all of them to evaluation by reason.

Plato was a more nearly systematic thinker than Socrates had been. He established his own school of philosophy, the Academy, during the fourth century, and he did not hesitate to offer a generation of young Athenians the positive results of his brilliant reasoning. Although he shared Socrates's interest in ethical and social philosophy, Plato was much more concerned to establish his views on matters of metaphysics and epistemology, trying to discover the ultimate constituents of reality and the grounds for our knowledge of them.

Early dialogues are typically devoted to investigation of a single issue, about which a conclusive result is rarely achieved. Thus, the Euthyphro raises a significant doubt about whether morally right action can be defined in terms of divine approval by pointing out a significant dilemma about any appeal to

authority in defence of moral judgments. The Apology offers a description of the philosophical life as Socrates presented it in his own defense before the Athenian jury. The Crito uses the circumstances of Socrates's imprisonment to ask whether an individual citizen is ever justified in refusing to obey the state.

Although they continue to use the talkative Socrates as a fictional character, the middle dialogues of Plato develop, express, and defend his own, more firmly established, conclusions about central philosophical issues. Beginning with the Meno, for example, Plato not only reports the Socratic notion that no one knowingly does wrong, but also introduces the doctrine of recollection in an attempt to discover whether or not virtue can be taught. The Phaedo continues development of Platonic notions by presenting the doctrine of the Forms in support of a series of arguments that claim to demonstrate the immortality of the human soul.

Plato's Meno is a transitional dialogue: although it is Socratic in tone, it introduces some of the epistemological and metaphysical themes that we will see developed more fully in the middle dialogues, which are clearly Plato's own. In a setting uncluttered by concern for Socrates's fate, it centers on the general problem of the origins of our moral knowledge.

The Greek notion of areth, or virtue, is that of an ability or skill in some particular respect. The virtue of a baker is what enables the baker to produce good bread; the virtue of the gardener is what enables the gardener to grow nice flowers; etc. In this sense, virtues clearly differ from person to person and from goal to goal. But Socrates is interested in true virtue, which (like genuine health) should be the same for everyone. This broad concept of virtue may include such specific virtues as courage, wisdom, or moderation, but it should nevertheless be possible to offer a perfectly general description of virtue as a whole, the skill or ability to be fully human. But what is that?

When Meno suggests that virtue is simply the desire for good things, Socrates argues that this cannot be the case. Since different human beings are unequal in virtue, virtue must be something that varies among them, he argues, but desire for one believes to be good is perfectly universal. Since no human being ever knowingly desires what is bad, differences in their conduct must be a consequence of differences in what they know. This is a remarkable claim. Socrates holds that knowing what is right automatically results in the desire to do it, even though this feature of our moral experience could be doubted. In this context, however, the Socratic position effectively shifts the focus of the dialogue from morality to epistemology: the question really at stake is how we know what virtue is.

2.3.2.1 Theory of forms

Plato supposed, are competent to judge between what merely seems to be the case and what really is, between the misleading, transient appearances

of sensible objects and the the permanent reality of unchanging, abstract forms. Thus, the theory of forms is central to Plato's philosophy once again: the philosophers who think about such things are not idle dreamers, but the true realists in a society. It is precisely their detachment from the realm of sensory images that renders them capable of making accurate judgments about the most important issues of human life.

The highest goal in all of education, Plato believed, is knowledge of the Good; that is, not merely an awareness of particular benefits and pleasures, but acquaintance with the Form itself. Just as the sun provides illumination by means of which we are able to perceive everything in the visual world, he argued, so the Form of the Good provides the ultimate standard by means of which we can apprehend the reality of everything that has value. Objects are worthwhile to the extent that they participate in this crucial form.

So, too, our apprehension of reality occurs in different degrees, depending upon the nature of the objects with which it is concerned in each case. Thus, there is a fundamental difference between the mere opinion (Gk. doxa) we can have regarding the visible realm of sensible objects and the genuine knowledge (Gk. epistêmê) we can have of the invisible realm of the Forms themselves. In fact, Plato held that each of these has two distinct varieties, so that we can picture the entire array of human cognition as a line divided proportionately into four segments.

At the lowest level of reality are shadows, pictures, and other images, with respect to which imagination (Gk. eikásia) or conjecture is the appropriate degree of awareness, although it provides only the most primitive and unreliable opinions.

The visible realm also contains ordinary physical objects, and our perception of them provides the basis for belief (Gk. pístis), the most accurate possible conception of the nature and relationship of temporal things.

Moving upward into the intelligible realm, we first become acquainted with the relatively simple Forms of numbers, shapes, and other mathematical entities; we can achieve systematic knowledge of these objects through a disciplined application of the understanding (Gk. diánoia).

Finally, at the highest level of all, are the more significant Forms – true Equality, Beauty, Truth, and of course the Good itself. These permanent objects of knowledge are directly apprehended by intuition (Gk. nóêsis), the fundamental capacity of human reason to comprehend the true nature of reality.

2.3.2.2 The allegory of the cave

Plato recognized that the picture of the Divided Line may be difficult for many of us to understand. Although it accurately represents the different levels of reality and corresponding degrees of knowledge, there is a sense in which

one cannot appreciate its full significance without first having achieved the highest level. So, for the benefit of those of us who are still learning but would like to grasp what he is talking about, Plato offered a simpler story in which each of the same structural components appears in a way that we can all comprehend at our own level. This is the Allegory of the cave.

Suppose that there is a group of human beings who have lived their entire lives trapped in a subterranean chamber lit by a large fire behind them. Chained in place, these cave-dwellers can see nothing but shadows (of their own bodies and of other things) projected on a flat wall in front of them. Some of these people will be content to do no more than notice the play of light and shadow, while the more clever among them will become highly skilled observers of the patterns that most regularly occur. In both cases, however, they cannot truly comprehend what they see, since they are prevented from grasping its true source and nature.

Now suppose that one of these human beings manages to break the chains, climb through the torturous passage to the surface, and escape the cave. With eyes accustomed only to the dim light of the former habitation, this individual will at first be blinded by the brightness of the surface world, able to look only upon the shadows and reflections of the real world.

But after some time and effort, the former cave-dweller will become able to appreciate the full variety of the newly-discovered world, looking at trees, mountains, and (eventually) the sun itself.

Finally, suppose that this escapee returns to the cave, trying to persuade its inhabitants that there is another, better, more real world than the one in which they have so long been content to dwell. They are unlikely to be impressed by the pleas of this extraordinary individual, Plato noted, especially since their former companion, having travelled to the bright surface world, is now inept and clumsy in the dim realm of the cave.

Nevertheless, it would have been in the best interest of these residents of the cave to entrust their lives to the one enlightened member of their company, whose acquaintance with other things is a unique qualification for genuine knowledge.

Plato seriously intended this allegory as a representation of the state of ordinary human existence. We, like the people raised in a cave, are trapped in a world of impermanence and partiality, the realm of sensible objects.

Entranced by the particular and immediate experiences these things provide, we are unlikely to appreciate the declarations of philosophers, the few among us who, like the escapee, have made the effort to achieve eternal knowledge of the permanent forms.

But, like them, it would serve us best if we were to follow this guidance, discipline our own minds, and seek an accurate understanding of the highest objects of human contemplation.

2.3.2.3 Doctrine of recollection

How can we ever learn what we do not know? Either we already know what we are looking for, in which case we don't need to look, or we don't know what we're looking for, in which case we wouldn't recognize it if we found it. The paradox of knowledge is that, in the most fundamental questions about our own nature and function, it seems impossible for us to learn anything. Plato's conviction that our most basic knowledge comes when we bring back to mind our acquaintance with eternal realities during a previous existence of the soul.

2.3.2.4 The nature of love

In other dialogues, Plato exhibited greater interest in elements of human nature that are strictly subordinate to the rational soul in Phaedo and The Republic. Sharing the same general theory of human nature, the Phaedrus treats love as a (divine) madness, a natural, if not wholly desirable, emotional imbalance. But the diverse speeches delivered in Plato's Symposium offer several more favorable accounts of human emotion in general and of love in particular. The Ion grants some value to the role of art as a copy or imitation of sensible things, which are themselves merely copies of the immutable forms.

2.3.2.5 The forms

Plato believed that the same point could be made with regard to many other abstract concepts: even though we perceive only their imperfect instances, we have genuine knowledge of truth, goodness, and beauty no less than of equality. Things of this sort are the Platonic Forms, abstract entities that exist independently of the sensible world. Ordinary objects are imperfect and changeable, but they faintly copy the perfect and immutable Forms. Thus, all of the information we acquire about sensible objects (like knowing what the high and low temperatures were yesterday) is temporary, insignificant, and unreliable, while genuine knowledge of the Forms themselves (like knowing that 93 – 67 = 26) perfectly certain forever.

The masterpiece among the middle dialogues is Plato's Politeia (Republic). It begins with a Socratic conversation about the nature of justice but proceeds directly to an extended discussion of the virtues (Gk. aretê) of justice (Gk. dikaiôsunê]), wisdom (Gk. sophía), courage (Gk. andreia), and moderation (Gk. sophrosúnê) as they appear both in individual human beings and in society as a whole. This plan for the ideal society or person requires detailed accounts of human knowledge and of the kind of educational program by which it may be achieved by men and women alike, captured in a powerful

image of the possibilities for human life in the allegory of the cave. The dialogue concludes with a review of various forms of government, an explicit description of the ideal state, in which only philosophers are fit to rule, and an attempt to show that justice is better than injustice. Among the other dialogues of this period are Plato's treatments of human emotion in general and of love in particular in the Phaedrus and Symposium.

Plato's later writings often modify or completely abandon the formal structure of dialogue. They include a critical examination of the theory of forms in Parmenides, an extended discussion of the problem of knowledge in Theaetetus, cosmological speculations in Timaeus, and an interminable treatment of government in the unfinished Laws.

2.3.2.6 Reasons of society formation

Imagining their likely origins in the prehistorical past, Plato argued that societies are invariably formed for a particular purpose. Individual human beings are not self-sufficient; no one working alone can acquire all of the genuine necessities of life. In order to resolve this difficulty, we gather together into communities for the mutual achievement of our common goals.

This succeeds because we can work more efficiently if each of us specializes in the practice of a specific craft: I make all of the shoes; you grow all of the vegetables; she does all of the carpentry; etc. Thus, Plato held that separation of functions and specialization of labor are the keys to the establishment of a worthwhile society.

The result of this original impulse is a society composed of many individuals, organized into distinct classes (clothiers, farmers, builders, etc.) according to the value of their role in providing some component part of the common good. But the smooth operation of the whole society will require some additional services that become necessary only because of the creation of the social organization itself – the adjudication of disputes among members and the defense of the city against external attacks, for example.

Therefore, carrying the principle of specialization one step further, Plato proposed the establishment of an additional class of citizens, the **guardians** who are responsible for management of the society itself.

In fact, Plato held that effective social life requires guardians of two distinct sorts: there must be both **soldiers** whose function is to defend the state against external enemies and to enforce its laws, and **rulers** who resolve disagreements among citizens and make decisions about public policy. The guardians collectively, then, are those individuals whose special craft is just the task of governance itself.

2.3.2.7 The virtues in human souls

In addition to the physical body, which corresponds to the land, buildings, and other material resources of a city, Plato held that every human being includes three souls (Gk. psychê) that correspond to the three classes of citizen within the state, each of them contributing in its own way to the successful operation of the whole person.

The **rational soul** (mind or intellect) is the thinking portion within each of us, which discerns what is real and not merely apparent, judges what is true and what is false, and wisely makes the rational decisions in accordance with which human life is most properly lived.

The **spirited soul** (will or volition), on the other hand, is the active portion; its function is to carry out the dictates of reason in practical life, courageously doing whatever the intellect has determined to be best.

Finally, the **appetitive soul** (emotion or desire) is the portion of each of us that wants and feels many things, most of which must be deferred in the face of rational pursuits if we are to achieve a salutary degree of self-control.

In the Phaedrus, Plato presented this theory even more graphically, comparing the rational soul to a charioteer whose vehicle is drawn by two horses, one powerful but unruly (desire) and the other disciplined and obedient (will).

On Plato's view, then, an human being is properly said to be just when the three souls perform their proper functions in harmony with each other, working in consonance for the good of the person as a whole.

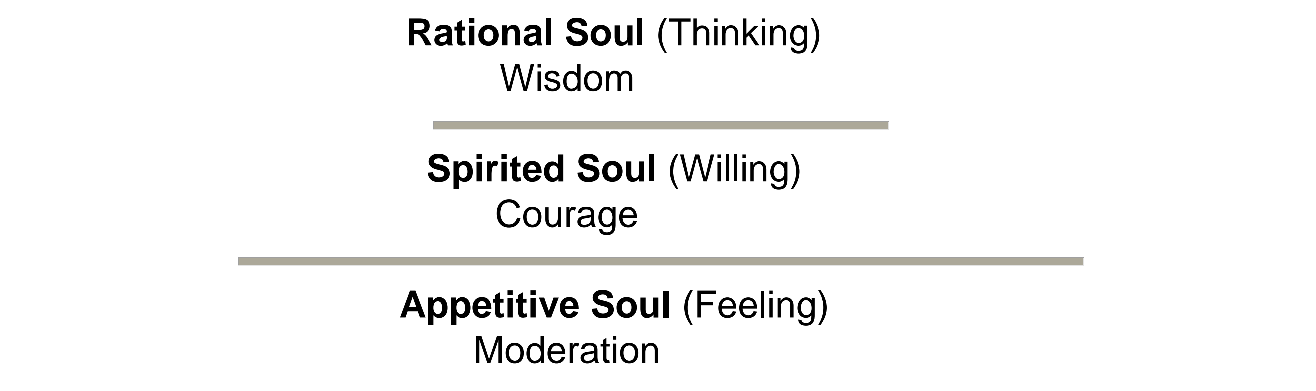

Figure 2.1 – Structure of the human soul, according to Plato

As in a well-organized state, the justice of an individual human being emerges only from the interrelationship among its separate components.

Plato's account of a tripartite division within the self has exerted an enormous influence on the philosophy of human nature in the Western

tradition. Although few philosophers whole-heartedly adopt his hypostasization of three distinct souls, nearly everyone acknowledges some differentiation among the functions of thinking, willing, and feeling. Even in The Wizard of Oz, Dorothy's quest depends upon the cooperation of her three friends – Scarecrow, Lion, and Tin Woodsman – each of whom exemplifies one of the three aspects of human nature. Perhaps any adequate view of human life requires some explanation or account (Gk. logos) of how we incorporate intellect, volition, and desire in the whole of our existence.

In the context of his larger argument, Plato's theory of human nature provides the foundation for another answer to the question of why justice is better than injustice.

On the view developed here, true justice is a kind of good health, attainable only through the harmonious cooperative effort of the three souls. In an unjust person, on the other hand, the disparate parts are in perpetual turmoil, merely coexisting with each other in an unhealthy, poorly-functioning, dis-integrated personality. Plato developed this theme in greater detail in the final books of The Republic.

2.3.2.8 Specific virtues

Having developed a general description of the structure of an ideal society, Plato maintained that the proper functions performed by its disparate classes, working together for the common good, provide a ready account of the need to develop significant social qualities or virtues.

Since the rulers are responsible for making decisions according to which the entire city will be governed, they must have the virtue of **wisdom**, the capacity to comprehend reality and to make impartial judgments about it.

Soldiers charged with the defense of the city against external and internal enemies, on the other hand, need the virtue of **courage**, the willingness to carry out their orders in the face of danger without regard for personal risk.

The rest of the people in the city must follow its leaders instead of pursuing their private interests, so they must exhibit the virtue of **moderation**, the subordination of personal desires to a higher purpose.

When each of these classes performs its own role appropriately and does not try to take over the function of any other class, Plato held, the entire city as a whole will operate smoothly, exhibiting the harmony that is genuine justice.

We can therefore understand all of the cardinal virtues by considering how each is embodied in the organization of an ideal city.

Rulers
Wise Decisions

Soldiers
Courageous Actions

Farmers, Merchants, and other People
(Moderated Desires)

Figure 2.2 – Structure of the ideal society, according to Plato

Justice itself is not the exclusive responsibility of any one class of citizens, but emerges from the harmonious interrelationship of each component of the society with every other.

2.3.2.9 Kinds of state or person

In order to explain the distinction between justice and injustice more fully, Plato devoted much of the remainder of The Republic to a detailed discussion of five different kinds of government (and, by analogy, five different kinds of person), ranked in order from best to worst:

A society organized in the ideally efficient way Plato has already described is said to have an **aristocratic** government. Similarly, an aristocratic person is one whose rational, spirited, and appetitive souls work together properly. Such governments and people are the most genuine examples of true justice at the social and personal levels.

In a defective **timocratic** society, on the other hand, the courageous soldiers have usurped for themselves the privilege of making decisions that properly belongs only to its better-educated rulers. A timocratic person is therefore someone who is more concerned with belligerently defending personal honor than with wisely choosing what is truly best.

In an **oligarchic** government, both classes of guardian have been pressed into the service of a ruling group comprising a few powerful and wealthy citizens. By analogy, an oligarchic personality is someone whose every thought and action is devoted to the self-indulgent goal of amassing greater wealth.

Even more disastrously, a **democratic** government holds out the promise of equality for all of its citizens but delivers only the anarchy of an unruly mob, each of whose members is interested only in the pursuit of private interests. The parallel case of a democratic person is someone who is utterly controlled by desires, acknowledging no bounds of taste or virtue in the

perpetual effort to achieve the momentary satisfaction that pleasure provides.

Finally, the **tyrranic** society is one in which a single individual has gained control over the mob, restoring order to place of anarchy, but serving only personal welfare instead of the interests of the whole city. A tyrranic person, then, must be one whose entire life is focussed upon the satisfaction of a single desire at the expense of everything else that truly matters. Governments and people of this last variety are most perfectly unjust, even though they may appear to be well-organized and effective.

Although Plato presents these five types of government or person as if there is a natural progression from each to the next, his chief concern is to exhibit the relative degree of justice achieved by each. The most perfect contrast between justice and injustice arises in a comparison between the aristocratic and the tyrranic instances.

2.3.3 Aristotle

Born at Stagira in northern Greece, Aristotle (384-322 BC) was the most notable product of the educational program devised by Plato; he spent twenty years of his life studying at the Academy. When Plato died, Aristotle returned to his native Macedonia, where he is supposed to have participated in the education of Philip's son, Alexander (the Great). He came back to Athens with Alexander's approval in 335 and established his own school at the Lyceum, spending most of the rest of his life engaged there in research, teaching, and writing. His students acquired the name «peripatetics» from the master's habit of strolling about as he taught. Although the surviving works of Aristotle probably represent only a fragment of the whole, they include his investigations of an amazing range of subjects, from logic, philosophy, and ethics to physics, biology, psychology, politics, and rhetoric. Aristotle appears to have thought through his views as he wrote, returning to significant issues at different stages of his own development. The result is less a consistent system of thought than a complex record of Aristotle's thinking about many significant issues.

The aim of Aristotle's logical treatises (known collectively as the Organon) was to develop a universal method of reasoning by means of which it would be possible to learn everything there is to know about reality. Thus, the Categories proposes a scheme for the description of particular things in terms of their properties, states, and activities. On Interpretation, Prior Analytics, and Posterior Analytics examine the nature of deductive inference, outlining the system of syllogistic reasoning from true propositions that later came to be known as categorical logic. Though not strictly one of the logical works, the Physics contributes to the universal method by distinguishing among the four causes which may be used to explain everything, with special concern for why things are the way they are and the apparent role of chance in

the operation of the world. In other treatises, Aristotle applied this method, with its characteristic emphasis on teleological explanation, to astronomical and biological explorations of the natural world

In Metaphysics Aristotle tried to justify the entire enterprise by grounding it all in an abstract study of being qua being. Although Aristotle rejected the Platonic theory of forms, he defended his own vision of ultimate reality, including the eternal existence of substance. On The Soul uses the notion of a hylomorphic composite to provide a detailed account of the functions exhibited by living things – vegetable, animal, and human – and explains the use of sensation and reason to achieve genuine knowledge. That Aristotle was interested in more than a strictly scientific exploration of human nature is evident from the discussion of literary art (particularly tragedy) in Poetics and the methods of persuasion in the Rhetoric.

Aristotle made several efforts to explain how moral conduct contributes to the good life for human agents, including the Eudemian Ethics and the Magna Moralia, but the most complete surviving statement of his views on morality occurs in the Nicomachean Ethics. There he considered the natural desire to achieve happiness, described the operation of human volition and moral deliberation, developed a theory of each virtue as the mean between vicious extremes, discussed the value of three kinds of friendship, and defended his conception of an ideal life of intellectual pursuit.

But on Aristotle's view, the lives of individual human beings are invariably linked together in a social context. In the Politics he speculated about the origins of the state, described and assessed the relative merits of various types of government, and listed the obligations of the individual citizen. He may also have been the author of a model Constitution of Athens in which the abstract notion of constitutional government is applied to the concrete life of a particular society.

2.3.3.1 The four causes

Applying the principles developed in his logical treatises, Aristotle offered a general account of the operation of individual substances in the natural world. He drew a significant distinction between things of two sorts: those that move only when moved by something else and those that are capable of moving themselves. In separate treatises, Aristotle not only proposed a proper description of things of each sort but also attempted to explain why they function as they do.

Aristotle considered bodies and their externally-produced movement in the Physics. Three crucial distinctions determine the shape of this discussion of physical science. First, he granted from the outset that, because of the difference in their origins, we may need to offer different accounts for the functions of natural things and those of artifacts. Second, he insisted that we

clearly distinguish between the basic material and the form which jointly constitute the nature of any individual thing. Finally, Aristotle emphasized the difference between things as they are and things considered in light of their ends or purposes.

Armed with these distinctions, Aristotle proposed in Physics that we employ four very different kinds of explanatory principle to the question of why a thing is, the four causes:

The **material cause** is the basic stuff out of which the thing is made. The material cause of a house, for example, would include the wood, metal, glass, and other building materials used in its construction. All of these things belong in an explanation of the house because it could not exist unless they were present in its composition.

The **formal cause** (Gk. eidos) is the pattern or essence in conformity with which these materials are assembled. Thus, the formal cause of our exemplary house would be the sort of thing that is represented on a blueprint of its design. This, too, is part of the explanation of the house, since its materials would be only a pile of rubble (or a different house) if they were not put together in this way.

The **efficient cause** is the agent or force immediately responsible for bringing this matter and that form together in the production of the thing. Thus, the efficient cause of the house would include the carpenters, masons, plumbers, and other workers who used these materials to build the house in accordance with the blueprint for its construction. Clearly the house would not be what it is without their contribution.

Lastly, the **final cause** (Gk. télos) is the end or purpose for which a thing exists, so the final cause of our house would be to provide shelter for human beings. This is part of the explanation of the house's existence because it would never have been built unless someone needed it as a place to live.

Causes of all four sorts are necessary elements in any adequate account of the existence and nature of the thing, Aristotle believed, since the absence or modification of any one of them would result it the existence of a thing of some different sort. Moreover, an explanation that includes all four causes completely captures the significance and reality of the thing itself.

2.3.3.2 Metaphysics

Aristotle considered the most fundamental features of reality in the twelve books of the Metaphysics. Although experience of what happens is a key to all demonstrative knowledge, Aristotle supposed that the abstract study of «being qua being» must delve more deeply, in order to understand why things happen the way they do. A quick review of past attempts at achieving this goal reveals that earlier philosophers had created more difficult questions than they had answered: the Milesians over-emphasized material causes;

Anaxagoras over-emphasized mind; and Plato got bogged down in the theory of forms. Aristotle intended to do better. Although any disciplined study is promising because there is an ultimate truth to be discovered, the abstractness of metaphysical reasoning requires that we think about the processes we are employing even as we use them in search of that truth. As always, Aristotle assumed that the structure of language and logic naturally mirrors the way things really are. Thus, the major points of each book are made by carefully analyzing our linguistic practices as a guide to the ultimate nature of what is.

2.3.3.3 Fundamental truths

It is reasonable to begin, therefore, with the simplest rules of logic, which embody the most fundamental principles applying to absolutely everything that is next ones.

The Law of Non-Contradiction in logic merely notes that no assertion is both true and false, but applied to reality this simple rule entails that nothing can both «be . . . » and «not be . . . » at the same time, although we will of course want to find room to allow for things to change. Thus, neither strict Protagorean relativism nor Parmenidean immutability offer a correct account of the nature of reality. The Law of Excluded Middle in logic states the necessity that either an assertion or its negation must be true, and this entails that there is no profound indeterminacy in the realm of reality. Although our knowledge of an assertion may sometimes fall short of what we need in order to decide whether it is true or false, we can be sure that either it or its negation is true. In order to achieve its required abstract necessity, all of metaphysics must be constructed from similar principles. Aristotle believed this to be the case because metaphysics is concerned with a genuinely unique subject matter. While natural science deals with moveable, separable things and mathematics focusses upon immoveable, inseparable things, metaphysics (especially in its highest, most abstract varieties) has as its objects only things that are both immoveable and separable. Thus, what we learn in metaphysics is nothing less than the immutable eternal nature, or essence, of individual things.

2.3.3.4 Universals

In the central books of the Metaphysics, Aristotle tried to develop an adequate analysis of subject-predicate judgments. Since logic and language rely heavily upon the copulative use of «is», careful study of these uses should reveal the genuine relationship that holds between substances and their features. Of course, Plato had already offered an extended account of this relationship, emphasizing the reality of the abstract forms rather than their

material substratum.

But Aristotle argued that the theory of forms is seriously flawed: it is not supported by good arguments; it requires a form for each thing; and it is too mathematical. Worst of all, on Aristotle's view, the theory of forms cannot adequately explain the occurrence of change. By identifying the thing with its essence, the theory cannot account for the generation of new substances. A more reasonable position must differentiate between matter and form and allow for a dynamic relation between the two.

Aristotle therefore maintained that each individual substance is a hylomorphic composite involving both matter and form together. Ordinary predication, then, involves paronymously attributing an abstract universal of a concrete individual, and our experience of this green thing is more significant than our apprehension of the form of greenness. This account, with its emphasis on the particularity of individual substances, provided Aristotle with a firm foundation in practical experience.

2.3.3.5 Higher truths

Aristotle also offered a detailed account of the dynamic process of change. A potentiality (Gk. dynamis) is either the passive capacity of a substance to be changed or (in the case of animate beings) its active capacity to produce change in other substances in determinate ways. An actuality (Gk. energeia) is just the realization of one of these potentialities, which is most significant when it includes not merely the movement but also its purpose. **Becoming**, then, is the process in which the potentiality present in one individual substance is actualized through the agency of something else which is already actual. Thus, for Aristotle, change of any kind requires the actual existence of something which causes the change.

The higher truths of what Aristotle called «theology» arise from an application of these notions to the more purely speculative study of being qua being. Since every being is a composite whose form and matter have been brought together by some cause, and since there cannot be infinitely many such causes, he concluded that everything that happens is ultimately attributable to a single universal cause, itself eternal and immutable. This self-caused «first mover», from which all else derives, must be regarded as a mind, whose actual thinking is its whole nature. The goodness of the entire universe, Aristotle supposed, resides in its teleological unity as the will of a single intelligent being.

2.3.3.6 The nature of souls

According to Aristotle, every animate being is a living thing which can move itself only because it has a soul. Animals and plants, along with human

beings, are more like each other than any of them are like any inanimate object, since each of them has a soul. Thus, his great treatise on psychology, On The Soul, offers interconnected explanations for the functions and operations of all living organisms.

All such beings, on Aristotle's view, have a nutritive soul which initiates and guides their most basic functions, the absorption of food, growth, and reproduction of its kind. All animals (and perhaps some plants) also have a sensitive soul by means of which they perceive features of their surroundings and move in response to the stimuli this provides. Human beings also possess (in addition to the rest) a rational soul that permits representation and thought.

Notice that each living thing has just one soul, the actions of which exhibit some degree of nutritive, sensitive, and/or rational functioning. This soul is the formal, efficient, and final cause of the existence of the organism; only its material cause resides purely in the body. Thus, all of the operations of the organism are to be explained in terms of the functions of its soul.

2.3.3.7 Human knowledge

Sensation is the passive capacity for the soul to be changed through the contact of the associated body with external objects. In each variety of sensation, the normal operations of the appropriate organ of sense result in the soul's becoming potentially what the object is in actuality.

Thus, without any necessary exchange of matter, the soul takes on the form of the object: when I feel the point of a pin, its shape makes an impression on my finger, conveying this form to my sensitive soul (resulting in information).

Thought is the more active process of engaging in the manipulation of forms without any contact with external objects at all. Thus, thinking is potentially independent of the objects of thought, from which it abstracts the form alone. Even the imagination, according to Aristotle, involves the operation of the common sense without stimulation by the sensory organs of the body.

Hence, although all knowledge must begin with information acquired through the senses, its results are achieved by rational means. Transcending the sensory preoccupation with particulars, the soul employs the formal methods of logic to cognize the relationships among abstract forms.

Desire is the origin of movement toward some goal. Every animate being, to some degree, is capable of responding to its own internal states and those of its external environment in such a way as to alleviate the felt absence or lack of some pleasure or the felt presence of some pain.

Even actions taken as a result of intellectual deliberation, Aristotle supposed, produce motion only through the collateral evocation of a concrete desire.

2.3.3.8 The goal of ethics

Aristotle applied the same patient, careful, descriptive approach to his examination of moral philosophy in the Nicomachean Ethics. Here he discussed the conditions under which moral responsibility may be ascribed to individual agents, the nature of the virtues and vices involved in moral evaluation, and the methods of achieving happiness in human life. The central issue for Aristotle is the question of character or personality — what does it take for an individual human being to be a good person?

Every activity has a final cause, the good at which it aims, and Aristotle argued that since there cannot be an infinite regress of merely extrinsic goods, there must be a highest good at which all human activity ultimately aims. This end of human life could be called happiness (or living well), of course, but what is it really? Neither the ordinary notions of pleasure, wealth, and honor nor the philosophical theory of forms provide an adequate account of this ultimate goal, since even individuals who acquire the material goods or achieve intellectual knowledge may not be happy.

According to Aristotle, things of any variety have a characteristic function that they are properly used to perform. The good for human beings, then, must essentially involve the entire proper function of human life as a whole, and this must be an activity of the soul that expresses genuine virtue or excellence. Thus, human beings should aim at a life in full conformity with their rational natures; for this, the satisfaction of desires and the acquisition of material goods are less important than the achievement of virtue. A happy person will exhibit a personality appropriately balanced between reasons and desires, with moderation characterizing all. In this sense, at least, «virtue is its own reward». True happiness can therefore be attained only through the cultivation of the virtues that make a human life complete.

2.3.3.9 The nature of virtue

Ethics is not merely a theoretical study for Aristotle. Unlike any intellectual capacity, virtues of character are dispositions to act in certain ways in response to similar situations, the habits of behaving in a certain way. Thus, good conduct arises from habits that in turn can only be acquired by repeated action and correction, making ethics an intensely practical discipline. Each of the virtues is a state of being that naturally seeks its mean (Gk. mesos) relative to us. According to Aristotle, the virtuous habit of action is always an intermediate state between the opposed vices of excess and deficiency: too much and too little are always wrong; the right kind of action always lies in the mean. Thus, for example:

- with respect to acting in the face of danger, courage is a mean between

the excess of rashness and the deficiency of cowardice;

- with respect to the enjoyment of pleasures,temperance is a mean between the excess of intemperance and the deficiency of insensibility;
- with respect to spending money, generosity is a mean between the excess of wastefulness and the deficiency of stinginess;
- with respect to relations with strangers, being friendly is a mean between the excess of being ingratiating and the deficiency of being surly;
- with respect to self-esteem, magnanimity (Gk. megalopsychia) is a mean between the excess of vanity and the deficiency of pusillanimity.

Notice that the application of this theory of virtue requires a great deal of flexibility: friendliness is closer to its excess than to its deficiency, while few human beings are naturally inclined to undervalue pleasure, so it is not unusual to overlook or ignore one of the extremes in each of these instances and simply to regard the virtue as the opposite of the other vice.

Although the analysis may be complicated or awkward in some instances, the general plan of Aristotle's ethical doctrine is clear: avoid extremes of all sorts and seek moderation in all things. Not bad advice, surely. Some version of this general approach dominated Western culture for many centuries.

2.3.3.10 Voluntary action

Because ethics is a practical rather than a theoretical science, Aristotle also gave careful consideration to the aspects of human nature involved in acting and accepting moral responsibility. Moral evaluation of an action presupposes the attribution of responsibility to a human agent. But in certain circumstances, this attribution would not be appropriate. Responsible action must be undertaken voluntarily, on Aristotle's view, and human actions are involuntary under two distinct conditions:

First, actions that are produced by some external force (or, perhaps, under an extreme duress from outside the agent) are taken involuntarily, and the agent is not responsible for them. Thus, if someone grabs my arm and uses it to strike a third person, I cannot reasonably be blamed (or praised) morally for what my arm has done.

Second, actions performed out of ignorance are also involuntary. Thus, if I swing my arm for exercise and strike the third party who (unbeknownst to me) is standing nearby, then again I cannot be held responsible for having struck that person. Notice that the sort of ignorance Aristotle is willing to regard as exculpatory is always of lack of awareness of relevant particulars. Striking other people while claiming to be ignorant of the moral rule under which it is wrong to do so would not provide any excuse on his view.

As we'll soon see, decisions to act voluntarily rely upon deliberation

about the choice among alternative actions that the individual could perform. During the deliberative process, individual actions are evaluated in light of the good, and the best among them is then chosen for implementation. Under these conditions, Aristotle supposed, moral actions are within our power to perform or avoid; hence, we can reasonably be held responsible for them and their consequences. Just as with health of the body, virtue of the soul is a habit that can be acquired (at least in part) as the result of our own choices.

2.3.3.11 The nature of justice

Since friendship is an important feature of the good life and virtuous habits can be acquired through moral education and legislation, Aristotle regarded life within a moral community as a vital component of human morality. Even in the Ethics, he had noted that social order is presumed by the general concept of justice.

Properly considered, justice is concerned with the equitability or fairness in interpersonal relations. Thus, Aristotle offered an account of distributive justice that made allowances for the social rectification of individual wrongs. Moreover, he noted that justice in the exchange of property requires careful definition in order to preserve equity. The broader concept of political justice, however, is to be recognized only within the context of an entire society. Thus, it deserves separate treatment in a different treatise.

2.3.3.12 Political life

That treatise is Aristotle's Politics, a comprehensive examination of the origins and structure of the state. Like Plato, Aristotle supposed that the need for a division of labor is the initial occasion of the formation of a society, whose structure will be modelled upon that of the family. But Aristotle (preferring the mean) declined to agree with Plato's notion of commonly held property and argued that some property should be held privately.

Aristotle also drew a sharper distinction between morality and politics than Plato had done. Although a good citizen is a good person, on Aristotle's view, the good person can be good even independently of the society. A good citizen, however, can exist only as a part of the social structure itself, so the state is in some sense prior to the citizen.

Depending upon the number of people involved in governing and the focus of their interests, Aristotle distinguished six kinds of social structure in three pairs:

1. State with only one ruler is either a **monarchy** or a **tyranny**.
2. State with several rulers is either an **aristocracy** or an **oligarchy**. a
3. State in which all rule is either a **polity** or a **democracy**.

In each pair, the first sort of state is one in which the rulers are concerned with the good of the state, while those of the second sort are those in which the rulers serve their own private interests.

Although he believed monarchy to be the best possible state in principle, Aristotle recognized that in practice it is liable to degenerate into the worst possible state, a tyrrany. He therefore recommended the formation of polity, or constitutional government, since its degenerate form is the least harmful of the bad kinds of government. As always, Aristotle defended the mean rather than run the risk of either extreme.

2.4 Hellenistic Philosophy

Hellenistic philosophers, therefore, devoted less attention than had Plato and Aristotle to the speculative construction of an ideal state that would facilitate the achievement of a happy life. Instead, the ethical thinkers of this later period focussed upon the life of the individual, independently of the society as a whole, describing in detail the kinds of character and action that might enable a person to live well despite the prevailing political realities. In general, we might say, such philosophers tried to show how we should live when circumstances beyond our control seem to render pointless everything we try to accomplish. The Hellenistic schools of philosophy, then, exhibit less confidence and propose solutions less radical than their Athenian predecessors had in the golden era.

2.4.1 Epicureans

Human life is, therefore, essentially passive: all we can do is to experience what goes on, without supposing ourselves capable of changing it. Even so, Epicurus held that this sort of life may be a good one, if the experiences are mostly pleasant ones.

Thus, in the Letter to Menoeceus, Epicurus held that the proper goal of human life is to achieve mental ease (Gk. ataraxia) and freedom from pain. All of our sensual desires are natural and their satisfaction is to be desired, since satiation is always a pleasure but frustrated desire is a mild pain. Material goods are worthwhile only to the extent that possessing them contributes to the achievement of peace.

What is more, Epicurus held that we have no reason to complain of the fact that human life must come to an end. Since death results in the annihilation of the personality, he argued, it cannot be experienced and is thus nothing to be feared. Thus, Epicureanism was long ago summarized as the view recommending that we «relax, eat, drink, be merry».

Epicurus' school, which was based in the garden of his house and thus called «The Garden», had a small but devoted following in his lifetime.

His school was the first of the ancient Greek philosophical schools to admit women as a rule rather than an exception. The original school was based in Epicurus's home and garden. An inscription on the gate to The Garden is recorded by Seneca in epistle XXI of Epistulae morales ad Lucilium: «Stranger, here you will do well to tarry; here our highest good is pleasure».

Epicurus emphasized friendship as an important ingredient of happiness, and the school resembled in many ways a community of friends living together. However, he also instituted a hierarchical system of levels among his followers, and had them swear an oath on his core tenets.

Epicurus' philosophy is based on the theory that all good and bad derive from the sensations of pleasure and pain. What is good is what is pleasurable, and what is bad is what is painful. Pleasure and pain were ultimately, for Epicurus, the basis for the moral distinction between good and evil. If pain is chosen over pleasure in some cases it is only because it leads to a greater pleasure.

Although Epicurus has been commonly misunderstood to advocate the rampant pursuit of pleasure, what he was really after was the absence of pain (both physical and mental, i.e., suffering) – a state of satiation and tranquility that was free of the fear of death and the retribution of the gods. When we do not suffer pain, we are no longer in need of pleasure, and we enter a state of «perfect mental peace».

The parody is accurate as far as it goes: Epicurus did suppose that a successful life is one of personal fulfillment and the attainment of happiness within this life. But the philosophical Epicureans were less confident than many of their later imitators about the prospects for achieving very much pleasure in ordinary life. They emphasized instead the mental peace that comes from accepting whatever happens without complaint or struggle. Notice again that this is a reasonable response to a natural world and social environment that do not provide for effective individual action.

The Roman philosopher Lucretius defended a similar set of theses, including both atomism in general and an Epicurean devotion to tranquillity in his philosophical poem De Rerum Naturae (On the Nature of Things).

His theory differs from the earlier atomism of Democritus because he admits that atoms do not always follow straight lines but their direction of motion may occasionally exhibit a «swerve». This allowed him to avoid the determinism implicit in the earlier atomism and to affirm free will.

Compare this with the modern theory of quantum physics, which postulates a non-deterministic random motion of fundamental particles, which do not swerve absent an external force; randonmness originates in interaction of particles in incompatible eigenstates.

2.4.2 Epictetus and the Stoics

A rival school of philosophy in Athens was that of the Stoics. As originally developed by Zeno of Citium and Chrysippus, stoicism offered a comprehensive collection of human knowledge encompassing formal logic, physical study of the natural world, and a thoroughly naturalistic explanation of human nature and conduct. Since each human being is a microcosm of the universe as a whole, they supposed, it is possible to employ the same methods of study to both life and nature equally.

In the Hellenistic period, Epictetus tersely noted the central features of a life thusly lived according to nature in his Manual. Once again, the key is to understand how little of what happens is within our control, and stoicism earns its reputation as a stern way of life with recommendations that we accept whatever fate brings us without complaint, concern, or feeling of any kind. Since family, friends, and material goods are all perishable, Epictetus held, we ought never to become attached to them. Instead, we treat everything and everyone we encounter in life as a temporary blessing (or curse), knowing that they will all pass away from us naturally. This seems cold and harsh advice indeed, but it works! If, indeed, we form no attachments and care about nothing, then loss will never disturb the tranquillity and peace of our lives. This way of life can be happy even for a slave like Epictetus. But later Roman Stoics like Seneca and Marcus Aurelius made clear in their lives and writings that it has merits even for those who are better-off.

Stoicism was one of the new philosophical movements of the Hellenistic period. The name derives from the porch (stoa poikilê) in the Agora at Athens decorated with mural paintings, where the members of the school congregated, and their lectures were held. Unlike ‘epicurean’, the sense of the English adjective ‘stoical’ is not utterly misleading with regard to its philosophical origins. The Stoics did, in fact, hold that emotions like fear or envy (or impassioned sexual attachments, or passionate love of anything whatsoever) either were, or arose from, false judgements and that the sage – a person who had attained moral and intellectual perfection – would not undergo them.

The later Stoics of Roman Imperial times, Seneca and Epictetus, emphasise the doctrines (already central to the early Stoics' teachings) that the sage is utterly immune to misfortune and that virtue is sufficient for happiness. Our phrase ‘stoic calm’ perhaps encapsulates the general drift of these claims. It does not, however, hint at the even more radical ethical views which the Stoics defended, e.g. that only the sage is free while all others are slaves, or that all those who are morally vicious are equally so. Though it seems clear that some Stoics took a kind of perverse joy in advocating views which seem so at odds with common sense, they did not do so simply to

shock. Stoic ethics achieves certain plausibility within the context of their physical theory and psychology, and within the framework of Greek ethical theory as that was handed down to them from Plato and Aristotle. It seems that they were well aware of the mutually interdependent nature of their philosophical views, likening philosophy itself to a living animal in which logic is bones and sinews; ethics and physics, the flesh and the soul respectively (another version reverses this assignment, making ethics the soul). Their views in logic and physics are no less distinctive and interesting than those in ethics itself.

2.4.2.1 Stoic ethics and virtues

The ancient Stoics are often misunderstood because the terms they used pertained to different concepts in the past than they do today. The word 'stoic' has come to mean 'unemotional' or indifferent to pain, because Stoic ethics taught freedom from 'passion' by following 'reason.' The Stoics did not seek to extinguish emotions; rather, they sought to transform them by a resolute 'askēsis' that enables a person to develop clear judgment and inner calm. Logic, reflection, and concentration were the methods of such self-discipline.

But what is happiness? The Epicureans' answer was deceptively straightforward: the happy life is the one which is most pleasant. But their account of what the highest pleasure consists in was not at all straightforward. Zeno's answer was «a good flow of life» or «living in agreement», and Cleanthes clarified that with the formulation that the end was «living in agreement with nature»Chrysippus amplified this to (among other formulations) «living in accordance with experience of what happens by nature. The Stoics claim that whatever is good must benefit its possessor under all circumstances. But there are situations in which it is not to my benefit to be healthy or wealthy. (We may imagine that if I had money I would spend it on heroin which would not benefit me.) Thus, things like money are simply not good, in spite of how nearly everyone speaks, and the Stoics call them 'indifferents' – i.e., neither good nor bad.

Borrowing from the Cynics, the foundation of Stoic ethics is that good lies in the state of the soul itself; in wisdom and self-control. Stoic ethics stressed the rule: «Follow where reason leads». One must therefore strive to be free of the passions, bearing in mind that the ancient meaning of 'passion' was «anguish» or «suffering», that is, «passively» reacting to external events – somewhat different from the modern use of the word. A distinction was made between pathos (plural pathe) which is normally translated as passion, propathos or instinctive reaction (e.g., turning pale and trembling when confronted by physical danger) and eupathos, which is the mark of the Stoic sage (sophos). The eupatheia are feelings that result from correct judgment in

the same way as passions result from incorrect judgment.

The idea was to be free of suffering through apatheia or peace of mind (literally,'without passion'), where peace of mind was understood in the ancient sense – being objective or having «clear judgment» and the maintenance of equanimity in the face of life's highs and lows.

For the Stoics, 'reason' meant not only using logic, but also understanding the processes of nature – the logos, or universal reason, inherent in all things. Living according to reason and virtue, they held, is to live in harmony with the divine order of the universe, in recognition of the common reason and essential value of all people. The four cardinal virtues of the Stoic philosophy are **wisdom** (sophia), **courage** (andreia), **justice** (dikaiosyne), and **temperance** (sophrosyne), a classification derived from the teachings of Plato.

Following Socrates, the Stoics held that unhappiness and evil are the results of human ignorance of the reason in nature. If someone is unkind, it is because they are unaware of their own universal reason, which leads to the conclusion of kindness. The solution to evil and unhappiness then, is the practice of Stoic philosophy – to examine one's own judgments and behavior and determine where they diverge from the universal reason of nature.

The Stoics accepted that suicide was permissible for the wise person in circumstances that might prevent them from living a virtuous life. Plutarch held that accepting life under tyranny would have compromised Cato's self-consistency (constantia) as a Stoic and impaired his freedom to make the honourable moral choices. Suicide could be justified if one fell victim to severe pain or disease, but otherwise suicide would usually be seen as a rejection of one's social duty

2.4.2.2 Spiritual exercise

Philosophy for a Stoic is not just a set of beliefs or ethical claims, it is a way of life involving constant practice and training (or askesis, see asceticism). Stoic philosophical and spiritual practices included logic, Socratic dialogue and self-dialogue, contemplation of death, training attention to remain in the present moment (similar to some forms of Eastern meditation), daily reflection on everyday problems and possible solutions, hypomnemata, and so on. Philosophy for a Stoic is an active process of constant practice and self-reminder.

In his Meditations, Marcus Aurelius defines several such practices. For example, in Book II, part 1: «Say to yourself in the early morning: I shall meet today ungrateful, violent, treacherous, envious, uncharitable men. All of these things have come upon them through ignorance of real good and ill... I can neither be harmed by any of them, for no man will involve me in wrong, nor can I be angry with my kinsman or hate him; for we have come into the world to work together...»

Prior to Aurelius, Epictetus in his Discourses distinguished between three topoi: judgement, desire and inclination. According to French philosopher Pierre Hadot, Epictetus identifies these three acts with logic, physics and ethics respectively Hadot writes that in the Meditations «Each maxim develops either one of these very characteristic topoi, or two of them or three of them».

2.4.3 Neoplatonism

Neoplatonism is generally a religious philosophy. Neoplatonism is a form of idealistic monism (also called theistic monism) and combines elements of polytheism.

Although the founder of Neoplatonism is supposed to have been Ammonius Saccas, the Enneads of his pupil Plotinus are the primary and classical document of Neoplatonism. As a form of mysticism, it contains theoretical and practical parts, the first dealing with the high origin of the human soul showing how it has departed from its first estate, and the second showing the way by which the soul may again return to the Eternal and Supreme. The system can be divided between the invisible world and the phenomenal world, the former containing the transcendent One from which emanates an eternal, perfect, essence (nous), which, in turn, produces the world-soul.

2.4.3.1 The One

The primeval Source of Being is the One and the Infinite, as opposed to the many and the finite. It is the source of all life, and therefore absolute causality and the only real existence. However, the important feature of it is that it is beyond all Being, although the source of it. Therefore, it cannot be known through reasoning or understanding, since only what is part of Being can be thus known according to Plato. Being beyond existence, it is the most real reality, source of less real things. It is, moreover, the Good, insofar as all finite things have their purpose in it, and ought to flow back to it. But one cannot attach moral attributes to the original Source of Being itself, because these would imply limitation. It has no attributes of any kind; it is being without magnitude, without life, without thought; in strict propriety, indeed, we ought not to speak of it as existing; it is «above existence», «above goodness». It is also active force without a substratum; as active force the primeval Source of Being is perpetually producing something else, without alteration, or motion, or diminution of itself. This production is not a physical process, but an emission of force; and, since the product has real existence only in virtue of the original existence working in it, Neoplatonism may be described as a species of

dynamic panentheism. Directly or indirectly, everything is brought forth by the «One». In it all things, so far as they have being, are divine, and God is all in all. Derived existence, however, is not like the original Source of Being itself, but is subject to a law of diminishing completeness. It is indeed an image and reflection of the first Source of Being; but the further the line of successive projections is prolonged the smaller is its share in the true existence. The totality of being may thus be conceived as a series of concentric circles, fading away towards the verge of non-existence, the force of the original Being in the outermost circle being a vanishing quantity. Each lower stage of being is united with the «One» by all the higher stages, and receives its share of reality only by transmission through them. All derived existence, however, has a drift towards, a longing for, the higher, and bends towards it so far as its nature will permit. Plotinus' treatment of the substance or essence (ousia) of the one was to reconcile Plato and Aristotle. Where Aristotle treated the monad as a single entity made up of one substance (here as energeia).

Plotinus reconciled Aristotle with Plato's «the good» by expressing the substance or essence of the one as potential or force.

2.4.3.2 Celestial hierarchy

The religious philosophy of Plotinus for himself personally sufficed, without the aid of the popular religion or worship. Nevertheless he sought for points of support in these. God is certainly in the truest sense nothing but the primeval Being who is revealed in a variety of emanations and manifestations. Plotinus taught the existence of an ineffable and transcendent One, the All, from which emanated the rest of the universe as a sequence of lesser beings. Later Neoplatonic philosophers, especially Iamblichus, added hundreds of intermediate beings such as gods, angels and demons, and other beings as mediators between the One and humanity. The Neoplatonist gods are omni-perfect beings and do not display the usual amoral behaviour associated with their representations in the myths.

1. The One – God, The Good. Transcendent and ineffable.
2. The Hypercosmic Gods – those that make Essence, Life, and Soul.
3. The Demiurge – the Creator.
4. The Cosmic Gods – those who make Being, Nature, and Matter – including the gods known to us from classical religion.

2.4.3.3 Logos

The term «Logos» was interpreted variously in neoplatonism. Plotinus refers to Thales in interpreting Logos as the principle of meditation, the interrelationship between the Hypostases (Soul, Spirit (nous) and the One). St. John introduces a relation between Logos and the Son, Christ, while St. Paul

calls it «Son», «Image» and «Form».

Victorinus subsequently differentiated the Logos interior to God and the Logos related to the world by creation and salvation.

Augustine re-interpreted Aristotle and Plato in the light of early Christian thought. In his Confessions he describes the Logos as the divine eternal Word. Augustine's Logos «took on flesh» in Christ, in whom the logos was present as in no other man. He influenced Christian thought throughout the Hellenistic world and strongly influenced Early Medieval Christian Philosophy. Perhaps the key subject in this was Logos.

After Plotinus' (around AD 205–270) and his student Porphyry (around AD 232–309) Aristotle's (non-biological) works entered the curriculum of Platonic thought. Porphyry's introduction to Aristotle's Categoria was important as an introduction to logic and the study of Aristotle, remarkably enough, became an introduction to the study of Plato in the late Platonism of Athens and Alexandria.

The commentaries of this group seek to harmonise Plato, Aristotle and, often, the Stoa. Some works of neoplatonism were attributed to Plato or Aristotle. De Mundo, for instance, is thought not to be the work of a «pseudo-Aristotle» though this remains debatable.

2.4.3.4 Mystical philosophy of Plotinus

The version of Platonic philosophy that came to be incorporated into the theology of the middle ages, however, had rather little to do with the thought of Plato himself. It was, instead, derived from the quasi-mystical writings of Plotinus. In an aphoristic book called the Enneads, Plotinus used Plato's fascination with the abstract forms of things as the starting-point for a comprehensive metaphysical view of the cosmos. According to Plotinus, the form of the Good is the transcendent source of everything in the universe: from its central core other forms emanate outward, like the ripples in a pond, losing measures of reality along the way. Thus, although the early emanations retain much of the abstract beauty of their source, those out on the fringes of the cosmos have very little good left in them. Nevertheless, Plotinus supposed that careful examination of anything in the world could be used to lead us toward the central reality, if we use the information it provides as the basis for our reasoning about its origins in something more significant. In principle, progressive applications of this technique will eventually bring us to contemplation of the Good itself and knowledge of the nature of the universe. But since the Good is both the cause of the universe and the source of its moral quality for Plotinus, philosophical study is a redemptive activity. Achievement of mystical union with the cause of the universe promises to provide us not only with knowledge but also with the true elements of virtue as well. It was this neoplatonic philosophy that the Christians found so well-suited

to their own theological purposes. Once the Good is identified with the god of scripture, the details work themselves out fairly naturally. Thus, we'll find notions of this sort to be a popular feature of medieval philosophy.

The most important achievement of ancient Greek philosophers was that they could distinguish chaos and cosmos, they tried to logically justify the laws of the cosmos and reasonable arrangement of the universe. They offered particular view of the world as Logos, within lows and principles.

Questions for self-testing:

1. What stages of development of ancient philosophy do you know?
2. What are the main representatives of the Milesian school and their philosophical positions?
3. What was the theme of the dispute Heraclitus with Eleatic?
4. What is the theory of atomism? What are its ethical implications?
5. Who the author of statements that human beings are «the measure of all things»? What does it mean?
6. What is the reason of misconducts, according to Socrates?
7. Which degrees of understanding of reality does Plato distinguish?
8. What is the meaning of Plato's forms (eidos)?
9. What is the relationship between theory of the human soul and society in Plato’s philosophy?
10. What are four reasons of things being according to Aristotle?
11. What forms of human knowledge does Aristotle consider?
12. What are the main provisions of Aristotelian ethics?
13. What is distributive justice, and what is its role in social life according to Aristotle?
14. Compare ideas about the best social structure of Plato and Aristotle.
15. What Epicurus believed the main purpose of human life? How can we achieve it?
16. What are the main virtues at the Stoic philosophy?
17. What is «the One» in neoplatonism?

Recommended reading:

1. Richard D. McKirahan, Philosophy Before Socrates: An Introduction With Text and Commentary (Hackett, 1994).
2. The Essential Epicurus: Letters, Principal Doctrines, Vatican Sayings, and Fragments, tr. by Eugene Michael O'Connor (Prometheus, 1993).
3. Plato, The Last Days of Socrates, ed. by Hugh Tredennick (Penguin, 1995).
4. Platonis opera, ed. by J. Burnet (Oxford, 1899-1906).
5. Plato, Complete Works, ed. by John M. Cooper and D. S Hutchinson

(Hackett, 1997).
6. The Collected Dialogues of Plato, ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. (Princeton, 1961).
7. Great Dialogues of Plato, tr. by W. H. D. Rouse (Signet, 1999).
8. The Complete Works of Aristotle, ed. by Jonathan Barnes.(Princeton, 1984): vol. 1 [includes the logical works, Physics, treatises on astronomy and animals, and Of the Soul]; vol. 2 [includes additional scientific treatises, Metaphysics, the works on ethics, Politics, Rhetoric, and Poetics].
9. Aristotle: Introductory Readings, tr. by Terence Irwin and Gail Fine (Hackett, 1996).
10. Seneca: Essays and Letters, tr. by Moses Hadas (Norton, 1968).
11. Seneca: Moral and Political Essays, ed. by John M. Cooper and J. F. Procope (Cambridge, 1995).
12. Seneca: A Critical Bibliography, 1900-1980: Scholarship on His Life, Thought, Prose, and Influence, ed. by Anna L. Motto (Hakkert, 1989).
13. The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, trans. by Michael Chase (Harvard, 1998) and Anthony R. Birley, Marcus Aurelius (Routledge, 2000).
14. The Enneads By Plotinus: http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.html

3 MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

Having devoted extensive attention to the development of philosophy among the ancient Greeks, we'll now cover more than a millenium of Western thought more briefly. The very name «medieval» (literally, «the in-between time») philosophy suggests the tendency of modern thinkers to skip rather directly from Aristotle to the Renaissance. What seemed to justify that attitude was the tendency of philosophers during this period to seek orthodoxy as well as truth.

Nearly all of the medieval thinkers – Jewish, Christian, and Muslim – were pre-occupied with some version of the attempt to synthesis philosophy with religion.

Early on, the neoplatonism philosophy of Plotinus seemed to provide the most convenient intellectual support for religious doctrine.

But later in the medieval era, thanks especially to the work of the Arabic-language thinkers, Aristotle's metaphysics gained a wider acceptance. In every case, the goal was to provide a respectable philosophical foundation for theological positions.

In the process, much of that foundation was effectively absorbed into the theology itself, so that much of what we now regard as Christian doctrine has its origins in Greek philosophy more than in the Biblical tradition.

3.1 Augustine: christian platonism

Augustine converted to Christianity and devoted his career to the exposition of a philosophical system that employed neoplatonic elements in support of Christian orthodoxy. The keynote of Augustine's method is «Credo ut intellegiam» («I believe in order that I may understand»), the notion that human reason in general and philosophy in particular are useful only to those who already have faith.

Augustine simply rejected the epistemological criticisms mounted by the Academic skeptics. Even if it were true that I am mistaken about nearly everything that I suppose to be true, he argued, one inescapable truth will remain: «Si fallor, sum» («If I am mistaken, I exist»). This doctrine is an interesting anticipation of Descartes's later attempt to establish knowledge on the phrase «Cogito ergo sum».

Upon this foundation, Augustine believed it possible to employ human faculties of sense and reason effectively in the pursuit of substantive knowledge of the world.

3.1.1 God's existence

That there is indeed a god, Augustine proved in fine Platonic fashion. Begin with the fact that we are capable of achieving mathematical knowledge, and remember that, as Plato demonstrated, this awareness transcends the sensory realm of appearances entirely.

Our knowledge of eternal mathematical truths thus establishes the immateriality and immortality of our own rational souls. So far, the argument is straight out of Plato's Phaedo.

Augustine further argued that the eternal existence of numbers and of the mathematical relations that obtain among them requires some additional metaphysical support. There must be some even greater being that is the eternal source of the reality of these things, and that, of course, must be god. Thus, Augustine endorses a Plotinian concept of god as the central core from which all of reality emanates.

But notice that if the truths of mathematics depend for their reality upon the creative activity of the deity, it follows that god could change them merely by willing them to be different. This is an extreme version of a belief known as voluntarism, according to which 2 + 3 = 5 remains true only so long as god wills it to be so. We can still balance our checkbooks with confidence because, of course, god invariably wills eternally. But in principle, Augustine held that even necessary truths are actually contingent upon the exercise of the divine will.

3.1.2 Human freedom

This emphasis on the infinite power of god's will raises a significant question about our own capacity to will and to act freely. If, as Augustine supposed, god has infinite power and knowledge of every sort, then god can cause me to act in particular ways simply by willing that I do so, and in every case god knows in advance in what way I will act, long before I even contemplate doing so.

From this, it would seem naturally to follow that I have no will of my own, cannot act of my own volition, and therefore should not be held morally responsible for what I do. Surely marionettes are not to be held accountable for the deeds they perform with so many strings attached.

Augustine's answer to this predicament lies in his analysis of time. A god who is eternal must stand wholly outside the realm of time as we know it, and since god is infinitely more real than we are, it follows that time itself does not exist at the level of the infinitely real.

The passage of time, the directionality of knowledge, and all temporal relations are therefore nothing more than features of our limited minds. And it is within these limitations, Augustine supposed, that we feel free, act on our volitions, and are responsible for what we do. God's foreknowledge, grounded outside the temporal order, has no bearing on the temporal nature of our moral responsibility. Once again, a true understanding of the divine plan behind creation resolves every apparent conflict.

3.2 Boethius

As classical scholarship began to wane, preservation of the philosophical tradition required capable translation of the central works from Greek into Latin. This labor was the great contribution of Boethius, whose translation of Aristotle's logical works provided the standard set of Latin terms for the logic of the Middle Ages. Moreover, Boethius's Commentary on the Isagoge of Porphyry focussed medieval attention on a metaphysical problem that arises from the simple fact that two or more things may share a common feature. The President of the United States and my youngest child, for example, have something in common, since they are both human beings.

The problem of universals asks the metaphysical question of what in reality accounts for this similarity between distinct individual substances. When we predicate of each substance the name of the species to which they both belong, what kinds of entities are truly involved? If the species itself is a third independently existing entity, then we must postulate the existence of a separate sphere of abstract beings like the Platonic forms. If, on the other hand, what is shared by both substances is nothing more than the name of the

species, then our account of resemblances seems grounded on little more than linguistic whim. The difficulty of providing a satisfactory account of the predication of shared features provoked intense debate throughout the middle ages. As we'll soon see, the variety of positions adopted with respect to this metaphysical issue often served as a litmus test of academic loyalties.

Since his own life lead to imprisonment and execution, Boethius also gave careful consideration to the intellectual and ethical principles of living well. In The Consolation of Philosophy, he maintained that commitment to rational discourse and decision-making is vital to the successful human life, even though it offers little prospect of avoiding the personal disasters fate holds for many of us.

3.3 John Scotus Erigena

During the ninth century, a British thinker named John Scotus Erigena applied the via negativa along with Aristotelean logic in order to develop a more carefully systematic description of the nature of reality in the neoplatonic view.

Noting the crucial distinction between active (or creative) beings on the one hand and what they produce (the created) on the other, Erigena proposed that all of reality be comprehended under four simple categories:

The only **creating uncreated** being is god, of which we can know nothing except its role as the central source of all.

Creating created beings are the Platonic forms (including human souls) by whose mediation the divine produces the world.

Ordinary things are **uncreating created** beings, the distant emanations that constitute the natural world as we perceive it.

Finally, **uncreating uncreated** must once again be god alone.

Thus, Erigena completes the logically tidy picture with a fourth category of existence that contradicts yet must be identified with the first, emphasizing the view that only mystical consciousness can even try to grasp the nature of god.

Each human being is a microcosm in whom analogues of these four fundamental elements combine to produce a dynamic whole whose existence and activity mirror those of the universe.

Few of Erigena's contemporaries appreciated the subtlety and logic of this view, however. Subordinating dialectical reasoning to the presumed dictates of revealed religion at every opportunity, many medieval writers defended and even encouraged the kind of deliberate ignorance that results from an unwillingness to question prevailing opinion.

The Socratic spirit nearly disappeared.

3.4 Scholastic philosophy

3.4.1 Origins of scholasticism

3.4.1.1 Anselm's ontological argument

The end of the Dark Ages in the philosophical tradition is clearly marked by the work of Anselm of Canterbury. Explicitly rejecting the anti-intellectual spirit of preceding centuries, Anselm devoted great care to his cultivation of the Augustinian theology of «faith seeking understanding». In the process, Anselm initiated an entirely new way of demonstrating the existence of god.

Reflecting on the text of Psalm 14 («Fools say in their hearts, 'There is no god'») in his Proslogion, Anselm proposed a proof of divine reality that has come to be known as **the ontological argument**. The argument takes the Psalmist quite literally by supposing that in virtue of the content of the concept of god there is a contradiction involved in the denial of god's existence.

Anselm supposes that in order to affirm or deny anything about god, we must first form in our minds the appropriate concept, namely the concept of «that than which nothing greater can be conceived» (in Latin, «aliquid quod maius non cogitari potest»). Having done so, we have in mind the idea of god. But of course nothing about reality usually follows from what we have in mind, since we often think about things that do not (or even cannot) actually exist. In the case of this special concept, however, Anselm argued that what we can think of must in fact exist independently of our thinking of it.

Suppose the alternative: if that than which nothing greater can be conceived existed only in my mind and not in reality, then I could easily think of something else which would in fact be greater than this (namely, the same thing existing in reality as well as in my mind), so that what I originally contemplated turns out not in fact to be that than which nothing greater can be conceived. Since this is a contradiction, only a fool would believe it. So that than which nothing greater can be conceived (that is god) must exist in reality as well as in the mind.

Something certainly seems fishy about this argument. It is extraordinary to suppose that merely thinking about something makes it so. But it turns out to be difficult to specify precisely what the problem is with Anselm's reasoning here.

3.4.1.2 Objections and reformulations

Early objections (like those of the monk Gaunilo) focussed on the notion of conceivability at work here, proposing a similarly absurd argument for the reality of the most perfect conceivable island. But Anselm's claim is that only

the concept of god unites all of the perfections under the umbrella of absolute unsurpassibility. What is more, Anselm supposed that existence is an essential feature of god's nature, and many philosophers have pointed out that existence is not a feature that could properly be included in the essence of any object. But the restatement of the argument in Proslogion seems to suggest that it is necessary, not merely contingent, existence that must be predicated of the deity, and this version may avoid the conceivability issue altogether.

Perhaps the real difficulty with this argument has less to do with conceivability than with the idea of perfection in general, with its attendant notion of unsurpassability. «The person taller than whom no other person is now living» must truly exist in reality as well as in our minds (provided that there is at least one living person), but it is not clear that «the person taller than whom no other person can ever live» exists as a coherent concept even in the understanding, much less in reality. In similar fashion, it may be that there is no concept corresponding to the words, «that than which nothing greater can be conceived», giving the ontological argument no foundation.

Despite all of these difficulties, Anselm's effort has continued to find sympathetic supporters for nearly a millenium. Remember that within the Augustinian approach, the demonstration is not really intended as a proof that will persuade unbelievers to convert. Rather, it occurs within the context of prayerful meditation, as one element in the believer's ongoing pursuit of faith seeking understanding.

Anselm's patient and rational approach to philosophical issues and his willingness to engage in debate with other thinkers who disagreed with the positions he defended were greatly influential on western culture. They helped give rise to the development of **scholasticism**, a process of intergenerational cooperation engendered by shared appeal to a common tradition of rational argumentation.

No everyone participated happily in this process, of course; Christian anti-inellectualism continued to flourish, as is clear in the writings of Peter Damian during the eleventh century. Damian condemned the use of dialectic for both secular and theological purposes, and argued that since human reason is so insignificant in comparison with the power of faith, the untrained and ignorant are bound to be wiser than the educated and thoughtful.

Many Christian thinkers disagreed, however, and their efforts to comprehend those who had gone before and to develop an intellectual tradition within the church were well served by the Book of Sentences (1158) compiled by Peter Lombard.

An appropriate textbook for an era during which few copies of any book could be made generally available for student use, the Sentences simply quoted the opinions of earlier philosophers with respect to a variety of questions.

Rarely commenting on these ancient materials, Lombard simply reported

the conflicting views of the authorities' issue by issue, leaving adjudication between them to the active participation of the reader. This helped to foster a framework of debate in which the basic positions could be clearly defined and new arguments in their criticism or defense easily developed.

3.4.2 The problem of universals

One of the issues that most plagued scholastic philosophers during this period was **the problem of universals**. What is the ontological status of the species to which many things commonly belong? **Realists**, following in the tradition of Plato, maintained that each universal is an entity in its own right, existing independently of the individual things that happen to participate in it. **Nominalists**, on the other hand, pursuing a view nearer that of Aristotle, held that only particular things exist, since the universal is nothing more than a name that applies to certain individual substances.

The difficulties with each position are clear. Nominalism seems to suggest that whether or not two things share a feature depends solely upon our accidental decision whether or not to call them by the same name.

Realism, on the other hand, introduces a whole range of special abstract entities for the simple purpose of accounting for similarities that particular things exhibit. In the medieval spirit of disputation, each side found it easier to attack its opponents' views than to defend its own. But the most brilliant disputant of the twelfth century invented a third alternative that avoided the difficulties of both extremes.

French logician Peter Abelard proposed that we ground the genuine similarities among individual things without reifying their universal features, by predicating general terms in conformity with concepts abstracted from experience. This view, which came to be known as **conceptualism**, denies the reality of universals as separate entities yet secures the objectivity of our application of general terms.

Although only individual things and their particular features truly exist, we effectively employ our shared concepts as universals. This resolution of the traditional problem of universals gained wide acceptance for several centuries, until doubts about the objectivity and reality of such mental entities as concepts came under serious question.

3.4.3 Reviving the West

During the thirteenth century, Christian Europe finally began to assimilate the lively intellectual traditions of the Jews and Arabs. Translations of ancient Greek texts (and the fine Arabic commentaries on them) into Latin made the full range of Aristotelean philosophy available to Western thinkers. This encouraged significant modifications of the prevalent neoplatonic

emanation-theory. Robert Grosseteste, for example, followed Ibn Sina in emphasizing the causal regularity evidenced by our experience of the world, and Siger of Brabant used the commentaries of Ibn Rushd as the basis for his thoroughly Aristotelean views.

In England, Roger Bacon initiated a national tradition of empiricist thinking. Bacon proposed a systematic plan for supplementing our meager knowledge of the external world. Although he granted that consultation of the ancient authorities has some value, Bacon argued that it is even more important to employ individual experience for experimental confirmation. In coming generations, this reliance upon experimental methods would become vital for the development of modern science.

When universities developed in the great cities of Europe during this era, rival clerical orders within the church began to battle for political and intellectual control over these centers of educational life. At Paris during the thirteenth century, two of the newest orders found their most capable philosophical representatives.

The Franciscans, founded by Francis of Assisi in 1209, were initially the philosophical conservatives. As their leader in mid-century, Bonaventure defended a traditional Augustine's theology, blending only a little of Aristotle in with the more traditional neoplatonic elements. In later generations, however, members of this order were leaders in the anti-rationalistic attacks that brought an effective end to scholastic traditions.

The Dominican order, founded by Dominic in 1215, on the other hand, placed great emphasis on the use of reason and made extensive use of Aristotelean materials. Thus, their finest expositor was Aquinas, whose works became definitive of Dominican (and, eventually, of Catholic) philosophy. Later Dominicans, like Savonarola, were more likely to pursue political power than philosophical truth.

3.4.4 Philosophical and theological views of Bonaventure

After studying in Paris with Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure taught and wrote extensively, leading his Franciscans in the measured defense of the scholastic synthesis of Platonic philosophy with Christian doctrine. Like Anselm, Bonaventure supposed that truth can emerge from rational argumentation only when the methods of philosophy are illuminated by religious faith. Thus, efforts to prove god's existence naturally begin with religious conviction itself, as an internal evidence of creaturely dependence on the deity.

Bonaventure held that the notion of an eternal material order is contradictory, so that reason itself supports the Christian doctrine of creation. Since god is the central being from which all else then emanates, every creature – including even human beings with sinful natures – may be regarded

as a **footprint** (Lat. vestiguum) of the divine reality. Thus, in the language of Christian doctrine, we are made in god's image and likeness; or, as Plato might have put it, we participate (partly) in the Form of the Good. Even matter itself is endowed by the creator with seminal urges by means of which effective causation can proceed from within.

Despite his general commitment to neoplatonic principles and rejection of Aristotelean metaphysics, Bonaventure did accept the notion of human nature as a **hylomorphic composite**. Although the human soul is indeed the form of the human body, Bonaventure maintained however, it is capable, with the help of god, of continuing to exist after the death of the body. Thus, as always, he accepted the thought of Aristotle only so far as it could be made to conform to his preconceptions about Christian doctrine. As we'll see next time, one of his contemporaries at Paris used a very different approach.

3.5 Thomas Aquinas: christian aristoteleanism

The most profoundly influential of all the medieval philosophers was the Dominican Thomas Aquinas, whose brilliant efforts in defence of Christian theology earned him a reputation as «the angelic teacher». His willingness to employ rational argumentation generally and the metaphysical and epistemological teachings of Aristotle in particular marked a significant departure from the neoplatonic Augustinian tradition that had dominated so much of the middle ages. Aquinas showed the church that it was possible to incorporate many of the «new» teachings of «the Philosopher» (Aristotle) without falling into the mistaken excesses of «the Commentator» (Ibn Rushd), and this became the basis for a lasting synthesis.

For Aquinas, theology is a science in which careful application of reason will yield the demonstrative certainty of theoretical knowledge. Of course it is possible to accept religious teachings from revealed sources by faith alone, and Aquinas granted that this always remains the most widely accessible route to Christian orthodoxy. But for those whose capacity to reason is well-developed, it is always better to establish the most fundamental principles on the use of reason. Even though simple faith is enough to satisfy most people, for example, Aquinas believed it possible, appropriate, and desirable to demonstrate the existence of god by rational means.

3.5.1 Five ways to prove God's existence

Anselm's ontological argument is not acceptable, Aquinas argued, since we are in fact ignorant of the divine essence from which it is presumed to begin. We cannot hope to demonstrate the necessary existence of a being whose true nature we cannot even conceive by direct or positive means. Instead, Aquinas held, we must begin with the sensory experiences we do

understand and reason upward from them to their origin in something eternal.

In this vein, Aquinas presented his own «**five ways**« to prove the existence of god.

The first three of these ways are all variations of the **cosmological argument**. The **first way** is an argument from motion, derived fairly directly from Aristotle's Metaphysics:

1. There is something moving.
2. Everything that moves is put into motion by something else.
3. But this series of antecedent movers cannot reach back infinitely.
4. Therefore, there must be a first mover (which is god).

The first premise is firmly rooted in sensory experience, and the second is based on accepted notions about potentiality and actuality. In defence of the third, Aquinas noted that if the series were infinite then there would be no first, and hence no second, or third, etc.

The **second way** has the same structure, but begins from experience of an instance of efficient causation, and the **third way** relies more heavily upon a distinction between contingent and necessary being.

In all of its forms, the cosmological argument is open to serious challenge. Notice that if the second premise is wholly and literally true, then the conclusion must be false. If, on the other hand, it is possible for something to move without being put into motion by another, then why might there not be hundreds of «first movers» instead of only one? Besides, it is by no means obvious that the Aristotelean notions of a «first mover» or «first cause» bear much resemblance to the god of Christianity. So even if the argument succeeded it might be of little use in defence of orthodox religion.

Aquinas's **fourth way** is a variety of **moral argument**. It begins with the factual claim that we do make judgments about the relative perfection of ordinary things. But the capacity to do so, Aquinas argued, presupposes an absolute standard of perfection to which we compare everything else. This argument relies more heavily on Platonic and Augustinian notions, and has the advantage of defending the existence of god as moral exemplar rather than as abstract intitiator of reality.

The **fifth way** is the teleological argument: the order and arrangement of the natural world (not merely its existence) bespeaks the deliberate design of an intelligent creator. Although it is an argument by analogy which can at best offer only probable reason for believing the truth of its conclusion, this proof offers a concept of god that most fully corresponds to the traditional elements of medieval Christian theology.

Since its empirical basis lies in our understanding of the operation of nature, this line of reasoning tends to become more compelling the more thorough our scientific knowledge is advanced.

3.5.2 The created world

Since the nature of god can be known only analogically by reference to the created world, Aquinas believed it worthwhile to devote great attention to the operation of nature. Here, of course, the basic approach is that of Aristotle, but the commentaries of Ibn Rushd provide a reliable guide as well.

Although we cannot rationally eliminate the possiblity that matter itself is co-eternal with god, Aquinas held, that undifferentiated prime matter can be nothing but pure potentiality in any case. It is only through god's bestowal of a substantial essence upon some portion of prime matter that a real material thing comes into existence. Thus, everything is, in some sense, a hylomorphic composite of matter and form for Aquinas, and god is the creator of all.

But, of course, human beings are a special case. As Aristotle had supposed, the human soul is the formal, efficient, and final cause of the human body. But in this one special instance, Aquinas held that god can add existence directly, without any admixture of prime matter, thus making possible the immortality of disembodied human souls.

Even in this life, Aquinas argued, the intellect is a higher faculty than the will in virtue of its greater degree of independence from the body. As the agent of knowledge, the human intellect comprehends the essences of things directly, making use of sensory information only as the starting-point for its fundamentally rational determinations. Although not all of Aquinas's contemporaries recognized, understood, or accepted this view of human knowledge, it provided ample room for the development of empirical investigations of the material world within the context of traditional Christian doctrine.

3.6 Final scholastic developments

3.6.1 The radical aristoteleans

Efforts to incorporate elements of Aristotelean metaphysics within the general scheme of Christian thought continued to stir controversy for a long time. Although Aquinas himself showed great caution in applying the ideas of Ibn Rushd to Christian theology, others were far more daring. Boetius of Dacia, for example, raised serious questions about individual immortality, and Siger of Brabant explicitly declared that human thought occurs only within the context of a comprehensive, single, unified intellect – a notion that would re-emerge during the modern period in the philosophy of Spinoza).

Philosophical dispute about such matters has theological implications, and the church was not reluctant to express its concern. In 1270 Etienne Tempier, the Bishop of Paris (encouraged by Henry of Ghent) issued a formal

condemnation of thirteen doctrines held by «radical Aristoteleans», including the unity of intellect, causal necessity, and the eternity of the world. In 1277 he expanded the number of condemned doctrines to 219, this time including on the list some clearly Thomistic teachings on the nature and individuation of substances and the role of reason in knowledge of god. This encouraged the (mostly) neoplatonic Franciscans of the late thirteenth century to pursue their attacks on the Dominican order's more enthusiastic reliance upon the offensive use of Aristotle. Giles of Rome, with a notable efforts to synthesize the chief doctrines of Aquinas with the neoplatonic tradition, was a rare exception.

3.6.2 John Duns Scotus

In the next generation, John Duns Scotus criticized many of the notions at the heart of the Thomistic philosophy, placing more emphasis on the traditional Augustinian theology in his own subtle and idiosyncratic exposition of a critical metaphysics. Since the natural object of human intellect is Being itself, as comprehended under the universal Forms, sensory information is often a misleading distraction from reality. Thus, the truest knowledge of god and self is to be derived by revelation and reason rather than from experience.

Since he conceived of god as the truest Being, which universally encompasses all of the perfections, Scotus followed Anselm in relying upon the ontological argument for god's existence. Sensory information, excluded from this proof, cannot corrupt or distort its theological and even devotional significance, which extablishes the perfect reality and freedom of the divine. Still, Scotus granted that from a common-sense, rational standpoint the more empirical Aristotelean arguments used by Aquinas have the virtue of greater clarity and certainty.

Scotus earned a reputation for great subtlety in reasoning, ironic mention of which by Tyndale introduced the English word «dunce». Much of this reputation derives from his frequent use of a sophisticated doctrine regarding **three different kinds of distinction** that may be drawn among things:

1. Everyone granted that a **real** distinction is drawn between genuinely separable things, each of which is capable of existing independently of all others.

2. A merely **mental** (or conceptual) distinction, on the other hand, is drawn wholly within our imaginations, between aspects or descriptions that in fact apply to a single thing.

3. Between these extremes, Scotus now added the **formal** distinction, a genuine, objective difference that holds between things that are inseparable from each other in reality.

Thus, for example, god's attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, benevolence, and freedom are only formally distinct from each other, as are

the concrete particular instantiations of universal Forms.

This distinction among distinctions has significant implications for the description of human nature. Scotus conceded to Aquinas the now-standard hylomorphic view of the soul as the form of the human body. But the functions of the soul are formally distinct for Scotus, so that the will can be radically free in its choices, even though the intellect is constrained by the structure of reason and evidence. The immortality of the individual human soul, though not natural in any sense, is guaranteed by the benevolent intervention of god.

3.6.3 William of Ockham

An even more strikingly modern conception of philosophy appeared in the work of William of Ockham, an English Franciscan who represented his Order in major controversies over papal authority and the vow of poverty. Concerned with the possibility that an over-emphasis on universal forms might undermine the theological doctrine of free will, Ockham secured his voluntaristic convictions by mounting a full-scale attack on essentialism.

Thus, Ockham's metaphysics is thoroughly nominalistic: everything that exists is particular, and relations among these individuals are purely conceptual. Thus, if we see a red shirt and a red car, there is no third thing (the form or essence of Redness) that they share. Between this red button and that red button there is only our own mental act of noticing their resemblance with respect to color. Only concrete individual substances and their particular features are real for Ockham; all else is manufactured by the human mind.

This treatment of the problem of universals is the most notable application of the famous principle of parsimony that came to be known as **Ockham's razor**. Ockham declared that «plurality is not to be posited without necessity». By this standard, the ontological analysis of any situation should make reference to existing entities only when the features at issue cannot be explained in any other way. Although opinions may differ about whether or not the postulation of a new kind of beings is genuinely necessary in certain circumstances, general acceptance of the Razor places the burden of proof firmly on the side of those who would defend a more complex view of the world.

Theologically, Ockham agreed with Scotus that god is universal and has all of the infinite attributes. But he emphasized even more strongly that god's freedom is absolutely unlimited.According to Ockham's conception of voluntarism, god can will anything at all, even an outright logical contradiction, even though we cannot conceive of the possibility in specific terms. Thus, the regularity of nature is guaranteed only by divine benevolence, not by any logical or causal necessity. Genuine human knowledge is always intuitive and incorrigible for Ockham, but its scope and extent are severely restricted by the limitations of our finite understandings. Were we to depend solely upon such

perfect awareness of the external world, skepticism would be our only recourse. In the practical conduct of life, however, Ockham supposed that mere belief, based on sensory information and therefore prone to error, is nevertheless adequate for our usual needs. This notion of the importance but limitations of empirical knowledge would become a significant feature of British philosophy for many centuries.

3.7 The collapse of scholasticism

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the critical spirit fostered by Scotus and Ockham began to undermine confidence in the scholastic project of synthesizing the philosophical and religious traditions in a comprehensive system of thought. John of Mirecourt, for example, used the problem of devising an adequate account of causation to argue that knowledge of the natural world is severly limited, and Jean Buridan abandoned theological pretension in order to focus narrowly on logical analysis of arguments. Nicholas of Autrecourt argued that efforts to apply philosophical reasoning to Christian doctrine had failed and should be abandoned. Hasdai Crescas among the Jews and Meister Eckhart among the Christians employed rational methods only in order to generate paradoxical results that would demonstrate the need ro rely upon mystical union with god as the foundation for genuine human knowledge.

The most remarkable of these late scholastic figures was Nicolas of Cusa, who made one final attempt at drawing together all of the inconsistent strands of medieval philosophy by deliberately embracing contradiction. Just as god's perfect unity can encompass otherwise contradictory attributes, Cusa argued, so the contradictions apparent in the philosophical tradition should simply be embraced in a single comprehensive whole, without any undue concern for its logical consistency.

Questions for self-testing:

1. On what grounds, according to Augustine, must the knowledge be built?
2. What are the four categories to describe reality offered by Erigena?
3. What is the meaning of the ontological argument of divine reality?
4. Characterize the period of scholasticism in medieval philosophy.
5. Which positions about the problem of the ontological status of general concepts do you know?
6. Who formulated the five ways to prove the existence of God? What are they?
7. What medieval philosophers talked about the freedom of the human will?

8. What is Occam's Razor?

Recommended reading:

1. The Essential Augustine, ed. by Vernon J. Bourke (Hackett, 1974).
2. Augustine, City of God, tr. by Marcus Dods (Modern Library, 2000).
3. Richard Cross, Duns Scotus (Oxford, 1999).
4. Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works, ed. by Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford, 1998).
5. Thomas Aquinas, Selected Philosophical Writings, tr. by Timothy McDermott (Oxford, 1998).
6. Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals: Porphyry, Boethius, Abelard, Duns Scotus, Ockham, ed. by Paul Vincent Spade (Hackett, 1994).
7. William of Ockham, Philosophical Writings: A Selection, tr. by Philotheus Boehner (Hackett, 1990).

4 RENAISSANCE THOUGHT

4.1 The Renaissance

Medieval philosophy had culminated in the cumulative achievements of scholasticism, a grand system of thought developed by generations of patient scholars employing neoplatonic and Aristotelean philosophy in the service of traditional Christian theology. But by the end of the fifteenth century, confidence in the success of this enterprise had eroded, and many thinkers tried to make a fresh start by rejecting such extensive reliance on the authority of earlier scholars. Just as religious reformers challenged ecclesiastical authority and made individual believers responsible for their own relation to god, prominent Renaissance thinkers proposed an analogous elimination of all appeals to authority in education and science.

Educational practice was revolutionized by the recovery of ancient documents, the rejection of institutional authority, and renewed emphasis on individual freedom. The **humanists** expressed an enormous confidence in the power of reason as a source of profound understanding of human nature and of our place in the natural order. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's Oration, for example, held forth the possibilities for a comprehensive new order of knowledge relying on human understanding without reference to divine revelation. For some, like Desiderius Erasmus and Marsillio Ficino, this spirit found expression in a return to careful study of classical texts in their own right, without relying on centuries of scholastic commentary. But for more revolutionary thinkers as diverse as Giordano Bruno and Francisco Suárez,

humanism offered an opportunity to incorporate modern developments along with classical elements in entirely new systems of metaphysical knowledge.

The rise of the new science also offered a significant change in the prospects for **human knowledge of the natural world**. Copernicus argued on theoretical grounds for a heliocentric view of the universe, for which Kepler provided a more secure mathematical interpretation. Galileo contributed not only an impressive series of direct observations of both celestial and terrestrial motion but also a serious effort to explain and defend the new methods. By abandoning explanation in terms of final causes, by emphasizing the importance of observation, and by trying to develop quantified accounts of all, renaissance scientists began to develop the foundations of a thoroughly empirical view of the world.

This emerging emphasis on empirical methods permanently transformed study of the natural world. Making extensive use of sensory observations made possible by the development of new instrumentation fostered an urge to seek quantification of every phenomenon. There were exceptions like Herbert of Cherbury, who hoped that the natural light of common notions imprinted innately in every human being would provide perfect certainty as a foundation for Christianity. But most of the moderns gladly embraced the methods, style, and content of the new science.

4.2 The skeptical challenge

While the Renaissance encouraged abandonment of the benefits of scholastic learning, it could offer only the promise that new ways of thinking might one day suitably replace them. Along with high hopes for the achievement of human knowledge came significant doubts about its possibility. By recovering and translating the work of Sextus Empiricus, humanist scholars introduced the tradition of classical **skepticism** as an element of modern thought. Turning the power of reasoning against itself at every opportunity, the Pyrrhonists proposed that we suspend all belief whenever we find ourselves capable of doubting the truth of what we suppose. The trouble is that very little beyond immediate personal experience can pass this test of indubitability.

The greatest exponent of modern Pyrrhonism was Michel de Montaigne, whose Essays (1580, 1588) gave prominent place to skeptical arguments. Any attempt to achieve knowledge is misguided, on his view, because it arrogantly supposes that the natural world and everything in it exists only for the satisfaction of our idle curiosity. Since the evidence of our senses is notoriously liable to error and the reliability of logical reasoning cannot be demonstrated without circularity, we would indeed be better off to doubt everything and rest comfortably with mere opinion. Even the new science offers no hope, Montaigne argued, since it must eventually be surpassed in

the same way that it has overcome the old. These concerns created a challenge to which modern philosophers were bound to respond.

4.3 Niccolo Machiavelli: Principality and Republic

Among the most widely-read of the Renaissance thinkers was Niccolò Machiavelli, a Florentine politician who retired from public service to write at length on the skill required for successfully running the state. Impatient with abstract reflections on the way things «ought» to be, Machiavelli focussed on the way things are, illustrating his own intensely practical convictions with frequent examples from the historical record. Although he shared with other humanists a profound **pessimism** about human nature, Machiavelli nevertheless argued that the social benefits of stability and security can be achieved even in the face of moral corruption.

In 1513 Machiavelli wrote his best-known work, The Prince. Dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici, this little book offers practical advice on how to rule a city like sixteenth-century Florence. Its over-all theme is that the successful prince must exhibit **virtù** (variously translated as «strength», «skill», or «prowess») in both favorable and adverse circumstances. This crucial quality of leadership is not the same as the **virtuous character** described by ethical philosophers, since Machiavelli held that public success and private morality are entirely separate. The question is not what makes a good human being, but what makes a good prince.

Since all governments are either republics or principalities, Machiavelli noted, their people will be accustomed either to managing their own affairs or to accepting the leadership of a prince. (For that reason, the safest princes are those who inherit their rule over people used to the family.) A prudent leader, however, will be able to anticipate problems long before they actually arise, using *virtù* to forestall what would otherwise be great difficulties. Whatever vitality a former republic may have, then, Machiavelli counselled that it either be destroyed or ruled carefully by a resident prince.

One of the most obvious ways of doing so is by the careful use of military forces, and to this Machiavelli devoted great attention. In fact, in a separate work entitled The Art of War (1520) he offered extensive advice on the acquisition, management, and employment of the army of the state. In The Prince he was content to distinguish types of forces which one might acquire, noting the advantages and disadvantages of each, and to emphasize that such matters are the most vital component of any prince's interest.

Machiavelli's insistence on the practicality of his political advice is most evident in his consideration of the personality, character, and conduct of the successful ruler. No matter what idealistic notions are adopted as principles of private morality, he argued, there is no guarantee that other people will follow them, and that puts the honorable or virtuous individual at a distinct

disadvantage in the real world. In order to achieve success in public life, the ruler must know precisely when and how to do what no good person would ever do.

Although private morality may rest on other factors – divine approval, personal character, or abstract duties, for example – in public life only the praise and blame of fellow human beings really counts. Thus, Machiavelli supposed, the ruler needs to acquire a good reputation while actually doing whatever wrong seems necessary in the circumstances. Thus, rulers must seem to be generous while spending their money wisely, appear to be compassionate while ruling their armies cruelly, and act with great cunning while cultivating a reputation for integrity. Although it is desirable to be both loved and feared by one's subjects, it is difficult to achieve both, and of the two, Machiavelli declared, it is far safer for the ruler to be feared.

Since the modern state is too complex to be managed by any single human being, the effective ruler will naturally need to have advisors who assist in governance. Choosing the right people for these jobs and employing their services appropriately, Machiavelli supposed, is among the practical skills most clearly associated with good leadership. A good ruler will invariably choose competent companions who offer honest advice in response to specific questions and carry out the business of the state without regard for their private interests; such people therefore deserve the rewards of honor, wealth, and power that unshakably secure their devotion to the leader. Ineffective leaders, on the other hand, surround themselves with flatterers whose unwillingness to provide competent advice is a mark of their princes' inadequacy.

All of this talk about skillful leadership would be pointless, of course, if human beings do not in fact have control over their own actions, but must constantly live at the mercy of blind fate or fortune. In the end, Machiavelli argued that even if sheer luck determines the greater portion of our destinies, we can still take full responsibility for whatever remains.

Acknowledging the possibilities for failure, the skillful ruler does better to act boldly than to try to calculate every possible eventuality.

4.4 Thomas Hobbes

4.4.1 Hobbes's Leviathan

Even more than Bacon, Thomas Hobbes illustrated the transition from medieval to modern thinking in Britain. His Leviathan effectively developed a vocabulary for philosophy in the English language by using Anglicized versions of the technical terms employed by Greek and Latin authors. Careful use of words to signify common ideas in the mind, Hobbes maintained, avoids the difficulties to which human reasoning is most obviously prone and makes it

possible to articulate a clear conception of reality. For Hobbes, that conception is bound to be a mechanistic one: the movements of physical objects will turn out to be sufficient to explain everything in the universe. The chief purpose of scientific investigation, then, is to develop a geometrical account of the motion of bodies, which will reveal the genuine basis of their causal interactions and the regularity of the natural world. Thus, Hobbes defended a strictly materialist view of the world.

4.4.2 Human nature

Human beings are physical objects, according to Hobbes, sophisticated machines all of whose functions and activities can be described and explained in purely mechanistic terms. Even thought itself, therefore, must be understood as an instance of the physical operation of the human body. Sensation, for example, involves a series of mechanical processes operating within the human nervous system, by means of which the sensible features of material things produce ideas in the brains of the human beings who perceive them.

Human action is similarly to be explained on Hobbes's view. Specific desires and appetites arise in the human body and are experienced as discomforts or pains which must be overcome. Thus, each of us is motivated to act in such ways as we believe likely to relieve our discomfort, to preserve and promote our own well-being. Everything we choose to do is strictly determined by this natural inclination to relieve the physical pressures that impinge upon our bodies. Human **volition** is nothing but the determination of the will by the strongest present desire.

Hobbes nevertheless supposed that human agents are free in the sense that their activities are not under constraint from anyone else. On this compatibilist view, we have no reason to complain about the strict determination of the will so long as we are not subject to interference from outside ourselves.

As Hobbes acknowledged, this account of human nature emphasizes our animal nature, leaving each of us to live independently of everyone else, acting only in his or her own self-interest, without regard for others. This produces what he called the «**state of war**», a way of life that is certain to prove «solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short». The only escape is by entering into contracts with each other – mutually beneficial agreements to surrender our individual interests in order to achieve the advantages of security that only a social existence can provide.

4.4.3 Human society

Unable to rely indefinitely on their individual powers in the effort to secure livelihood and contentment, Hobbes supposed, human beings join together in the formation of a commonwealth. Thus, the commonwealth as a whole embodies a network of associated contracts and provides for the highest form of social organization. On Hobbes's view, the formation of the commonwealth creates a new, artificial person (the Leviathan) to whom all responsibility for social order and public welfare is entrusted.

Of course, someone must make decisions on behalf of this new whole, and that person will be the sovereign. The commonwealth-creating covenant is not in essence a relationship between subjects and their sovereign at all. Rather, what counts is the relationship among subjects, all of whom agree to divest themselves of their native powers in order to secure the benefits of orderly government by obeying the dictates of the sovereign authority.

That's why the minority who might prefer a different sovereign authority have no complaint, on Hobbes's view: even though they have no respect for this particular sovereign, they are still bound by their contract with fellow-subjects to be governed by a single authority. The sovereign is nothing more than the institutional embodiment of orderly government.

Since the decisions of the sovereign are entirely arbitrary, it hardly matters where they come from, so long as they are understood and obeyed universally. Thus, Hobbes's account explicitly leaves open the possibility that the sovereign will itself be a corporate person – a legislature or an assembly of all citizens – as well as a single human being.

Regarding these three forms, however, Hobbes himself maintained that the commonwealth operates most effectively when a hereditary monarch assumes the sovereign role. Investing power in a single natural person who can choose advisors and rule consistently without fear of internal conflicts is the best fulfillment of our social needs. Thus, the radical metaphysical positions defended by Hobbes lead to a notably conservative political result, an endorsement of the paternalistic view.

Hobbes argued that the commonwealth secures the liberty of its citizens. Genuine human freedom, he maintained, is just the ability to carry out one's will without interference from others. This doesn't entail an absence of law; indeed, our agreement to be subject to a common authority helps each of us to secure liberty with respect to others.

Submission to the sovereign is absolutely decisive, except where it is silent or where it claims control over individual rights to life itself, which cannot be transferred to anyone else. But the structure provided by orderly government, according to Hobbes, enhances rather than restricts individual liberty.

Whether or not the sovereign is a single heredetary monarch, of course, its administration of social order may require the cooperation and assistance of others. Within the commonwealth as a whole, there may arise smaller «bodies politic» with authority over portions of the lives of those who enter into them. The sovereign will appoint agents whose responsibility is to act on its behalf in matters of less than highest importance. Most important, the will of the sovereign for its subjects will be expressed in the form of civil laws that have either been decreed or tacitly accepted. Criminal violations of these laws by any subject will be appropriately punished by the sovereign authority.

Despite his firm insistence on the vital role of the sovereign as the embodiment of the commonwealth, Hobbes acknowledged that there are particular circumstances under which it may fail to accomplish its purpose. If the sovereign has too little power, is made subject to its own laws, or allows its power to be divided, problems will arise.

Similarly, if individual subjects make private judgments of right and wrong based on conscience, succomb to religious enthisiasm, or acquire excessive private property, the state will suffer. Even a well-designed commonwealth may, over time, cease to function and will be dissolved.

Questions for self-testing:

1. What do you know about the peculiarities of philosophical and scientific thought in the Renaissance? In what is humanism manifested in this period?
2. What kind of advice does Machiavelli give the ruler? Comment the ethical and political philosopher's views.
3. What Hobbes sees the the causes of human behavior? What are the consequences of such an order of things?
4. How does Hobbes propose to allocate responsibility for public welfare?

Recommended reading:

1. Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts, ed. by Jill Kraye (Cambridge, 1998).
2. Renaissance Philosophy of Man: Petrarca, Valla, Ficino, Pico, Pomponazzi, Vives, ed. by Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John H. Randall (Chicago, 1956).
3. Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, tr. by George Bull (Penguin, 1999).
4. Michel Montaigne, The Complete Essays (Penguin, 1993).
5. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. by J.C.A. Gaskin (Oxford, 1998).
6. Thomas Hobbes, On the Citizen, ed. by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge, 1998).

5 MODERN

5.1 The Central Questions

Against the background of humanistic scholarship, the rise of the new science, and the challenge of skepticism, modern philosophers were preoccupied with philosophical issues in several distinct areas:

Epistemology: Can human beings achieve any certain knowledge of the world? If so, what are the sources upon which genuine knowledge depends? In particular, how does sense perception operate in service of human knowledge?

Metaphysics: What kinds of things ultimately compose the universe? In particular, what are the distinctive features of human nature, and how do they function in relation to each other and the world at large? Does god exist?

Ethics: By what standards should human conduct be evaluated? Which actions are morally right, and what motivates us to perform them? Is moral life possible without the support of religious belief?

Metaphilosophy: Does philosophy have a distinctive place in human life generally? What are the proper aims and methods of philosophical inquiry?

Although not every philosopher addressed all of these issues and some philosophers had much more to say about some issues than others, our survey of modern philosophy will trace the content of their responses to questions of these basic sorts.

5.2 Francis Bacon

British politician and entrepeneur Francis Bacon, for example, expressed the modern spirit well in a series of works designed to replace stultified Aristoteleanism with improved methods for achieving truth. Assuming that the difficulties we experience are invariably the results of poor training and can therefore be eliminated, Bacon promised that the adoption of more appropriate habits of thinking will enable individual thinkers to transcend them.

Believing that the first step toward knowledge is to identify its major obstacles, Bacon took note of four distinct varieties of distractions that too often prevent us from understanding the world correctly:

Idols of the tribe, which arise from human nature generally, encourage us to over-estimate our own importance within the greater scheme of things by supposing that everything must truly be as it appears to us.

Idols of the cave, which arise from our individual natures, lead each one of us to extrapolate inappropriately from his or her own case to a hasty generalization about humanity, life, or nature generally.

Idols of the marketplace, which arise from the use of language as a means of communication, interfere with an unbiased perception of natural

phenomena by forcing us to express everything in traditional terms.

Idols of the theatre, which arise from academic philosophy itself, produces an inclination to build and defend elaborate systems of thought that are founded on little evidence from ordinary experience.

Once we notice the effects that these «Idols» have upon us, Bacon supposed, we are in a position to avoid them, and our knowledge of nature will accordingly improve.

In a more positive spirit, Bacon proposed a patient method borrowed from the practice of the new scientists of the preceding generation. First, we must use our senses (properly freed from the idols) to collect and organize many particular instances from experience. Resisting the urge to generalize whenever it is possible to do so, we adhere firmly to an experimental appreciation of the natural world. Only when it seems unavoidable will we then tentatively postulate modest rules about the coordination and reqularity we observe among these cases, subject always to confirmation or refutation by future experiences.

5.3 Rene Descartes: a new approach

The first great philosopher of the modern era was René Descartes, whose new approach won him recognition as the progenitor of modern philosophy. Descartes's pursuit of mathematical and scientific truth soon led to a profound rejection of the scholastic tradition in which he had been educated. Much of his work was concerned with the provision of a secure foundation for the advancement of human knowledge through the natural sciences. Fearing the condemnation of the church, however, Descartes was rightly cautious about publicly expressing the full measure of his radical views. The philosophical writings for which he is remembered are therefore extremely circumspect in their treatment of controversial issues.

5.3.1 Rules for the guidance of reason

After years of work in private, Descartes finally published a preliminary statement of his views in the Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason (1637). Since mathematics has genuinely achieved the certainty for which human thinkers yearn, he argued, we rightly turn to mathematical reasoning as a model for progress in human knowledge more generally. Expressing perfect confidence in the capacity of human reason to achieve knowledge, Descartes proposed an intellectual process no less unsettling than the architectural destruction and rebuilding of an entire town. In order to be absolutely sure that we accept only what is genuinely certain, we must first deliberately renounce all of the firmly held but questionable beliefs we have previously acquired by experience and education.

The progress and certainty of mathematical knowledge, Descartes supposed, provide an emulable model for a similarly productive philosophical method, characterized by four simple rules:

1. Accept as true only what is indubitable.
2. Divide every question into manageable parts.
3. Begin with the simplest issues and ascend to the more complex.
4. Review frequently enough to retain the whole argument at once.

This quasi-mathematical procedure for the achievement of knowledge is typical of a rationalistic approach to epistemology.

While engaged in such a comprehensive revision of our beliefs, Descartes supposed it prudent to adhere to a modest, conventional way of life that provides a secure and comfortable environment in which to pursue serious study. The stoic underpinnings of this «provisional morality» are evident in the emphasis on changing oneself to fit the world. Its general importance as an avenue to the contemplative life, however, is more general.

5.3.2 Anticipated results

In this context, Descartes offered a brief description of his own experience with the proper approach to knowledge. Begin by renouncing any belief that can be doubted, including especially the testimony of the senses; then use the perfect certainty of one's own existence, which survives this doubt, as the foundation for a demonstration of the providential reliability of one's faculties generally. Significant knowledge of the world, Descartes supposed, can be achieved only by following this epistemological method, the rationalism of relying on a mathematical model and eliminating the distraction of sensory information in order to pursue the demonstrations of pure reason.

Later sections of the Discourse (along with the supplementary scientific essays with which it was published) trace some of the more significant consequences of following the Cartesian method in philosophy. His mechanistic inclinations emerge clearly in these sections, with frequent reminders of the success of physical explanations of complex phenomena. Non-human animals, on Descartes's view, are complex organic machines, all of whose actions can be fully explained without any reference to the operation of mind in thinking.

In fact, Descartes declared, most of human behavior, like that of animals, is susceptible to simple mechanistic explanation. Cleverly designed automata could successfully mimic nearly all of what we do. Thus, Descartes argued, it is only the general ability to adapt to widely varying circumstances – and, in particular, the capacity to respond creatively in the use of language – that provides a sure test for the presence of an immaterial soul associated with the normal human body.

But Descartes supposed that no matter how human-like an animal or machine could be made to appear in its form or operations, it would always be possible to distinguish it from a real human being by two functional criteria. Although an animal or machine may be capable of performing any one activity as well as (or even better than) we can, he argued, each human being is capable of a greater variety of different activities than could be performed by anything lacking a soul. In a special instance of this general point, Descartes held that although an animal or machine might be made to utter sounds resembling human speech in response to specific stimuli, only an immaterial thinking substance could engage in the creative use of language required for responding appropriately to any unexpected circumstances. My puppy is a loyal companion, and my computer is a powerful instrument, but neither of them can engage in a decent conversation.

5.3.3 Starting with doubt

For a more complete formal presentation of this foundational experience, we must turn to the Meditations on First Philosophy (1641), in which Descartes offered to contemporary theologians his proofs of the existence of god and the immortality of the human soul. This explicit concern for religious matters does not reflect any loss of interest in pursuing the goals of science. By sharply distinguishing mind from body, Descartes hoped to preserve a distinct arena for the church while securing the freedom of scientists to develop **mechanistic accounts of physical phenomena**. In this way, he supposed it possible to satisfy the requirements of Christian doctrine, but discourage the interference of the church in scientific matters and promote further observational exploration of the material world.

The arrangement of the Meditations, Descartes emphasized, is not the order of reasons; that is, it makes no effort to proceed from the metaphysical foundations of reality to the dependent existence of lesser beings, as Spinoza would later try to do. Instead, this book follows the order of thoughts; that is, it traces the epistemological progress an individual thinker might follow in establishing knowledge at a level of perfect certainty. Thus, these are truly Meditations: we are meant to put ourselves in the place of the first-person narrator, experiencing for ourselves the benefits of the philosophical method.

5.3.4 The method of doubt

The basic strategy of Descartes's **method of doubt** is to defeat skepticism on its own ground. Begin by doubting the truth of everything – not only the evidence of the senses and the more extravagant cultural presuppositions, but even the fundamental process of reasoning itself. If any particular truth about the world can survive this extreme skeptical challenge,

then it must be truly indubitable and therefore a perfectly certain foundation for knowledge. The First Meditation, then, is an extended exercise in learning to doubt everything that I believe, considered at **three distinct levels**:

1. Perceptual Illusion

First, Descartes noted that the testimony of the senses with respect to any particular judgment about the external world may turn out to be mistaken. Things are not always just as they seem at first glance (or at first hearing, etc.) to be. But then, Descartes argues, it is prudent never wholly to trust in the truth of what we perceive. In ordinary life, of course, we adjust for mistaken perceptions by reference to correct perceptions. But since we cannot be sure at first which cases are veridical and which are not, it is possible (if not always feasible) to doubt any particular bit of apparent sensory knowledge.

2. The Dream Problem

Second, Descartes raised a more systematic method for doubting the legitimacy of all sensory perception. Since my most vivid dreams are internally indistinguishible from waking experience, he argued, it is possible that everything I now «perceive» to be part of the physical world outside me is in fact nothing more than a fanciful fabrication of my own imagination. On this supposition, it is possible to doubt that any physical thing really exists, that there is an external world at all.

Severe as it is, this level of doubt is not utterly comprehensive, since the truths of mathematics and the content of simple natures remain unaffected. Even if there is no material world (and thus, even in my dreams) two plus three makes five and red looks red to me. In order to doubt the veracity of such fundamental beliefs, I must extend the method of doubting even more hyperbolically.

3. A Deceiving God

Finally, then, Descartes raises even more comprehensive doubts by inviting us to consider a radical hypothesis derived from one of our most treasured traditional beliefs. What if (as religion teaches) there is an omnipotent god, but that deity devotes its full attention to deceiving me? The problem here is not merely that I might be forced by god to believe what something which is in fact false. Descartes means to raise the far more devastating possibility that whenever I believe anything, even if it has always been true up until now, a truly omnipotent deceiver could at that very moment choose to change the world so as to render my belief false. On this supposition, it seems possible to doubt the truth of absolutely anything I might come to believe.

Although the hypothesis of a deceiving god best serves the logical structure of the Meditations as a whole, Descartes offered two alternative versions of the hypothetical doubt for the benefit of those who might take offense at even a counter-factual suggestion of impiety. It may seem more palatable to the devout to consider the possibility that I systematically deceive

myself or that there is some evil demon who perpetually tortures me with my own error. The point in each case is that it is possible for every belief I entertain to be false.

Remember that the point of the entire exercise is to out-do the skeptics at their own game, to raise the broadest possible grounds for doubt, so that whatever we come to believe in the face of such challenges will indeed be that which cannot be doubted. It is worthwhile to pause here, wallowing in the depths of Cartesian doubt at the end of the First Meditation, the better to appreciate the escape he offers at the outset of Meditation Two.

5.3.5 I am, I exist

The Second Meditation begins with a review of the First. Remember that I am committed to suspending judgment with respect to anything about which I can conceive any doubt, and my doubts are extensive. I mistrust every report of my senses, I regard the material world as nothing more than a dream, and I suppose that an omnipotent god renders false each proposition that I am even inclined to believe. Since everything therefore seems to be dubitable, does it follow that I can be certain of nothing at all?

It does not. Descartes claimed that one thing emerges as true even under the strict conditions imposed by the otherwise universal doubt: «I am, I exist» is necessarily true whenever the thought occurs to me. This truth neither derives from sensory information nor depends upon the reality of an external world, and I would have to exist even if I were systematically deceived. For even an omnipotent god could not cause it to be true, at one and the same time, both that I am deceived and that I do not exist. If I am deceived, then at least I am.

Although Descartes's reasoning here is best known in the Latin translation of its expression in the Discourse, «cogito, ergo sum» («I think, therefore I am»), it is not merely an inference from the activity of thinking to the existence of an agent which performs that activity. It is intended rather as an **intuition** of one's own reality, an expression of the indubitability of first-person experience, the logical self-certification of self-conscious awareness in any form.

Skepticism is thereby defeated, according to Descartes. No matter how many skeptical challenges are raised – indeed, even if things are much worse than the most extravagant skeptic ever claimed – there is at least one fragment of genuine human knowledge: my perfect certainty of my own existence. From this starting-point, Descartes supposed, it is possible to achieve indubitable knowledge of many other propositions as well.

5.3.6 I am a thinking thing

An initial consequence may be drawn directly from the intuitive certainty of the cogito itself. If I know that I am, Descartes argued, I must also know what I am; an understanding of my true nature must be contained implicitly in the content of my awareness. What then, is this «I» that doubts, that may be deceived, that thinks? Since I became certain of my existence while entertaining serious doubts about sensory information and the existence of a material world, none of the apparent features of my human body can have been crucial for my understanding of myself. But all that is left is my thought itself, so Descartes concluded that «sum res cogitans» («I am a thing that thinks»). In Descartes's terms, I am a **substance** whose inseparable attribute (or entire essence) is thought, with all its modes: doubting, willing, conceiving, believing, etc. What I really am is a mind [Lat. mens] or soul [Lat. anima]. So completely am I identified with my conscious awareness, Descartes claimed, that if I were to stop thinking altogether, it would follow that I no longer existed at all. At this point, nothing else about human nature can be determined with such perfect certainty.

In ordinary life, my experience of bodies may appear to be more vivid than self-consciousness, but Descartes argued that sensory appearances actually provide no reliable knowledge of the external world. If I hold a piece of beeswax while approaching the fire, all of the qualities it presents to my senses change dramatically while the wax itself remains. It follows that the impressions of sense are unreliable guides even to the nature of bodies. Notice here that the identity of the piece of wax depends solely upon its spatial location; that's a significant hint about Descartes's view of the true nature of material things, which we'll see in more detail in Meditation Five.

5.3.7 Clear and distinct ideas

At the outset of the Third Meditation, Descartes tried to use this first truth as the **paradigm** for his general account of the possibilities for achieving human knowledge. In the **cogito**, awareness of myself, of thinking, and of existence are somehow combined in such a way as to result in an intuitive grasp of a truth that cannot be doubted. Perhaps we can find in other cases the same grounds for indubitable truth. But what is it?

The answer lies in Descartes's theory of ideas. Considered formally, as the content of my thinking activity, the ideas involved in the **cogito** are unusually clear and distinct. But ideas may also be considered objectively, as the mental representatives of things that really exist.

According to a representative realist like Descartes, then, the connections among our ideas yield truth only when they correspond to the way the world really is.

But it is not obvious that our clear and distinct ideas do correspond to the reality of things, since we suppose that there may be an omnipotent deceiver.

In some measure, the reliability of our ideas may depend on the source from which they are derived. Descartes held that there are only three possibilities: all of our ideas are either **adventitious** (entering the mind from the outside world) or **factitious** (manufactured by the mind itself) or **innate** (inscribed on the mind by god).

5.3.8 Consequences of dualism

Descartes worked out his own detailed theories about the physical operation of the material world in The World, but uncertainty about ecclesiastical reactions prevented him from publishing it. The final sections of the Discourse, however, include several significant hints about the positions he was prepared to defend. Their explanations of the activities of living organisms make the mechanistic implications of the Cartesian view more evident.

Since, as everyone acknowledges, non-human animals do not have souls, Descartes concluded that animals must be merely complex machines. Since they lack any immaterial thinking substance, animals cannot think, and all of the movements of their bodies can, in principle, be explained in purely mechanical terms. (Descartes himself incorrectly supposed that the nervous system functions as a complex hydraulic machine.) But since the structure of the human body and the behavior of human beings are similar to the structure and behavior of some animals, it is obvious that many human actions can also be given a mechanistic explanation. La Mettrie later followed this line of reasoning to its ultimate conclusion, supposing human beings to be nothing more than Cartesian machines.

5.3.9 Cartesianism

The philosophy of Descartes won ready acceptance in the second half of the seventeenth century, expecially in France and Holland. Although few of his followers, known collectively as Cartesians, employed his methods, they showed great diligence and ingenuity in their efforts to explain, defend, and advance his central doctrines.

In the physical sciences, for example, Cavendish, Rohault, and Régis were happy to abandon all efforts to employ final causes in their pursuit of mechanistic accounts of physical phenomena and animal behavior. On this basis, however, such philosophers were able to progress beyond a simple affirmation of the mysterious reality of mind-body interaction.

Metaphysicians like Cordemoy and Geulincx fared little better in their efforts to deal with this crucial problem with dualism. If there is no genuine causal interaction between independent substances, we seem driven to suppose that the actions of mind and body are merely parallel or divinely synchronized.

Not everyone was entirely satisfied by the epistemological foundations of the Cartesian scheme, either. Critics like Arnauld, Nicole, and Foucher drew attention to the inherent difficulty of explaining in representationalist terms how our ideas of things can be known to resemble the things themselves and the implausibility of reliance upon innate ideas. Conway went even further, rejecting the dualistic foundations of Descartes's substance-ontology along with his approach to human knowledge.

5.4 Blaise Pascal: The religious mathematician

One seventeenth-century thinker of greater independent significance was Blaise Pascal, with his unusual blend of religious piety, scientific curiosity, and mathematical genius. Led by his deep religious feelings to participate fully in the pietistic Jansenism of the Port-Royal community, Pascal maintained that formal reasoning about god can never provide an adequate substitute for genuine personal concern for the faith: «The heart has its reasons that reason cannot know».

Pascal's mathematical acumen was no less remarkable than that of Descartes; his work anticipated the development of game theory and the modern methods of calculating probability. In fact, his famous «Wager» applies these mathematical techniques to the prudence of religious conviction in the absence of adequate evidence: since the consequences of believing are infinitely beneficial if there is a god and only slightly inconvenient if there is not, while the outcome of atheism is only somewhat more pleasant if there is no god and eternally costly if there is, the expected value of theism is much greater than that of atheism, and it is reasonable to stake one's life on the possibility that god does exist.

5.5 Baruch Spinoza: God, nature, and freedom

5.5.1 Philosophy «ad more geometrico»

Descartes regarded mathematical reasoning as the paradigm for progress in human knowledge, but Baruch Spinoza took this rationalistic appreciation even further, developing and expressing his mature philosophical views «in the geometrical manner». Thus, in the posthumously-published Ethics (1677), Spinoza claimed to deduce the entire system of thought from a restricted set of definitions and self-evident axioms.

Drawing specific doctrines from Cartesian thought, medieval scholasticism, and the Jewish tradition, Spinoza blended everything together into a comprehensive vision of the universe as a coherent whole governed solely by the immutable laws of logical necessity. Rigorous thought reveals that there can be only a single substance, of which we (and everything else) are merely insignificant parts. Although we may find it difficult to take any comfort in Spinoza's account of our place in the world, we are bound to admire the logical consistency with which he works out all the details.

5.5.2 The Unity of Substance

The definitions and axioms with which Book I of the Ethics begins are critical to Spinoza's enterprise, since they are intended to carry his central doctrines as deductive consequences. Although they generally follow the usages of the scholastic tradition, many of them also include special features of great significance to the thought of Spinoza.

Substance, for example, he defined not only as existing in itself but also as «conceived through itself». This places a severe limit on the possibility of interaction between things, since Spinoza delared that causation is a relation of logical necessity, such that knowledge of the effect requires knowledge of its cause. Few will disagree that god is a substance with infinite attributes, but this definition carries some surprising implications in Spinoza's view of the world; notice also that freedom, according to Spinoza, just means that a thing exists and acts by its own nature rather than by external compulsion.

The numbered propositions that follow make it clear what Spinoza is getting at. Since causal interaction is impossible between two substances that differ essentially, and no two substances can share a common attribute or essence, it follows that no substance can produce genuine change in any another substance. Each must be the cause of its own existence and, since it cannot be subject to limitations imposed from outside itself, must also be absolutely infinite. Things that appear to be finite individuals interacting with each other, then, cannot themselves be substances; in reality, they can be nothing more than the modifications of a self-caused, infinite substance. And that, of course, is god.

5.5.3 «Deus sive Natura»

Spinoza supposed it easy to demonstrate that such a being does really exist. As the ontological argument makes clear, god's very essence includes existence. Moreover, nothing else could possibly prevent the existence of that substance which has infinite attributes in itself.

Finally, although it depends on a posteriori grounds to which Spinoza would rather not appeal, the cosmological argument helps us to understand

that since we ourselves exist, so must an infinite cause of the universe. Thus, god exists.

What is more, god is a being with infinitely many attributes, each of which is itself infinite, upon which no limits of any kind can be imposed. So Spinoza argued that infinite substance must be indivisible, eternal, and unitary. There can be only one such substance, «god or nature», in which everything else is wholly contained. Thus, Spinoza is **an extreme monist**, for whom «Whatever is, is in god». Every mind and every body, every thought and every movement, all are nothing more than aspects of the one true being. Thus, god is an extended as well as a thinking substance.

Finally, god is perfectly free on Spinoza's definition. Of course it would be incorrect to suppose that god has any choices about what to do. Everything that happens is not only causally determined but actually flows by logical necessity from immutable laws. But since everything is merely a part of god, those laws themselves, and cause and effect alike, are simply aspects of the divine essence, which is wholly self-contained and therefore free. Because there is no other substance, god's actions can never be influenced by anything else.

5.5.4 The natural order

God is the only genuine cause. From the essence of god, Spinoza held, infinitely many things flow in infinitely many different ways. The entire universe emanates inexorably from the immutable core of infinite substance.

Though we often find it natural to think of the world from the outside looking in, as **natura naturata** (nature natured), its internal structure can be more accurately conceived from the inside looking out, as **natura naturans** (nature naturing). Since all that happens radiates from the common core, everything hangs together as part of the coherent whole which just is god or nature in itself.

The infinite substance and each of its infinitely many distinct attributes (among which only thought and extension are familiar to us) are eternal expressions of the immutable essence of god. From each attribute flow the infinite immediate modes (infinite intellect and motion or rest), and out of these in turn come the infinite mediate modes (truth and the face of the universe).

Thus, every mode of substance (each individual mind or body) is determined to be as it is because of the divine essence. Even the finite modes (particular thoughts and actions) are inevitably and wholly determined by the nature of god. Hence, everything in the world is as it must be; nothing could be other than it is.

5.5.5 Thought and extension

In the same deductive geometrical form, Book II of the Ethics offers an extensive account of human beings: our existence, our nature, and our activities. Remember that we are aware of only two of the infinitely many attributes of god, extension and thought, and that each of them independently expresses the entire essence of the one infinite substance.

That is, in the natural world (god's body), the attribute of extension, modified by varying degrees of motion and rest, produces the face of the universe, which includes all of the particular physical events which are the modes of extension. This is almost exactly like Descartes's account of the material world.

Similarly, in the mental realm (god's idea), the attribute of thought – modified by infinite intellect – produces the truth, which includes all of the particular mental events which are the modes of thought. Since they arise from distinct attributes, each of these realms is causally independent of the other and wholly self-contained: the natural world and the mental realm are separate closed systems.

Despite the impossibility of any causal interaction between the two, Spinoza supposed that the inevitable unfolding of each these two independent attributes must proceed in perfect parallel with that of the other.

«The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things». And so, of course, must be the order and connection of each of the infinitely many other attributes of god. Since the development of each aspect of the divine nature follows with logical necessity from its own fundamental attribute, and since all of the attributes, in turn, derive from the central essential being of one and the same infinite substance, each exhibits the same characteristic pattern of organization even though they have no influence on each other.

Thus, for every object of the natural world that exists as a mode of the attribute of extension, there is a corresponding idea in the mind of god that exists as a mode of the attribute of thought.

For every physical event that takes place in the material realm as the result of exclusively physical causes, a corresponding mental event must occur in the infinite intellect as a result of purely mental causes.

Since everything flows from the same infinite being, we may suppose that the structure of thought in infinite intellect comprises an accurate representation of the structure of every other attribute.

5.5.6 Mind and body

Consider what all of this implies for each of us as a living human being. We are not substances, according to Spinoza, for only god or Nature is truly

substantial; we can exist only as modes, depending for our existence upon the reality of the one real being. Since the one infinite substance is the cause of everything, each of us can only be regarded as a tiny cross-section of the whole.

Of course, that cross-section does include elements from each of the infinitely many attributes of that substance. In particular, we know that in each case it involves both a human body, the movements of whose organic parts are all physical events that flow from god via the attribute of extension, and a human mind, the formation of whose ideas are all mental events that flow from god via the attribute of thought. Although there can be no causal interaction between the mind and the body, the order and connection of their internal elements are perfectly correlated.

Thus, in principle, the human mind contains ideas that perfectly represent the parts of the human body. But since many of these ideas are inadequate in the sense that they do not carry with them internal signs of their accuracy, we do not necessarily know our own bodies. If, for example, there must be in my mind an idea that corresponds to each particular organic state of my spleen; but since I am unaware of its bodily correlate, it provides me with no clear awareness of that representational object.

5.5.7 Human knowledge

Spinoza maintained that human beings do have particular faculties whose functions are to provide some degree of knowledge. I typically assume, for example, that there may be some correlation between thought and extension with regard to sensations produced by the action of other bodies upon my eyes, ears, and fingertips. Even my memory may occasionally harbor some evidence of the order and connection common to things and ideas. And in self-conscious awareness, I seem to achieve genuine knowledge of myself by representing my mind to itself, using ideas to signify other ideas.

Near the end of Book II, then, Spinoza distinguished three kinds of knowledge of which we may be capable: First, **opinion**, derived either from vague sensory experience or from the signification of words in the memory or imagination, provides only inadequate ideas and cannot be relied upon as a source of truth. Second, **reason**, which begins with simple adequate ideas and by analyzing causal or logical necessity proceeds toward awareness of their more general causes, does provide us with truth. But **intuition**, in which the mind deduces the structure of reality from the very essence or idea of god, is the great source of adequate ideas, the highest form of knowledge, and the ultimate guarantor of truth. Spinoza therefore recommends a three-step process for the achievement of human knowledge:

First, disregard the misleading testimony of the senses and conventional learning.

Second, starting from the adequate idea of any one existing thing, reason back to the eternal attribute of god from which it derives.

Finally, use this knowledge of the divine essence to intuit everything else that ever was, is, and will be.

Indeed, he supposed that the Ethics itself is an exercise in this ultimate pursuit of indubitable knowledge.

5.5.8 Action, goodness, and freedom

The last three Books of the Ethics collectively describe how to live consistently on Spinozistic principles. All human behavior results from desire or the perception of pain, so (like events of any sort) it flows necessarily from the eternal attributes of thought and extension. But Spinoza pointed out a crucial distinction between two kinds of cases: Sometimes I am wholly unaware of the causes that underlie what I do and am simply overwhelmed by the strength of my momentary passions. But at other times I have adequate knowledge of the motives for what I do and can engage in deliberate action because I recognize my place within the grander scheme of reality as a whole.

It is in this fashion that moral value enters Spinoza's system. Good (or evil) just is what serves (or hinders) the long-term interests of life. Since my actions invariably follow from emotion or desire, I always do what I believe to be the good, which will truly be so if I have adequate ideas of everything involved. The greatest good of human life, then, is to understand one's place in the structure of the universe as a natural expression of the essence of god.

But how can we speak of moral responsibility when every human action is determined with rigid necessity? Remember that, for Spinoza, **freedom** is self-determination, so when I acquire adequate knowledge of the emotions and desires that are the internal causes of all my actions, when I understand why I do what I do, then I am truly free. Although I can neither change the way things are nor hope that I will be rewarded, I must continue to live and act with the calm confidence that I am a necessary component of an infinitely greater and more important whole. This way of life may not be easy, Spinoza declared, «But all noble things are as difficult as they are rare».

5.6 Gottfried Leibniz

The last of the great Continental Rationalists was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Known in his own time as a legal advisor to the Court of Hanover and as a practicing mathematician who co-invented the calculus, Leibniz applied the rigorous standards of formal reasoning in an effort to comprehend everything. A suitably sophisticated logical scheme, he believed, can serve as a reliable guide to the ultimate structure of reality.

5.6.1 True propositions

The basis for Leibniz's philosophy is pure logical analysis. Every proposition, he believed, can be expressed in subject-predicate form. What is more, every true proposition is a statement of identity whose predicate is wholly contained in its subject, like «2 + 3 = 5». In this sense, all propositions are analytic for Leibniz. But since the required analysis may be difficult, he distinguished two kinds of true propositions:

Truths of Reason are explicit statements of identity, or reducible to explicit identities by a substitution of the definitions of their terms. Since a finite analysis always reveals the identity-structure of such truths, they cannot be denied without contradiction and are perfectly necessary.

Truths of Fact, on the other hand, are implicit statements of identity, the grounds for whose truth may not be evident to us. These truths are merely contingent and may be subject to dispute, since only an infinite analysis could show them to be identities.

Anything that human beings can believe or know, Leibniz held, must be expressed in one or the other of these two basic forms. The central insight of Leibniz's system is that all existential propositions are truths of fact, not truths of reason. This simple doctrine has many significant consequences.

5.6.2 Complete individual substances

Consider next how this logic of propositions applies to the structure of reality itself for Leibniz. The subject of any proposition signifies a complete individual substance, a simple, indivisible, dimensionless being or **monad**, while the predicate signifies some quality, property, or power. Thus, each true proposition represents the fact that some feature is actually contained in this substance.

Each monad is a **complete** individual substance in the sense that it contains all of its features – past, present, and future. Because statements of identity are timeless, the facts they express perpetually obtain. (Thus, for example, I am the person whose daughter was born in 1996 and the person who now develops this web site and the person who will vacation in Manitoba next summer; since each of these predicates can be truly affirmed of me, each of these features is contained in me.) Everything that was, is, or will ever be true of any substance is already contained in it.

Moreover, each monad is a complete **individual** substance in the sense that its being is utterly independent of everything else. Because statements of identity are self-contained, any apparent relation between substances must actually be a matching pair of features that each possesses alone. (Thus, for example, I happen to have the property of being Aaron's father, and Aaron happens to have the property of being my son, but these are two facts, not

one.) Hence, on Leibniz's view, there can be no interaction between substances, each of which is purely active. Monads are «windowless».

Where Spinoza saw the world as a single comprehensive substance like Descartes's extended matter, then, Leibniz supposed that the world is composed of many discrete particles, each of which is simple, active, and independent of every other, like Descartes's minds or souls. The rationalists' common reliance upon mathematical models of reasoning led to startlingly different conceptions of the universe. Yet the rationality, consistency, and necessity within each system is clear.

5.6.3 Logical principles

Another way of summing up the structure of the universe on Leibniz's view is by reviewing the great logical principles from which all truths are said to flow:

The Principle of Contradiction generates the truths of reason, each of which states the connection between an individual substance and one of its finite number of essential features. It would be a contradiction to deny any of these propositions, since the substance would not be what it is unless it had all of these features. Truths of reason, then, are not influenced by any contingent fact about the world; they are true «in all possible worlds». Thus, for example, «Garth Kemerling is a human being» would be necessarily true even if my parents had been childless.

The Principle of Sufficient Reason generates the truths of fact, each of which states the connection between an existing individual substance and one of its infinitely many accidental features or relations. The sufficient reason for the truth of each of these propositions is that this substance does exist as a member of the consistent set of monads which constitutes the actual world. Truths of fact, then, depend upon the reciprocal mirroring of each existing substance by every other. Thus, for example, «Garth Kemerling is an oldest child» is contingently true only because my parents had no children before I was born.

The Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles establishes the fact that, within the set of monads that constitutes any possible world, no two can be exactly alike. If, on the contrary, there were two distinct but perfectly identical substances, Leibniz argued, then there could be no sufficient reason for each to occupy its own location rather than that of the other. More positively, since each monad mirrors the entire structure of the world, each must reflect a unique set of relations to every other.

Finally, the Principle of the Plenum (or principle of plenitude) affirms that the actual world, considered as a set of monads, is as full as it can possibly be. Since there is no genuine interaction among distinct substances, there would be no sufficient reason for the non-existence of any monad that would

be consistent with the others within a possible world. Hence, anything that can happen will; every possibility within this world must be actualized. The world in which we live, then, is but one among the infinitely many possible worlds that might have existed. What makes this one special?

5.6.4 Space and time

Since we experience the actual world as full of physical objects, Leibniz provided a detailed account of the nature of bodies. As Descartes had correctly noted, the essence of matter is that it is spatially extended. But since every extended thing, no matter how small, is in principle divisible into even smaller parts, it is apparent that all material objects are compound beings made up of simple elements. But from this Leibniz concluded that the ultimate constitutents of the world must be simple, indivisible, and therefore unextended, particles – dimensionless mathematical points. So the entire world of extended matter is in reality constructed from simple immaterial substances, monads, or entelechies.

In fact, Leibniz held that neither space nor time is a fundamental feature of reality. Of course individual substances stand in spatial relation to each other, but relations of this sort are reducible in logic to the non-relational features of windowless monads. In exactly the same way, temporal relations can be logically analyzed as the timeless properties of individual monads. Space and time are unreal, but references to spatial location and temporal duration provide a convenient short-hand for keeping track of the relations among the consistent set of monads which is the actual world.

What is at work here again is Leibniz's notion of complete individual substances, each of which mirrors every other. A monad not only contains all of its own past, present, and future features but also, by virtue of a complex web of spatio-temporal references, some representation of every other monad, each of which in turn contains. In a universe of windowless mirrors, each reflects any other, along with its reflections of every other, and so on *ad* infinitum. It is for this reason that an infinite analysis would be required to reveal the otherwise implicit identity at the heart of every truth of fact. In order fully to understand the simple fact that my eyes are brown, one would have to consider the eye-color of all of my ancestors, the anatomical structure of the iris, my personal opthalmological history, the culturally-defined concept of color, the poetical associations of dark eyes, etc., etc., etc.; the slightest difference in any one of these things would undermine the truth of this matter of fact. Existential assertions presuppose the reality of just this one among all possible worlds as the actual world.

Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz illustrate well the range of diverse outcomes that may result from an effort to understand the world through **a priori knowledge**. If their systems of thought seem implausibly remote from

the world of ordinary experience, it may help to remember that modern science leads to a similar result. Once we grant that the reality of things may be quite different from the way they appear to us, only the internal coherence of the scheme of thought makes much difference. Next we'll look at modern philosophers who were more determined to make sense out of the materials provided in everyday life.

5.7 John Locke

5.7.1 The origin of ideas

We now leave the Continent for an extended look at philosophy in Great Britain during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Here the favored model for achieving human knowledge was not the abstract mathematical reasoning so admired by the rationalists but the more concrete observations of natural science. Heeding the call of Francis Bacon, British scientists had pursued a vigorous program of observation and experiment with great success. Isaac Newton showed that both celestial and terrestial motion could be explained by reference to a simple set of laws of motion and gravitation; Robert Boyle investigated the behavior of gasses and proposed a general theory of matter as a collection of corpuscles; and Thomas Sydenham began to use observational methods for the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

Philosopher John Locke greatly admired the achievements that these scientists (his friends in the Royal Society) had made in physics, chemistry, and medicine, and he sought to clear the ground for future developments by providing a theory of knowledge compatible with such carefully-conducted study of nature.

The goal of Locke's An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), then, is to establish epistemological foundations for the new science by examining the reliability, scope, and limitations of human knowledge in contrast with with the pretensions of uncritical belief, borrowed opinion, and mere superstition. Since the sciences had already demonstrated their practical success, Locke tried to apply their Baconian methods to the pursuit of his own philosophical aims. In order to discover how the human understanding achieves knowledge, we must trace that knowledge to its origins in our experience.

Locke's investigation into human knowledge began by asking how we acquire the basic materials out of which that knowledge is composed, our **ideas**. Note that this is an extremely broad definition: it includes concrete sensory images, abstract intellectual concepts, and everything in between. The colors and shapes I see before me right now are ideas, and so are my hunger, my memories of the ocean, my hopes for my children, the multiplication tables, and the principles of democratic government. Ideas, then,

are the immediate objects of all thought, the meaning or signification of all words, and the mental representatives of all things. Locke's question was, where do we get all of these ideas which are the content of our knowedge?

5.7.2 Ideas from experience

First, Locke eliminated one bad answer to the question. Most of Book I of the Essay is devoted to a detailed refutation of the belief that any of our knowledge is **innate**. Against the claims of the Cambridge Platonists and Herbert of Cherbury, Locke insisted that neither the speculative principles of logic and metaphysics nor the practical principles of morality are inscribed on our minds from birth.

Such propositions do not in fact have the universal consent of all human beings, Locke argued, since children and the mentally defective do not assent to them. Moreover, even if everyone did accept these principles, their universality could be better explained in terms of self-evidence or shared experience than by reference to a presumed innate origin. Innatism is the refuge of lazy intellectual dictators who wish thereby to impose their provincial notions upon others. Besides, Locke held, our knowledge cannot be innate because none of the ideas of which it is composed are innate.

As the correct answer to the question, Locke proposed the fundamental principle of empiricism: all of our knowledge and ideas arise from experience. The initially empty room of the mind is furnished with ideas of two sorts: first, by **sensation** we obtain ideas of things we suppose to exist outside us in the physical world; second, by **reflection** we come to have ideas of our own mental operations.

Thus, for example, «hard», «red», «loud», «cold», «sweet», and «aromatic» are all ideas of sensation, while «perceiving», «remembering», «abstracting», and «thinking» are all ideas of reflection. «Pleasure», «unity», and «existence», Locke held, are ideas that come to us from both sensation and reflection. Everything we know, everything we believe, every thought we can entertain is made up of ideas of sensation and reflection and nothing else.

But wait. It isn't true that I can think only about what I myself have experienced; I can certainly think about dinosaurs (or unicorns) even though I have never seen one for myself. So Locke's claim must be about the ultimate origin of our ideas, the source of their content. He distinguished between simple and complex ideas and acknowledged that we often employ our mental capacities in order manufacture complex ideas by conjoining simpler components. My idea of «unicorn», for example, may be compounded from the ideas of «horse» and «single spiral horn», and these ideas in turn are compounded from less complex elements. What Locke held was that every complex idea can be analyzed into component parts and that the final elements of any complete analysis must be simple ideas, each of which is

derived directly from experience. Even so, the empiricist program is an ambitious one, and Locke devoted Book II of the *Essay* to a lengthy effort to show that every idea could, in principle, be derived from experience.

5.7.3 A special problem

Locke began his survey of our mental contents with the simple ideas of sensation, including those of colors, sounds, tastes, smells, shapes, size, and solidity. With just a little thought about specific examples of such ideas, we notice a significant difference among them: the color of the wall in front of me seems to vary widely from time to time, depending on the light in the room and the condition of my eyes, while its solidity persists independently of such factors. Following the lead of Galileo and Boyle, Locke explained this difference in corpuscularian fashion, by reference to the different ways in which the qualities of things produce our ideas of them.

The **primary qualities** of an object are its intrinsic features, those it really has, including the «Bulk, Figure, Texture, and Motion» of its parts. Since these features are inseparable from the thing even when it is divided into parts too small for us to perceive, the primary qualities are independent of our perception of them. When we do perceive the primary qualities of larger objects, Locke believed, our ideas exactly resemble the qualities as they are in things.

The **secondary qualities** of an object, on the other hand, are nothing in the thing itself but the power to produce in us the ideas of «Colors, Sounds, Smells, Tastes, etc». In these cases, our ideas do not resemble their causes, which are in fact nothing other than the primary qualities of the insensible parts of things. The **powers**, or tertiary qualities, of an object are just its capacities to cause perceptible changes in other things.

Thus, for example, the primary qualities of this rose include all of its quantifiable features, its mass and momentum, its chemical composition and microscopic structure; these are the features of the thing itself. The secondary qualities of the rose, on the other hand, include the ideas it produces in me, its yellow color, its delicate fragrance; these are the merely the effects of the primary qualities of its corpuscles on my eyes and nose. Like the pain I feel when I stick my finger on a thorn, the color and smell are not features of the rose itself.

Some distinction of this sort is important for any representative realist. Many instances of perceptual illusion can be explained by reference to the way secondary qualities depend upon our sensory organs, but the possibility of accurate information about the primary qualities is preserved, at least in principle. The botanical expert may be able to achieve detailed knowledge of the nature of roses, but that knowledge is not necessary for my appreciation of their beauty.

5.7.4 Complex ideas

Even if the simple ideas of sensation provide us with ample material for thinking, what we make of them is largely up to us. In his survey of ideas of reflection, Locke listed a variety of mental operations that we perform upon our ideas.

Notice that in each of these sections, Locke defined the relevant mental operations as we experience them in ourselves, but then went on to consider carefully the extent to which other animals seem capable of performing the same activities. This procedure has different results from Descartes's doctrinal rejection of animal thinking: according to Locke, only abstraction (the operation most crucial in forming the ideas of mixed modes, on which morality depends) is utterly beyond the capacity of any animal.

Perception of ideas through the senses and retention of ideas in memory, Locke held, are passive powers of the mind, beyond our direct voluntary control and heavily dependent on the material conditions of the human body. The active powers of the mind include distinguishing, comparing, compounding, and abstracting. It is by employing these powers, Locke supposed, that we manufacture new, complex ideas from the simple elements provided by experience. The **resulting complex ideas** are of three sorts:

Modes are complex ideas that combine simpler elements to form a new whole that is assumed to be incapable of existing except as a part or feature of something else. The ideas of «three», «seventy-five», and even «infinity», for example, are all modes derived from the simple idea of «unity». We can understand these ideas and know their mathematical functions, whether or not there actually exist numbers of things to which they would apply in reality. «Mixed modes» similarly combine simple components without any presumption about their conformity to existing patterns, yielding all of our complex ideas of human actions and their value.

Substances are the complex ideas of real particular things that are supposed to exist on their own and to account for the unity and persistence of the features they exhibit. The ideas of «my only son», «the largest planet in the solar system», and «tulips», for example, are compounded from simpler ideas of sensation and reflection. Each is the idea of a thing (or kind of thing) that could really exist on its own. Since we don't understand all of the inner workings of natural objects, Locke supposed, our complex ideas of substances usually rely heavily on their secondary qualities and powers – the effects they are observed to have on ourselves and other things.

Relations are complex ideas of the ways in which other ideas may be connected with each other, in fact or in thought. The ideas of «younger», «stronger», and «cause and effect», for example, all involve some reference to the comparison of two or more other ideas.

Locke obviously could not analyze the content of every particular idea that any individual has ever had. But his defence of the empiricist principle did require him to show in principle that any complex idea can be derived from the simple ideas of sensation and reflection. The clarity, reality, adequacy, and truth of all of our ideas, Locke supposed, depend upon the success with which they fulfill their representative function. Here, we'll consider one of the most significant and difficult examples from each category:

5.7.5 Free action

Among our modal ideas, Locke believed that those of mixed modes, which combine both sensory and reflective elements, are especially important, since they include the ideas of human actions and provide for their moral evaluation. Among the mixed modes, the ideas of power, volition, and liberty are the most crucial and difficult. To them Locke devoted a chapter that grew, with alterations in later editions, to become the longest in the *Essay*.

The idea of power is illustrated every time we do something. Whether we think or move, the feeling that our mental preference leads to action provides a simple instance of power. The exercise of that power is volition or will, and the action taken as a result is a voluntary one. **Liberty** or freedom, on Locke's view, is the power to act on our volition, whatever it may be, without any external compulsion or restraint.

Under these definitions, the question of whether we have free will does not arise for Locke, since it involves what would later come to be called a category mistake. In particular, it does not matter whether we have control over our own preferences, whether we are free to will whatever we wish. In fact, Locke offered a strictly hedonistic account of human motivation, according to which our preferences are invariably determined by the desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain. What does matter for freedom and moral responsibility is that we can act on our preferences, whatever their source, without any outside interference. If I could have done otherwise (given a different preference), then I act freely and am responsible for my action.

5.7.6 Substance

The idea of a particular substance is the complex idea of a set of coexisting qualities and powers, together with the supposition that there is some unknown substrate upon which they all depend. Locke is derisive about the confused idea of this something, «we know not what», that is supposed by scholastic philosophers. But he cannot eliminate the concept of substance altogether, since he, too, must account for the existence and coherence of just this group of features.

About species or kinds of substances, Locke offers a more sophisticated explanation. Our complex idea of a specific kind of substance – «gold» or «horse», for example – is the collection of features by reference to which we classify individual substances as belonging to that kind. These **nominal essences**, developed for our convenience in sorting things into kinds, rely heavily upon the secondary qualities and powers that are the most obvious features of such things in our experience – the color, weight, and malleability of gold, for example, and the shape, noises, and movements of horses.

As a corpuscularian, Locke supposed that individual substances must also have **real essences**, the primary qualities of their insensible parts, which cause all of their qualities. But since we cannot observe the «real inner constitutions» of things, we cannot use them for purposes of classification, nor can we even understand their causal influence on our perception. Since Locke doubted that real essences could ever be discovered, he was thrown back on the supposition of an underlying reality which we cannot know.

This account imposes a severe limitation on the possibilities of our knowledge of substances. According to Locke, the mechanical operations of nature remain hidden to us. Careful observation and experimentation may support a reliable set of generalizations about the appearances of the kinds of things we commonly encounter, but we cannot even conceive of their true natures.

5.7.7 Personal identity

Among our ideas of relations, the strongest is that of identity. Locke held that the criteria for identity depend upon the kind of thing we are considering. Substantial identity requires the unique spatio-temporal history that is just the existence of each substance, but this is not the only consideration in all cases.

The identity of the tree outside my window, for example, does not depend on the substantial identity of its parts (in fact, they change from day to day and season to season); what matters in this case is the organization of those parts into a common life. A similar explanation, Locke held, accounts for the identity of animals and human beings. We recognize living bodies at different times by the organization of their material parts rather than by their substantial composition. In analogous fashion, Locke explained personal identity independently of identity of substance. The idea of the person is that of a moral agent who can be held responsible for his or her actions. But Locke used a series of hypothetical examples to show that the identity of an underlying immaterial substance or soul is neither necessary nor sufficient for personal identity in this sense. Even the identity of the same human body (though we may rely upon that for third-person attributions of identity) is not truly relevant. The only thing that does matter, on Locke's view, is that the person self-consciously appropriates actions as its own.

This is, as Locke says, a «forensic» notion of personal identity; its aim is to secure the justice and effectiveness of moral sanctions. If, and only if, I now remember having committed a particular act in the past can I be justly punished for having done so. If, and only if, I project myself into the future can the prospect of punishment or reward influence my deliberations about how to act now. Locke's way of thinking about personal identity has shaped discussions of the issue ever since.

5.7.8 Words

Locke devoted Book III of the *Essay* to a discussion of language. His basic notion is clear: words signify ideas. Thus, the meaning of a word is always the idea it signifies in the minds of those who use it. Of course, those ideas are presumed in turn to represent things, but the accuracy of that representation does not directly affect the meaning of the word. The names of substances, for example, signify the complex ideas Locke called their nominal essences, not the real nature of the substances themselves. Thus, common names for substances are general terms by means of which we classify things as we observe them to be; we can agree upon the meaning of such terms even though we remain ignorant of the real essences of the things themselves.

The chief point of Locke's theory of language was to eliminate the verbal disputes that arise when words are used without clear signification. It is always reasonable to ask for the meaning of a word, that is, to know what idea it signifies. If a speaker cannot supply the idea behind the word, then it has no meaning. Many of the academic squabbles that obstruct advancement in human knowledge, Locke believed, could be dissolved by careful attention to the meaning of words.

5.7.9 Knowledge and its Degrees

Having provided a thorough account of the origins of our ideas in experience, Locke opens Book IV of the *Essay* with a deceptively simple definition of knowledge. Knowledge is just perception of the agreement or disagreement of our ideas.

We know the truth of a proposition when we become aware of the relation between the ideas it conjoins. This can occur in any of **three distinct ways**, each with its characteristic degree of certainty.

Intuitive knowledge involves direct and immediate recognition of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas. It yields perfect certainty, but is only rarely available to us. I know intuitively that three is not the same as seven.

In **demonstrative knowledge** we perceive the agreement or disagreement only indirectly, by means of a series of intermediate ideas.

Since demonstration is a chain of reasoning, its certainty is no greater than its weakest link; only if each step is itself intuitively known will the demonstration as a whole be certain. If I know that A is greater than B and that B is greater than C, then I know demonstratively that A is greater than C.

Although intuition and demonstration alone satisfy the definition of knowledge, Locke held that the belief that our sensory ideas are caused by existing things deserves the name of **sensitive knowledge**. In the presence of a powerful, present idea of sensation, we cannot doubt that it has some real cause outside us, even though we do not know what that cause may be or how it produces the idea in us. I have only sensitive knowledge that there is something producing the odor I now smell.

5.7.10 Types of Knowledge

Locke distinguished four sorts of agreement or disagreement between ideas, perception of which gives us four distinct types of knowledge:

Since knowledge of **identity and diversity** requires only a direct comparison of the ideas involved, it is intuitive whenever the ideas being compared are clear.

Knowledge of **coexistence** would provide detailed information about features of the natural world that occur together in our experience, but this scientific knowledge is restricted by our ignorance of the real essences of substances; the best we can do is to rely upon careful observations of the coincidental appearance of their secondary qualities and powers.

Mathematics and morality rest upon knowledge of **relation**, which Locke held to be demonstrative whenever we form clear ideas and discover the links between them.

The degree of certainty in our knowledge of **real existence** depends wholly upon the content of our ideas in each case. Locke agreed with Descartes that we have intuitive knowledge of our own existence, and he supposed it possible to achieve demonstrative knowledge of god as the thinking creator of everything. But we have only sensitive knowledge of the existence of other things presently before our senses.

5.7.11 The extent of knowledge

The result of all of this is that our knowledge is severely limited in its extent. On Locke's definition, we can achieve genuine knowledge only when we have clear ideas and can trace the connection between them enough to perceive their agreement or disagreement. That doesn't happen very often, especially where substances are at issue.

The truths of mathematics are demonstrable precisely because they are abstract: since my ideas of lines, angles, and triangles are formed without any

necessary reference to existing things, I can prove that the interior angles of any triangle add up to a straight line.

But any effort to achieve genuine knowledge of the natural world must founder on our ignorance of substances. We have «sensitive knowledge» of the existence of something that causes our present sensory ideas. But we do not have adequate ideas of the real essence of any substance, and even if we did, we would be unable to discover any demonstrative link between that real essence and the ideas it produces in us. The most careful observation can establish at best only the secondary qualities and powers that appear to coexist in our experience often enough to warrant our use of them as the nominal essence of a kind of substance.

Locke's efforts have therefore led to a sobering conclusion. Certainty is rarely within our reach; we must often be content with probable knowledge or mere opinion. Locke ultimately recommends that we adopt significantly reduced epistemological expectations.

5.7.12 The great concernments

Despite all of these limitations, Locke believed that human knowledge is well-suited for the conduct of human life. We have all the knowledge we need to secure our «great concernments»: convenience in this life and the means for attaining a better life hereafter.

Survival and comfort in daily life are attainable in spite of our ignorance of the hidden operations of nature. We don't need to know the real essences of substances in order to make use of them productively. Indeed, Locke suggests, additional information might actually make daily life more difficult. Surely demonstrative knowledge of the true nature of fire or food is unnecessary for my survival; my natural aversion to the pain of being burned and desire for the pleasures of eating provide ample practical guidance.

Doing the right thing is also possible, since our action is properly guided by a demonstrable morality. The truths of morality are demonstrable for the same reason that the truths of mathematics are: the mixed modes that describe possible human actions, of the moral rules that govern them, and even of the possible agents that might perform them, are all complex ideas manufactured by the mind without reference to the real existence of substantial beings, so I can prove that murder is wrong.

Finally, we have all the knowledge we need to enter into a proper relation to our creator. God's existence is demonstrable on rational grounds, and the scriptures provide us with detailed information about the divine will for our lives. The precise boundary between reason and revelation, Locke held, is itself known only as a matter of probable knowledge or opinion.

In the end, then, Locke believed that we have no reason to complain. Although restricted in extent, our knowledge is sufficient for our needs.

Respecting its limits will prevent us from wasting effort on pointless wrangling. Since our experience is itself limited, an empiricist epistemology can only advise caution and modesty in our claims to know.

5.8 David Hume

Later in eighteenth century, Scottish philosopher David Hume sought to develop more fully the consequences of Locke's cautious empiricism by applying the scientific methods of observation to a study of human nature itself. We cannot rely on the common-sense pronouncements of popular superstition, which illustrate human conduct without offering any illumination, Hume held, nor can we achieve any genuine progress by means of abstract metaphysical speculation, which imposes a spurious clarity upon profound issues. The alternative is to reject all easy answers, employing the negative results of **philosophical skepticism** as a legitimate place to start.

Stated more positively, Hume's position is that since human beings do in fact live and function in the world, we should try to observe how they do so. The key principle to be applied to any investigation of our cognitive capacities is, then, an attempt to discover the causes of human belief. This attempt is neither the popular project of noticing and cataloging human beliefs nor the metaphysical effort to provide them with an infallible rational justification. According to Hume, the proper goal of philosophy is simply to **explain** why we believe what we do. His own attempt to achieve that goal was the focus of Book I of the Treatise of Human Nature and all of the first Enquiry.

Hume's analysis of human belief begins with a careful distinction among our mental contents: **impressions** are the direct, vivid, and forceful products of immediate experience; **ideas** are merely feeble copies of these original impressions. Thus, for example, the background color of the screen at which I am now looking is an impression, while my memory of the color of my mother's hair is merely an idea. Since every idea must be derived from an antecedent impression, Hume supposed, it always makes sense to inquire into the origins of our ideas by asking from which impressions they are derived.

To this beginning, add the fact that each of our ideas and impressions is entirely separable from every other, on Hume's view. The apparent connection of one idea to another is invariably the result of an association that we manufacture ourselves. We use our mental operations to link ideas to each other in one of three ways: resemblance, contiguity, or cause and effect. This animal looks like that animal; this book is on that table; moving this switch turns off the light, for example. Experience provides us with both the ideas themselves and our awareness of their association. All human beliefs (including those we regard as cases of knowledge) result from repeated applications of these simple associations.

Hume further distinguished between two sorts of belief.

Relations of ideas are beliefs grounded wholly on associations formed within the mind; they are capable of demonstration because they have no external referent. **Matters of fact** are beliefs that claim to report the nature of existing things; they are always contingent. This is Hume's version of the **a priori / a posteriori distinction**. Mathematical and logical knowledge relies upon relations of ideas; it is uncontroversial but uninformative. The interesting but problematic propositions of natural science depend upon matters of fact. Abstract metaphysics mistakenly (and fruitlessly) tries to achieve the certainty of the former with the content of the latter.

Questions for self-testing:

1. List the major problems of modern philosophy.
2. What does Bacon propose to improve human knowledge?
3. What rules the guidance of reason Descartes offered?
4. Explain the principle of Cartesian doubt.
5. "I am, I exist" - expand the philosophical position of the author of the judgment.
6. What is the definition of substance in Spinoza's philosophy? What is him extreme monism?
7. What kinds of knowledge does Spinoza distinguish?
8. Who formulated the thesis: "Freedom is the recognition of necessity"? What direction are the ethical views of the author?
9. What kinds of propositions does Leibniz allocate?
10. What is the essence of Leibniz's monadology?
11. What is the fundamental principle of empiricism of Locke?
12. What is primary and secondary qualities of the object according to Locke?
13. How many types knowledge exists according to Locke?
14. What Hume sees the purpose of philosophy and how does he try to reach it?

Recommended reading:

1. Stephen Gaukroger, Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early Modern Philosophy(Cambridge, 2001).
2. The Cambridge Companion to Bacon, ed. by Markku Peltonen (Cambridge, 1996).
3. René Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy, tr. by Donald A. Cress (Hackett, 1999).
4. Anthony Kenny, Descartes: A Study of His Philosophy (St. Augustine, 1993).

5. Janet Broughton, Descartes's Method of Doubt (Princeton, 2002).
6. Benedict De Spinoza, Ethics including the Improvement of the Understanding, tr. by R. H. M. Elwes (Prometheus, 1989)
7. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Discourse on Metaphysics and the Monadology, tr. by R. Montgomery (Prometheus, 1992).
8. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, New Essays on Human Understanding, ed. by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge, 1997).
9. John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. by Peter H. Nidditch (Clarendon, 1989).
10. David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. by Martin Bell (Penguin, 1990).

6 AGE OF THE ENLIGHTENED

The Enlightenment is the period in the history of western thought and culture, stretching roughly from the mid-decades of the seventeenth century through the eighteenth century, characterized by dramatic revolutions in science, philosophy, society and politics; these revolutions swept away the medieval world-view and ushered in our modern western world. Enlightenment thought culminates historically in the political upheaval of the French Revolution, in which the traditional hierarchical political and social orders (the French monarchy, the privileges of the French nobility, the political power and authority of the Catholic Church) were violently destroyed and replaced by a political and social order informed by the Enlightenment ideals of freedom and equality for all, founded, ostensibly, upon principles of human reason. The Enlightenment begins with the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The rise of the new science progressively undermines not only the ancient geocentric conception of the cosmos, but, with it, the entire set of presuppositions that had served to constrain and guide philosophical inquiry. The dramatic success of the new science in explaining the natural world, in accounting for a wide variety of phenomena by appeal to a relatively small number of elegant mathematical formulae, promotes philosophy (in the broad sense of the time, which includes natural science) from a handmaiden of theology, constrained by its purposes and methods, to an independent force with the power and authority to challenge the old and construct the new, in the realms both of theory and practice, on the basis of its own principles. D'Alembert, a leading figure of the French Enlightenment, characterizes his eighteenth century, in the midst of it, as «the century of philosophy par excellence», because of the tremendous intellectual progress of the age, the advance of the sciences, and the enthusiasm for that progress, but also because of the characteristic expectation of the age that philosophy (in this broad sense) would dramatically improve human life.

The task of characterizing philosophy in (or of) the Enlightenment confronts the obstacle of the wide diversity of Enlightenment thought. The Enlightenment is associated with the French thinkers of the mid-decades of the eighteenth century, the so-called «philosophes» (Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, Montesquieu, et cetera). The philosophes constitute an informal society of men of letters who collaborate on a loosely defined project of Enlightenment centered around the project of the Encyclopedia. But the Enlightenment has broader boundaries, both geographical and temporal, than this suggests. In addition to the French, there was a very significant Scottish Enlightenment (key figures were Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Adam Smith, and Thomas Reid) and a very significant German Enlightenment.

6.1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau also harbored a profound dislike for authority (or even structure) of any sort and sought to restore a proper respect for the creativity and worth of individual human beings. But Rousseau also explored the political implications of these ideas: his notion of individual liberty and his convictions about political unity helped to fuel the romantic spirit of the French Revolution.

In the second of his essays for the Dijon competition, the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (1755), Rousseau emphasized that the natural condition of humanity is disguised by the corruptive influence of civilization. Reliance on the feeling of compassion and on native respect for sentience, he believed, was an adequate guide for human life.

Although some few natural inequalities among individual human beings are inevitable, Rousseau argued that the far more significant moral and political inequalities are purely conventional in origin. Savage human beings, like animals of any species, are well-adapted by nature to their surroundings in the natural world. In the absence of any discursive reasoning about themselves, such beings have no need for morality or a concept of duty. Their lives are wholly guided by their feelings of pity and love for each other, and conventional inequalities do not arise.

It is concern for private property, according to Rousseau, that gives rise to civil society. Everyone's well-being is served by reliance on each other in the basic cooperation that characterizes the family as a primitive social unit, designed to secure the necessities of human life. But the very success of this cooperative effort produces time for leisure, which in turn leads to the production of agriculture and industry. These developments require ownership of land and promote acquisition of wealth, both of which entail the protection of a stable government. Thus, Rousseau held, a body politic must be established by means of a contract that unites many wills into one.

6.1.1 The Social Contract

The details of this process Rousseau described in On the Social Contract (1762). At the outset, Rousseau notes that since perfect freedom is the natural condition of human beings, it is the existence of social restrictions that requires explanation. Only the family is truly a natural association, and its features are commonly extended far beyond the basic needs from which it arises. Military conquest and slavery in its usual forms cannot establish any genuine right for one person to rule over another. So, Rousseau concluded, society must devolve from a **social contract** in which individual citizens voluntarily participate.

Each citizen chooses to trade the natural liberty of independent life for the civil liberty secured by the state, allowing social rights over property to outweigh individual rights. But according to Rousseau, this surrender of each to the good of the whole must take place in a way that also secures the unity of all in a desire for what will most benefit the whole. This is the fundamental problem of all social organization: to secure the participation of every individual in the general will.

6.1.2 The General Will

As Rousseau envisioned it, the **general will** [Fr. *volonté générale*] is not merely the cancelled-out sum of all the individual wills of those who participate in the social contract, the **will of all** [Fr. *volonté de tous*]. Indeed, he warned that the influence of parties representing special interests is directly inimical to the sort of sound public deliberation that can arrive at a consensus regarding the welfare of all. By entering into the original agreement, I have sworn to seek only the welfare of the community, no matter what the consequences may be for me. The general will must be concerned solely with the general interest, which is the inalienable responsibility of the sovereign body, expressed through legislation.

Although the general will must be arrived at through reasoned deliberation in the state as a whole, its execution depends upon an embodiment in the structure of government. Thus, for Rousseau, distinct forms of government have to do only with the execution of the sovereign laws: democracy is dangerous in application to particular cases, where the general will can easily be lost in the pressure of private interests; aristocracy is acceptable so long as it executes the general will rather than serving the welfare of the ruling elite; and monarchy clearly raises the temptation to serve private welfare at the expense of the common good. The appropriate form of government for any state depends upon the character of its people and even its physical climate, Rousseau supposed, and its success can be measured easily by the extent to which its population thrives.

Abuses of power can, of course, threaten the very life of the state. When the government – properly responsible only for carrying out the general will – takes upon itself the sovereign responsibility of establishing legal requirements for the people, the social contract has been broken. For Rousseau, then, the establishment of a government is always provisional and temporary, subject to the continual review by its citizens. Since the legitimacy of the social contract depends upon the unanimous consent of all the governed, the sovereign general will is fully expressed only in an assembly of the entire population. Even the effort to establish a representative legislative body is an illusion, according to Rousseau, since the general will can be determined only by each for all.

The general will, abstractly considered as a commitment to the welfare of the whole, is indestructible in principle, Rousseau held, even though it may be overridden by undesirable motives in practice. The original contract requires perfect unanimity, and major issues should be decided by a major portion of the population, but simple matters requiring quick action may be determined by a simple majority. In each case, Rousseau supposed that open inquiry and debate will converge on an awareness by each individual of what is truly in the best interest of the community as a whole; and that is the general will. Positions of leadership that require skill should be decided by election, while those that demand only good sense should be chosen by lot.

In a final reminder of the nature of the general will, Rousseau noted that it is distinct from the social customs that may be endorsed or expressed as public opinion. These are not determinations of what is best for all, but merely codifications of the conventional mores of the people, and should occupy a correspondingly lesser status. Even when incorporated into the civil religion, with an appeal to the full force of divine as well as human approval, he insisted, social customs are merely that.

6.2 Immanuel Kant

6.2.1 The critical philosophy

Next we turn to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, a watershed figure who forever altered the course of philosophical thinking in the Western tradition. Long after his thorough indoctrination into the quasi-scholastic German appreciation of the metaphysical system of Leibniz, Kant said, it was a careful reading of David Hume that «interrupted my dogmatic slumbers and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction». Having appreciated the full force of such skeptical arguments, Kant supposed that the only adequate response would be a «**Copernican revolution**» in philosophy, a recognition that the appearance of the external world depends in some measure upon the position and movement of its

observers. This central idea became the basis for his life-long project of developing a critical philosophy that could withstand them.

Kant's aim was to move beyond the traditional dichotomy between rationalism and empiricism. The rationalists had tried to show that we can understand the world by careful use of reason; this guarantees the indubitability of our knowledge but leaves serious questions about its practical content. The empiricists, on the other hand, had argued that all of our knowledge must be firmly grounded in experience; practical content is thus secured, but it turns out that we can be certain of very little. Both approaches have failed, Kant supposed, because **both** are premised on the same mistaken assumption.

Progress in philosophy, according to Kant, requires that we frame the epistemological problem in an entirely different way. The crucial question is not how we can bring ourselves to understand the world, but how the world comes to be understood by us. Instead of trying, by reason or experience, to make our concepts match the nature of objects, Kant held, we must allow the structure of our concepts shape our experience of objects. This is the purpose of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (1781, 1787): to show how reason determines the conditions under which experience and knowledge are possible.

6.2.1.1 Varieties of judgment

In the Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic (1783) Kant presented the central themes of the first Critique in a somewhat different manner, starting from instances in which we do appear to have achieved knowledge and asking under what conditions each case becomes possible. So he began by carefully drawing a pair of crucial distinctions among the judgments we do actually make. The first distinction separates a priori from a posteriori judgments by reference to the origin of our knowledge of them. **A priori** judgments are based upon reason alone, independently of all sensory experience, and therefore apply with strict universality. **A posteriori** judgments, on the other hand, must be grounded upon experience and are consequently limited and uncertain in their application to specific cases. Thus, this distinction also marks the difference traditionally noted in logic between necessary and contingent truths.

But Kant also made a less familiar distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, according to the information conveyed as their content. **Analytic** judgments are those whose predicates are wholly contained in their subjects; since they add nothing to our concept of the subject, such judgments are purely explicative and can be deduced from the principle of non-contradiction. **Synthetic** judgments, on the other hand, are those whose predicates are wholly distinct from their subjects, to which they must be shown

to relate because of some real connection external to the concepts themselves. Hence, synthetic judgments are genuinely informative but require justification by reference to some outside principle.

Kant supposed that previous philosophers had failed to differentiate properly between these two distinctions. Both Leibniz and Hume had made just one distinction, between matters of fact based on sensory experience and the uninformative truths of pure reason. In fact, Kant held, the two distinctions are not entirely coextensive; we need at least to consider all four of their logically possible combinations:

1. **Analytic a posteriori** judgments cannot arise, since there is never any need to appeal to experience in support of a purely explicative assertion.
2. **Synthetic a posteriori** judgments are the relatively uncontroversial matters of fact we come to know by means of our sensory experience (though Wolff had tried to derive even these from the principle of contradiction).
3. **Analytic a priori** judgments, everyone agrees, include all merely logical truths and straightforward matters of definition; they are necessarily true.
4. **Synthetic a priori** judgments are the crucial case, since only they could provide new information that is necessarily true. But neither Leibniz nor Hume considered the possibility of any such case.

Unlike his predecessors, Kant maintained that synthetic a priori judgments not only are possible but actually provide the basis for significant portions of human knowledge. In fact, he supposed (pace Hume) that arithmetic and geometry comprise such judgments and that natural science depends on them for its power to explain and predict events. What is more, metaphysics – if it turns out to be possible at all – must rest upon synthetic a priori judgments, since anything else would be either uninformative or unjustifiable. But how are synthetic a priori judgments possible at all? This is the central question Kant sought to answer.

6.2.1.2 Mathematics

Consider, for example, our knowledge that two plus three is equal to five and that the interior angles of any triangle add up to a straight line. These (and similar) truths of mathematics are synthetic judgments, Kant held, since they contribute significantly to our knowledge of the world; the sum of the interior angles is not contained in the concept of a triangle. Yet, clearly, such truths are known a priori, since they apply with strict and universal necessity to all of the objects of our experience, without having been derived from that experience itself. In these instances, Kant supposed, no one will ask whether or not we have synthetic a priori knowledge; plainly, we do. The question is, how do we come to have such knowledge? If experience does not supply the required connection between the concepts involved, what does?

Kant's answer is that we do it ourselves. Conformity with the truths of mathematics is a precondition that we impose upon every possible object of our experience. Just as Descartes had noted in the Fifth Meditation, the essence of bodies is manifested to us in Euclidean solid geometry, which determines a priori the structure of the spatial world we experience. In order to be perceived by us, any object must be regarded as being uniquely located in space and time, so it is the spatio-temporal framework itself that provides the missing connection between the concept of the triangle and that of the sum of its angles. Space and time, Kant argued in the «Transcendental Aesthetic» of the first Critique, are the «pure forms of sensible intuition» under which we perceive what we do.

Understanding mathematics in this way makes it possible to rise above an old controversy between rationalists and empiricists regarding the very nature of space and time. Leibniz had maintained that space and time are not intrinsic features of the world itself, but merely a product of our minds. Newton, on the other hand, had insisted that space and time are absolute, not merely a set of spatial and temporal relations. Kant now declares that both of them were correct! Space and time are absolute, and they do derive from our minds. As synthetic a priori judgments, the truths of mathematics are both informative and necessary.

This is our first instance of a transcendental argument, Kant's method of reasoning from the fact that we have knowledge of a particular sort to the conclusion that all of the logical presuppositions of such knowledge must be satisfied. We will see additional examples in later lessons, and can defer our assessment of them until then. But notice that there is a price to be paid for the certainty we achieve in this manner. Since mathematics derives from our own sensible intuition, we can be absolutely sure that it must apply to everything we perceive, but for the same reason we can have no assurance that it has anything to do with the way things are apart from our perception of them. Next time, we'll look at Kant's very similar treatment of the synthetic a priori principles upon which our knowledge of natural science depends.

6.2.1.3 Preconditions for natural science

In natural science no less than in mathematics, Kant held, synthetic a priori judgments provide the necessary foundations for human knowledge.

The most general laws of nature, like the truths of mathematics, cannot be justified by experience, yet must apply to it universally. In this case, the negative portion of Hume's analysis – his demonstration that matters of fact rest upon an unjustifiable belief that there is a necessary connection between causes and their effects – was entirely correct.

But of course Kant's more constructive approach is to offer a transcendental argument from the fact that we do have knowledge of the

natural world to the truth of synthetic a priori propositions about the structure of our experience of it.

As we saw last time, applying the concepts of space and time as forms of sensible intuition is necessary condition for any perception.

But the possibility of scientific knowledge requires that our experience of the world be not only perceivable but thinkable as well, and Kant held that the general intelligibility of experience entails the satisfaction of two further conditions:

First, it must be possible in principle to arrange and organize the chaos of our many individual sensory images by tracing the connections that hold among them. This Kant called the synthetic unity of the sensory manifold.

Second, it must be possible in principle for a single subject to perform this organization by discovering the connections among perceived images.

This is satisfied by what Kant called the transcendental unity of apperception.

Experiential knowledge is thinkable only if there is some regularity in what is known and there is some knower in whom that regularity can be represented. Since we do actually have knowledge of the world as we experience it, Kant held, both of these conditions must in fact obtain.

6.2.1.4 Deduction of the categories

Since (as Hume had noted) individual images are perfectly separable as they occur within the sensory manifold, connections between them can be drawn only by the knowing subject, in which the principles of connection are to be found.

As in mathematics, so in science the synthetic a priori judgments must derive from the structure of the understanding itself.

Consider, then, the sorts of judgments distinguished by logicians (in Kant's day): each of them has some quantity (applying to all things, some, or only one); some quality (affirmative, negative, or complementary); some relation (absolute, conditional, or alternative); and some modality (problematic, assertoric, or apodeictic).

Kant supposed that any intelligible thought can be expressed in judgments of these sorts.

But then it follows that any thinkable experience must be understood in these ways, and we are justified in projecting this entire way of thinking outside ourselves, as the inevitable structure of any possible experience.

The result of this «transcendental logic» is the schematized table of categories, Kant's summary of the central concepts we employ in thinking about the world, each of which is discussed in a separate section of the Critique:

Quantity	**Quality**
Unity	Reality
Plurality	Negation
Totality	Limitation
Axioms of Intuition	Anticipations of Perception

Relation	**Modality**
Substance	Possibility
Cause	Existence
Community	Necessity
Analogies of Experience	Postulates of Empirical Thought

Our most fundamental convictions about the natural world derive from these concepts, according to Kant. The most general principles of natural science are not empirical generalizations from what we have experienced, but synthetic a priori judgments about what we could experience, in which these concepts provide the crucial connectives.

6.2.2 Experience and Reality

6.2.2.1 Analogies of experience

So Kant maintained that we are justified in applying the concepts of the understanding to the world as we know it by making a priori determinations of the nature of any possible experience. In order to see how this works in greater detail, let's concentrate on the concepts of relation, which govern how we understand the world in time. As applied in the Analogies of Experience, each concept of relation establishes one of the preconditions of experience under one of the modes of time: duration, succession, and simultaneity.

1. **Substance**: The experience of any change requires not only the perception of the altered qualities that constitute the change but also the concept of an underlying substance which persists through this alteration. E.g., in order to know by experience that the classroom wall has changed in color from blue to yellow, I must not only perceive the different colors – blue then, yellow now – but also suppose that the wall itself has endured from then until now. Thus, Kant supposed that the philosophical concept of substance (reflected in the scientific assumption of an external world of material objects) is an a priori condition for our experience.

2. **Cause**: What is more, the experience of events requires not only awareness of their intrinsic features but also that they be regarded as occurring one after another, in an invariable regularity determined by the concept of causality. E.g., in order to experience the flowering of this azalea as

an event, I must not only perceive the blossoms as they now appear but must also regard them as merely the present consequence of a succession of prior organic developments. Thus, Kant responded to Hume's skepticism by maintaining that the concept of cause is one of the synthetic conditions we determine for ourselves prior to all experience.

3. **Community**: Finally, the experience of a world of coexisting things requires not only the experiences of each individually but also the presumption of their mutual interaction. E.g., in order believe that the Sun, Earth, and Moon coexist in a common solar system, I must not only make some estimate of the mass of each but must also take into account the reciprocity of the gravitational forces between them. Thus, on Kant's view, the notion of the natural world as a closed system of reciprocal forces is another *a priori* condition for the intelligibility of experience.

Notice again that these features of nature are not generalized from anything we have already experienced; they are regulative principles that we impose in advance on everything we can experience. We are justified in doing so, Kant believed, because only the pure concepts of the understanding can provide the required connections to establish synthetic a priori judgments. Unless these concepts are systematically applied to the sensory manifold, the unity of apperception cannot be achieved, and no experience can be made intelligible.

6.2.2.2 Phenomena and noumena

Having seen Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories as pure concepts of the understanding applicable a priori to every possible experience, we might naturally wish to ask the further question whether these regulative principles are really true. Are there substances? Does every event have a cause? Do all things interact? Given that we must suppose them in order to have any experience, do they obtain in the world itself? To these further questions, Kant firmly refused to offer any answer.

According to Kant, it is vital always to distinguish between the distinct realms of phenomena and noumena. **Phenomena** are the appearances, which constitute the our experience; **noumena** are the (presumed) things themselves, which constitute reality. All of our synthetic a priori judgments apply only to the phenomenal realm, not the noumenal. It is only at this level, with respect to what we can experience, that we are justified in imposing the structure of our concepts onto the objects of our knowledge. Since **the thing in itself** would by definition be entirely independent of our experience of it, we are utterly ignorant of the noumenal realm.

Thus, on Kant's view, the most fundamental laws of nature, like the truths of mathematics, are knowable precisely because they make no effort to describe the world as it really is but rather prescribe the structure of the world

as we experience it. By applying the pure forms of sensible intuition and the pure concepts of the understanding, we achieve a systematic view of the phenomenal realm but learn nothing of the noumenal realm. Math and science are certainly true of the phenomena; only metaphysics claims to instruct us about the noumena.

6.2.2.3 The aim of metaphysics

Although our knowledge of mathematics and natural science yield easily to a Kantian analysis, the synthetic a priori judgments of metaphysics are much more difficult to explain. Here the forms of intuition and concepts of understanding are useless, since they find application only in the realm of our experience, while metaphysics seeks to transcend experience completely, in order to discover the nature of reality itself as comprehended under pure reason.

Metaphysical speculation properly begins with the same method as the Aesthetic and Analytic, Kant supposed, but it invariably ends up in a Dialectic. The transcendental arguments we employ in metaphysics need not restrict their determination to the phenomenal realm alone, since their aim is genuine knowledge of the noumena. Synthetic a priori judgments in metaphysics must be grounded upon truly transcendental ideas, which are regarded as applicable to things in themselves independently of our experience of them.

6.2.2.4 Transcendental ideas

Kant's exposition of the transcendental ideas begins once again from the logical distinction among categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive syllogisms. From this distinction, as we have seen, the understanding derives the concepts of substance, cause, and community, which provide the basis for rules that obtain as natural laws within our experience. Now, from the same distinction, the reason must carry things further in order derive the transcendental ideas of the complete subject, the complete series of conditions, and the complete complex of what is possible. Thus, the «completion» of metaphysical reasoning requires transcendental ideas of three sorts, but Kant argued that each leads to its characteristic irresolvable difficulty.

The **psychological idea** is the concept of the soul as a permanent substance which lives forever. It is entirely natural to reason (as in Descartes's cogito) from knowledge that «I think» to my real existence as one and the same thinking thing through all time, but Kant held that our efforts to reach such conclusions are «paralogisms», with only illusory validity. It is true that thought presupposes the unity of apperception and that every change presupposes an underlying substance, but these rules apply only to the

phenomena we experience. Since substantial unity and immortality are supposed to be noumenal features of the soul as a thing in itself, Kant held, legitimate a priori judgments can never prove them, and the effort to transcend in this case fails.

The **cosmological idea** is the concept of a complete determination of the nature of the world as it must be constituted in itself. In this case, Kant held, the difficulty is not that we can conclude too little but rather that we can prove too much. From the structure of our experience of the world, it is easy to deduce contradictory particular claims about reality: finitude vs. infinity; simplicity vs. complexity; freedom vs. determinism; necessity vs. contingency. These **antinomies of pure reason** can be avoided only when we recognize that one or both of the contradictory proofs in each antinomy holds only for the phenomenal realm. Once again, it is the effort to achieve transcendental knowledge of noumena that necessarily fails.

The **theological idea** is the concept of an absolutely perfect and most real being (or god). Again it is natural to move from our recognition of dependence within the phenomenal realm to the notion of a perfectly independent noumenal being, the «transcendental ideal». But traditional attempts to prove that god really exists, founded as they are on what we experience, cannot establish the reality of a being necessarily beyond all experience.

The general point of the Transcendental Dialectic should by now be clear: metaphysical speculation about the ultimate nature of reality invariably fails. The synthetic a priori judgments which properly serve as regulative principles governing our experience can never be shown to have any force as constitutive of the real nature of the world. Pure reason inevitably reaches for what it cannot grasp.

6.2.2.5 The limits of reason

Now that we've seen Kant's answers to all three parts of the Prolegomena's and have traced their sources in the Critique of Pure Reason, we are in a position to appreciate his careful delineation of what is possible in metaphysical thought and what is not.

What most clearly is not possible is any legitimate synthetic a priori judgment about things in themselves. The only thing that justifies the application of regulative principles in mathematics and natural science is their limitation to phenomena. Both sensible intuition and the understanding deal with the conditions under which experience is possible. But the whole point of speculative metaphysics is to transcend experience entirely in order to achieve knowledge of the noumenal realm. Here, only the faculty of reason is relevant, but its most crucial speculative conclusions, its deepest convictions about the self, the world, and god, are all drawn illegitimately.

What is possible – indeed, according to Kant what we are bound by our very nature as rational beings to do – is to think of the noumenal realm as if the speculative principles were true (whether or not they are). By the nature of reason itself, we are required to suppose our own existence as substantial beings, the possibility of our free action in a world of causal regularity, and the existence of god. The absence of any formal justification for these notions makes it impossible for us to claim that we know them to be true, but it can in no way diminish the depth fo our belief that they are.

According to Kant, then, the rational human faculties lead us to the very boundaries of what can be known, by clarifying the conditions under which experience of the world as we know it is possible. But beyond those boundaries our faculties are useless. The shape of the boundary itself, as evidenced in the Paralogisms and Antinomies, naturally impels us to postulate that the unknown does indeed have certain features, but these further speculations are inherently unjustifiable.

The only legitimate, «scientific» metaphysics that the future may hold, Kant therefore held, would be a thoroughly critical, non-speculative examination of the bounds of pure reason, a careful description of what we can know accompanied by a clear recognition that our transcendental concepts (however useful they may seem) are entirely unreliable as guides to the nature of reality. It is this task, of course, that Kant himself had pursued in the First Critique.

6.2.3 The Moral Order

Having mastered epistemology and metaphysics, Kant believed that a rigorous application of the same methods of reasoning would yield an equal success in dealing with the problems of moral philosophy. Thus, in the Critique of Practical Reason (1788), he proposed a «Table of the categories of freedom in relation to the concepts of good and Evil», using the familiar logical distinctions as the basis for a catalog of synthetic *a priori* judgments that have bearing on the evaluation of human action, and declared that only two things inspire genuine awe: «the starry sky above and the moral law within»). Kant used ordinary moral notions as the foundation ffor a derivation of this moral law in his Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals (1785).

6.2.3.1 From good will to universal law

We begin with the concept of that which can be conceived to be good without qualification, a good will. Other good features of human nature and the benefits of a good life, Kant pointed out, have value only under appropriate conditions, since they may be used either for good or for evil. But a good will is intrinsically good; its value is wholly self-contained and utterly independent of

its external relations. Since our practical reason is better suited to the development and guidance of a good will than to the achievement of happiness, it follows that the value of a good will does not depend even on the results it manages to produce as the consequences of human action.

Kant's moral theory is, therefore, **deontological**: actions are morally right in virtue of their motives, which must derive more from **duty** than from inclination. The clearest examples of morally right action are precisely those in which an individual agent's determination to act in accordance with duty overcomes her evident self-interest and obvious desire to do otherwise. But in such a case, Kant argues, the moral value of the action can only reside in a formal principle or «maxim», the general commitment to act in this way because it is one's duty. So he concludes that «Duty is the necessity to act out of reverence for the law».

According to Kant, then, the ultimate principle of morality must be a moral law conceived so abstractly that it is capable of guiding us to the right action in application to every possible set of circumstances. So the only relevant feature of the moral law is its generality, the fact that it has the formal property of universalizability, by virtue of which it can be applied at all times to every moral agent. From this chain of reasoning about our ordinary moral concepts, Kant derived as a preliminary statement of moral obligation the notion that right actions are those that practical reason would will as universal law.

6.2.3.2 Imperatives for action

More accurate comprehension of morality, of course, requires the introduction of a more precise philosophical vocabulary. Although everything naturally acts in accordance with law, Kant supposed, only rational beings do so consciously, in obedience to the objective principles determined by practical reason. Of course, human agents also have subjective impulses – desires and inclinations that may contradict the dictates of reason. So we experience the claim of reason as an obligation, a command that we act in a particular way, or an **imperative**. Such imperatives may occur in either of two distinct forms, hypothetical or categorical.

A **hypothetical imperative** conditionally demands performance of an action for the sake of some other end or purpose; it has the form «Do A in order to achieve X». The application of hypothetical imperatives to ethical decisions is mildly troublesome: in such cases it is clear that we are morally obliged to perform the action A only if we are sure both that X is a legitimate goal and that doing A will in fact produce this desirable result. For a perfectly rational being, all of this would be analytic, but given the general limitations of human knowledge, the joint conditions may rarely be satisfied.

A **categorical imperative**, on the other hand, unconditionally demands performance of an action for its own sake; it has the form «Do A». An absolute moral demand of this sort gives rise to familiar difficulties: since it expresses moral obligation with the perfect necessity that would directly bind any will uncluttered by subjective inclinations, the categorical imperative must be known *a priori*; yet it cannot be an analytic judgment, since its content is not contained in the concept of a rational agent as such. The supreme principle of morality must be a synthetic a priori proposition. Leaving its justification for the third section of the Grounding (and the Second Critique), Kant proceeded to a discussion of the content and application of the categorical impetative.

6.2.3.3 The categorical imperative

Constrained only by the principle of universalizability, the practical reason of any rational being understands the **categorical imperative** to be: «Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law». That is, each individual agent regards itself as determining, by its decision to act in a certain way, that everyone (including itself) will always act according to the same general rule in the future. This expression of the moral law, Kant maintained, provides a concrete, practical method for evaluating particular human actions of several distinct varieties.

Consider, for example, the case of someone who contemplates relieving a financial crisis by borrowing money from someone else, promising to repay it in the future while in fact having no intention of doing so. (Notice that this is not the case of finding yourself incapable of keeping a promise originally made in good faith, which would require a different analysis.) The maxim of this action would be that it is permissible to borrow money under false pretenses if you really need it. But as Kant pointed out, making this maxim into a universal law would be clearly self-defeating. The entire practice of lending money on promise presupposes at least the honest intention to repay; if this condition were universally ignored, the (universally) false promises would never be effective as methods of borrowing. Since the universalized maxim is contradictory in and of itself, no one could will it to be law, and Kant concluded that we have a perfect duty (to which there can never be any exceptions whatsoever) not to act in this manner.

On the other hand, consider the less obvious case of someone who lives comfortably but contemplates refusing any assistance to people who are struggling under great hardships. The maxim here would be that it is permissible never to help those who are less well-off than ourselves. Although Kant conceded that no direct contradiction would result from the universalization of such a rule of conduct, he argued that no one could consistently will that it become the universal law, since even the most fortunate among us rightly allow for the possibility that we may at some future

time find ourselves in need of the benevolence of others. Here we have only an imperfect duty not act so selfishly, since particular instances may require exceptions to the rule when it conflicts either with another **imperfect duty** (e.g., when I don't have enough money to help everyone in need) or a **perfect duty** (e.g., if the only way to get more money would be under a false promise).

Kant also supposed that moral obligations arise even when other people are not involved. Since it would be contradictory to universalize the maxim of taking one's own life if it promises more misery than satisfaction, he argued, we have a perfect duty to ourselves not to commit suicide. And since no one would will a universalized maxim of neglecting to develop the discipline required for fulfilling one's natural abilities, we have an imperfect duty to ourselves not to waste our talents.

These are only examples of what a detailed application of the moral law would entail, but they illustrate the general drift of Kant's moral theory. In cases of each of the four sorts, he held that there is a contradiction – either in the maxim itself or in the will – involved in any attempt to make the rule under which we act into a universal law. The essence of immorality, then, is to make an exception of myself by acting on maxims that I cannot willfully universalize. It is always wrong to act in one way while wishing that everyone else would act otherwise.

The perfect world for a thief would be one in which everyone else always respected private property.)Thus, the purely formal expression of the categorical imperative is shown to yield significant practical application to moral decisions.

6.2.3.4 Alternative formulae for the categorical imperative

Although he held that there is only one categorical imperative of morality, Kant found it helpful to express it in several ways. Some of the alternative statements can be regarded as minor variations on his major themes, but two differ from the «formula of universal law» sufficiently to warrant a brief independent discussion.

Kant offered the «formula of the end in itself» as: «Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means».

This places more emphasis on the unique value of human life as deserving of our ultimate moral respect and thus proposes a more personal view of morality. In application to particular cases, of course, it yields the same results: violating a perfect duty by making a false promise (or killing myself) would be to treat another person (or myself) merely as a means for getting money (or avoiding pain), and violating an imperfect duty by refusing to offer benevolence (or neglecting my talents) would be a failure to treat another person (or myself) as an end in itself.

Thus, the Kantian imperative agrees with the Christian expression of «the golden rule» by demanding that we derive from our own self-interest a generalized concern for all human beings.

Drawing everything together, Kant arrived at the «formula of autonomy», under which the decision to act according to a maxim is actually regarded as having made it a universal law. Here the concern with human dignity is combined with the principle of universalizability to produce a conception of the moral law as self-legislated by each for all. As Kant puts it,

A rational being belongs to the kingdom of ends as a member when he legislates in it universal laws while also being himself subject to these laws. He belongs to it as sovereign, when as legislator he is himslf subject to the will of no other.

A rational being must always regard himself as legislator in a kingdom of ends rendered possible by freedom of the will, whether as member or as sovereign.

In this final formulation, the similarity of Kant's moral theory with his epistemology should be clear. Just as the understanding in each of us determines the regulative principles of natural science that all must share, so the practical reason in each of us determines the universal maxims of morality that all must obey.

6.2.3.5 Autonomy of the will

In fact, this final formula for the categorical imperative brings us back to the original concept of the will itself as that which is good without qualification. At this point in the argument, Kant can provide a more technical statement of its intrinsic moral value by distinguishing between autonomy and heteronomy of the will.

A **heteronomous will** is one in obedience to rules of action that have been legislated externally to it. Such a will is always submitting itself to some other end, and the principles of its action will invariably be hypothetical imperatives urging that it act in such a way as to receive pleasure, appease the moral sense, or seek personal perfection. In any case, the moral obligations it proposes cannot be regarded as completely binding upon any agent, since their maxim of action comes from outside it.

An **autonomous will**, on the other hand, is entirely self-legislating: The moral obligations by which it is perfectly bound are those which it has imposed upon itself while simultaneously regarding them as binding upon everyone else by virtue of their common possession of the same rational faculties. All genuinely moral action, Kant supposed, flows from the freely chosen dictates of an autonomous will. So even the possibility of morality presupposes that human agents have free will, and the final section of the Grounding is devoted to Kant's effort to prove that they do.

6.2.3.6 Human Freedom

As we might expect, Kant offered as proof of human freedom a transcendental argument from the fact of moral agency to the truth of its presupposed condition of free will. This may seem to be perfectly analogous to the use of similar arguments for synthetic a priori judgments in the First Critique, but the procedure is more viciously circular here.

Having demonstrated the supreme principle of morality by reference to autonomy, Kant can hardly now claim to ground free will upon the supposed fact of morality. That would be to exceed the bounds of reason by employing an epistemological argument for metaphysical purposes.

Here's another way of looking at it: Each case of moral action may be said to embody its own unique instance of the antinomy between freedom and causal determination. For in order to do the right thing, it must at least be possible for my action to have some real effect in the world, yet I must perform it in complete independence from any external influence.

Morality requires both freedom and causality in me, and of course Kant supposes that they are. I can think of myself from two standpoints: I operate within the phenomenal realm by participating fully in the causal regularities to which it is subject; but as a timeless thing in itself in the noumenal realm I must be wholly free. The trick is to think of myself in both ways at once, as sensibly determined but intelligibly free.

Kant rightly confesses at the end of the Grounding that serious contemplation of morality leads us to the very limits of human reason. Since action in accordance with the moral law requires an autonomous will, we must suppose ourselves to be free; since the correspondence of happiness with virtue cannot be left to mere coincidence, we must suppose that there is a god who guarantees it; and since the moral perfection demanded by the categorical imperative cannot be attained in this life, we must suppose ourselves to live forever. Thus god, freedom, and immortality, which we have seen to be metaphysical illusions that lie beyond the reach of pure reason, turn out to be the three great postulates of practical reason.

Although the truth about ourselves and god as noumenal beings can never be determined with perfect certainty, on Kant's view, we can continue to function as responsible moral agents only by acting as if it obtains. Things could hardly have been otherwise: the lofty dignity of the moral law, like the ultimate nature of reality, is the sort of thing we cannot know but are bound to believe.

6.2.3.7 Morality and Peace

Kant's interest in moral matters was not exclusively theoretical. In Metaphysics of Morals (1797) he worked out the practical application of the

categorical imperative in some detail, deriving a fairly comprehensive catalog of specific rules for the governance of social and personal morality. What each of us must actually will as universal, Kant supposed, is a very rigid system of narrowly prescribed conduct.

In On Perpetual Peace (1795), Kant proposed a high-minded scheme for securing widespread political stability and security. If statesmen would listen to philosophers, he argued, we could easily achieve an international federation of independent republics, each of which reduces its standing army, declines to interfere in the internal affairs of other states, and agrees to be governed by the notion of universal hospitality.

6.2.4 Kant's Third Critque: summing up

The final component of Kant's critical philosophy found expression in his Critique of Judgment (1790). Where the first Critique had dealt with understanding in relation to reality and the second had been concerned with practical reason in relation to action, this third Critique was meant to show that there is a systematic connection between the two, a common feature underlying every use of synthetic a priori judgments, namely the concept of **purpose**. In the last analysis, Kant supposed, it is our compulsion to find meaning and purpose in the world that impels us to accept the tenets of transcendental idealism.

In aesthetics, for example, all of our judgments about what is beautiful or sublime derive from the determination to impose an underlying form on the sensory manifold. Like mathematics, art is concerned with the discovery or creation of unity in our experience of the spatio-temporal world. Teleological judgments in science, theology, and morality similarly depend upon our fundamental convictions, that operation of the universe has some deep purpose and that we are capable of comprehending it.

Kant's final word here offers an explanation of our persistent desire to transcend from the phenomenal realm to the noumenal. We must impose the forms of space and time on all we perceive, we must suppose that the world we experience functions according to natural laws, we must regulate our conduct by reference to a self-legislated categorical imperative, and we must postulate the noumenal reality of ourselves, god, and free will – all because a failure to do so would be an implicit confession that the world may be meaningless, and that would be utterly intolerable for us.

Thus, Kant believed, the ultimate worth of his philosophy lay in his willingness «to criticize reason in order to make room for faith». The nineteenth-century German philosophers who followed him quickly moved to transform his modest critical philosophy into the monumental metaphysical system of absolute idealism.

Questions for self-testing:

1. What is manifested principal value of the Enlightenment?
2. What is the meaning of the social contract theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau?
3. How does Jean-Jacques Rousseau represent the general will?
4. What is "pure knowledge" according to Kant? What are its components?
5. What kinds of judgments does Kant distinguish? Provide examples different judgments.
6. What is the relationship between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenon in Kant's philosophy?
7. What antinomy of pure reason did Kant formulate?
8. What is the difference between the hypothetical and categorical imperative in Kantian philosophy?
9. What was the proof of human freedom in Kant's philosophy?

Recommended reading:

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, tr. by Maurice Cranston (Penguin, 1987).
2. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, tr. by Werner S. Pluhar and Patricia Kitcher (Hackett, 1996).
3. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Hackett, 2002).
4. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment, ed. by Werner S. Pluhar (Hackett, 1987).
5. Karl Ameriks, Kant's Theory of Mind: An Analysis of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason (Oxford, 2000).
6. Carol W. Voeller, The Metaphysics of the Moral Law (Garland, 2000).

7 GERMAN IDEALISM

The philosophy of German idealism arose to challenge the Enlightenment’s skeptical, materialist, empiricist, and antimetaphysical worldview. German idealist philosophers sought thereby to restore reason to its former preeminence and grandeur as the universal tool through which human understanding of reality is possible

7.1 Johann Fichte and the transcendental Ego

The initial step in this transformation was taken by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, author of the Science of Knowledge (1797). Noticing that the Kantian account of experience creates a vital tension between the roles of pure intelligence and pure object as noumenal realities, Fichte argued that the balance between the two cannot be maintained. We are, instead, driven to choose one of two alternative views: to emphasize the knower and ignore the known as a thing in itself, or to ignore the knower in order to focus on the reality of the known. Fichte chose the former, idealistic course, believing it alone capable of securing the freedom required for an adequate account of morality.

According to Fichte, then, all philosophy and all reality begins with the transcendental ego, the elusive but purely active noumenal self, identifiable only in an indefinitely repeated reflection upon primary experience («think on one who thinks on one who…».). This conscious being expand itself infinitely to comprehend everything, limited in its scope only by the logical categories and the regulative principles they entail. Hence, for Fichte, objects exist only as the objects of consciousness, believed by some individual ego in its restlessly active pursuit of knowledge.

Since an individual ego of this sort just is the active self as moral agent, Fichte supposed that morality follows directly from its nature. Once again, the ego expands infinitely to do everything, yet is consistently limited by its own legislation of the moral law. Since all egos are subject to precisely the same conditions, universal agreement to their moral precepts is assured. At the social level, this implies individual membership in a society of like-minded selves, a primitively socialist spirit akin to that exhibited in the French Revolution, of which Fichte was a vocal supporter.

By eliminating all references to material objects as even potential things in themselves, Fichte left room for nothing but minds in the noumenal realm. Thus, although he regarded himself as a loyal follower of Kant, Fichte significantly modified the master's thought by regarding it as inescapably committed to transcendental idealism.

7.2 Friedrich Schelling and objective reality

Another significant step in the transformation of idealism may be clearly seen in the writings of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling. More willing than Fichte to preserve the tension between knower and known, subject and object, ego and non-ego, Schelling attempted an adequate description of their intimate interdependence with each other. But the nature of the connection between the two remained obscure and problematic.

Schelling certainly rejected any objectification of the material independently of the knowing self, thus avoiding the dangers of dogmatism, yet he thought it evident from the content of our experience that representation embodies genuine information about the world. Kant's accounts of causality and teleology are not enough to explain the connection between the object and our knowing of it, and Fichte's explanation in wholly mental terms granted too little reality to the realm of the natural object.

What we must acknowledge, Schelling believed, is that there is a perfect parallel between the world of nature and the structure of our awareness of it – «Nature reflects Consciousness». Of course this cannot be true of my individual ego, though, since the world does not invariably conform to my own thought about it. But the apparent subjectivity of this approach is easily overcome by postulating an **absolute** consciousness, which simultaneously contains the thought of every individual ego and provides the noumenal ground for every material object in nature.

Like the neoplatonic center of emanations or Spinoza's «god or nature», the absolute is completely self-contained in essence and exclusively self-caused in operation. The study of physics, as an exploration of the necessary operation of the Absolute considered in one way, then, will be perfectly parallel to the science of knowledge that examines the necessary structure of self-conscious awareness that is the Absolute considered in another way.

By shifting from the thoughts of an individual ego to the infinite reason of the Absolute, employing the notions of earlier monists to express the fundamental identity of the real with the rational, Schelling transformed German idealism. This vision of the world was greatly influential on the Romantic poets, but its ripest philosophical fruit is to be found in the philosophy of Hegel.

7.3 Georg Hegel and absolute idealism

The greatest of all the German idealists was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who methodically constructed a comprehensive system of thought about the world. Focussed like Kant on the goal of showing how some fundamental unity underlies the confusing multiplicity of experiental contents, Hegel took a much more sytematic approach by making absolute consciousness the key source of ultimate connections among all other things. Above all else, Hegel held that reality must be rational, so that its ultimate structure is revealed in the structure of our thought. Everything that is thinkable, especially apparent contradictions, must be resolvable under some common concept of the reason. In what follows, we will examine in detail the logical apparatus Hegel employed in pursuit of knowledge.

7.3.1 Fundamental convictions

Even more than Aristotle and the Stoics, Hegel believed that the study of logic is an investigation into the fundamental structure of reality itself. According to Hegel, all logic (and, hence, all of reality) is dialectical in character. As Kant had noted in the Antinomies, serious thought about one general description of the world commonly leads us into a contemplation of its opposite. But Hegel did not suppose this to be the end of the matter; he made the further supposition that the two concepts so held in opposition can always be united by a shift to some higher level of thought. Thus, the human mind invariably moves from thesis to antithesis to synthesis, employing each synthesis as the thesis for a new opposition to be transcended by yet a higher level, continuing in a perpetual waltz of intellectual achievement.

Being, for example, is a basic concept that serves as a clear starting-point for any serious thinker, but serious contemplation of its nature reveals it to be so utterly devoid of specific content that the mind is naturally led to the thought of **nothing** as its opposite; but these two are not really contradictory, since both may be unified under the more sophisticated and comprehensive notion of **becoming**. If, on the other hand, our thesis is the concept of **being** as a naive immediate presentation of experience, then its natural antithesis is the idea of **essence** as knowledge mediated by classification; and the synthesis that unites these concepts is that of the **notion** as a self-mediating interpretation of thought and reality combined.

On the grandest scale of conceivability, all of thought (including the dialectical logic itself) is comprised by the thesis **idea**, whose natural antithesis is **nature**, the otherness of the known considered independently of its relation to the knower; and the grand synthesis of the two is **spirit**, the self-knowing, self-actualizing totality of all that is – namely, the absolute itself. This embodies Hegel's fundamental convicions that reality is wholly rational and that whatever is rational must be real. Human thought is merely one portion of the becoming of absolute spirit, which is (through us) thinking and creating itself as it goes. Even this development, as Hegel described it in the Phenomenology of Spirit, is best understood as the triadic transition from **subjective** to **objective** to **absolute** spirit.

7.3.2 Subjective spirit

Considered as subjective, Spirit may be observed, through truths about human nature described by the discipline of psychology, in the structure of thought exhibited by each individual human being. In every concrete instantiation, consciousness strives to reach perfect knowledge, and the path of its struggle can, of course, be described as the movement from thesis through antithesis to synthesis:

The first level of consciousness is that of sensory awareness of objects. Despite the fact that sensory images invariably appear to us as concrete particulars, wholly unrelated to each other, we naturally universalize the apparent regularities of their appearance, imposing upon them the forms of space and time and the generalized laws of nature.

Recognition of the role we ourselves play in the origination of these Kantian regulative principles, Hegel supposed, leads us directly to the antithesis of sensory experience, the self-conscious awareness of the individual thinker, who acknowledges self as individual ego. Although this ultimately implies the existence of other selves as well, its immediate consequence is a tendency toward skepticism about the world of objects.

But Hegel held that these levels are transcended by their synthesis in universal consciousness, an abstract awareness of one's own place within the greater scheme of absolute spirit. The objects of my experience and my awareness of myself are unified by the recognition that each is wholly contained in the fundamental reality of a common whole. Here the faculty of reason is crucial, since it most clearly draws upon what is common to us all.

7.3.3 Objective spirit

Considered objectively, Spirit involves the interaction among many selves that are the proper subject of ethics and social or political theory. Once again, of course, Hegel maintained that a correct understanding of these fields is to be derived not by generalizing from what we observe, but rather by tracing the dialectic through new triads.

Ethics, on Hegel's view, begins with the concept of freedom understood as the right of each individual human being to act independently in pursuit of its own self-interest. The antithesis to this is the emergence of moral rules, which require the imposition of duty as a constraint upon the natural liberty of human desire. The synthesis of the two for Hegel is «the ethical life», which emerges from a sincere recognition of the significance of one's own stake in the greater good of the whole.

Political order has its origins in family life, in which the basic needs of all individuals are served by mutual feeling, without any formal principle of organization. The antithesis to this is civil life, in which the incorporation of so many more individual units often leads to a system of purely formal regulation of conduct, demanded by law without any emotional bond. The synthesis of the two, then, is the State, which Hegel believed to unite society into a sort of civil family, organized in legal fashion but bound together by a profound emotional sense of devotion.

According to Hegel, then, the modern nation must serve as an actualization of the self-conscioius ethical will of a people. Although this sounds something like Rousseau's general will, Hegel's version puts all of the

emphasis on the collective expression of what is best for the people rather than on each individual's capacity to discover it for herself or himself. This view of the state fits well with the rise of modern nationalism in Europe during the nineteenth century, where the **national spirit** (Ger. *Völkergeist*) of each group emerges distinctively from every other.

7.3.4 Absolute spirit

Finally, when considered most purely, as absolute in itself, spirit is just the historical process of human thought toward ever-greater awareness of the fundamental unity of all reality. In order to see how the absolute gradually discovers and expresses its own nature, Hegel proposed, we need only observe the way in which the **spirit of the world** develops dialectically in three distinguishable arenas, a triad of triads through which human culture achieves its transcendental aim.

Since it appreciates and evaluates the Absolute entirely through its presentations among the senses, **art** is first to be considered. Effective artistic expression, Hegel supposed, must allways transcend the subject/object dichotomy by leading us to awareness of some underlying unity.

Historically, human art has embodied the dialectical development of the Absolute's sensory being, starting with the thesis of symbolic representation of natural objects and proceeding to its antithesis in highly stylized classical art before rising to the synthesis of Romantic expression.

The antithesis of art as a whole is the abstract notion of the Absolute as an objectified other, the divine being contemplated by **religion**. Although traditional religion often speaks of god in personal terms, its theological exposition usually emphasizes the radical differentness of the deity and its incomprehensibility to us.

Again, the historical development of religion displays a dialectical structure: the thesis is worship of nature, which gives rise to a religion of individuality tempered by revealed law, and both are transcended in the synthesis of protestant christianity, which unifies them under the notion of god in human form.

This leaves room for the grand culminating synthesis of human culture, which is **philosophy**, in which the absolute learns to cognize itself in perfectly literal terms. As the self-conscious awareness of the absolute, Hegel's philosophy unifies the sensibility of art and the objectivication of religion by regarding the dialectical logic of reason as the ultimate structure of reality.

Here, too, there has been historical development, most recently the emergence of absolute idealism as a synthesis transcending the dispute between empiricism and rationalism.

7.3.5 The inexorability of history

As we have already seen, Hegel's view of the world is determinedly historical; he believed that history itself (involving another triad, of original/reflective/philosophical history) exhibits the growth of self-consciousness in the Absolute, the process of development by means of which the spirit of the world comes to know itself. But since history inevitably follows the pattern of logical necessity through the dialectical movement from thesis to antithesis to synthesis, the present age must be the highest stage of development. Certainly Hegel regarded the cultural achievements of his own time – nationalism, romanticism, protestantism, and idealism – as the culmination of all that had gone before, with his own philosophical work as its highest expression. Here is nineteenth-century optimism at its peak, full of self-confidence in the possibilities of rationality and enlightenment.

Many thinkers of the nearly two centuries since Hegel's time have raised serious questions about the reliability of this modernist promise. In German philosophy after *Hegel*, no one else tried to develop such a thorough, methodically coherent system of thought; his achievement was quite literally inimitable. Yet few thinkers of the nineteenth century were entirely satisfied with the cool rationality of Hegel's defense of the status quo in all things. Many took issue with specific applications of his system to ethical, religious, or political concerns.

Questions for self-testing:

1. Why Fichte's philosophy is known as subjective idealism?
2. How does Schelling explain the relationship and unity of nature and consciousness?
3. In what is rationalism of Hegel's philosophy disclosed?
4. What are the stages of development of the absolute idea? Expand each of them.
5. How does Hegel understand the historical process?

Recommended reading:

1. Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will (Cambridge, 1998).
2. Schelling: Between Fichte and Hegel, ed. by Christoph Asmuth, Alfred Denker, and Michael Vater (Benjamins, 2001).
3. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, tr. by A. V. Miller and J. N. Findlay (Oxford, 1979).
4. Justus Hartnack, An Introduction to Hegel's Logic (Hackett, 1998).

8 XIX-XXth CENTURY: A VARIETY OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

8.1 Arthur Schopenhauer and the will

Believing that absolute idealism had corrupted the legitimate insights of Kant's critical philosophy, Arthur Schopenhauer proposed a return to central Kantian doctrines in The World as Will and Representation (1844).

Representations (or ideas) are properly described in Kantian fashion, as the phenomena of experience, categorized under concepts of the mind's manufacture. Schopenhauer, however, employed the principle of sufficient reason in explanation of the structure of reality to a decidedly un-Kantian degree, and he suggested that this view of the world was clearly prefigured in the tenets of Hindu thought.

Schopenhauer's departure from Hegel is clearest in his treatment of the Will as an individual drive, the noumenal urge to survive and create, which is never fully satisfied.

As Kant had pointed out, the greatest evil is the enxlavement of will to any extraneous influence. But Schopenhauer saw two avenues of escape from this trap: aesthetic appreciation as a way of securing one's own space in the world and true salvation through moral progress, which he supposed to require an ascetic denial of the blind urges to which each will is suskeptible.

8.2 Ludwig Feuerbach on religion

Ludwig Feuerbach, on the other hand, focussed primarily on the theological implications of idealism. Even if Hegel's position were, as he supposed, the ultimate culmination of the entire philosophical tradition, it would not be enough to satisfy the human desire for certainty. In addition to their epistemological and metaphysical urges, human beings also have a fundamental feeling of dependence that can be satisfied only by their adherence to religion. Unfortunately, as Feuerbach noted, the actual religions to which we do adhere are elaborate fictions created by the projection of human virtues (and vices) onto the plane of the infinity. Thus, as Freud would emphasize later, we are collectively and individually led to reliance on an illusion.

8.3 British and American idealists

Of course idealism, with its promise of unifying everything under a single comprehensive system of knowledge, continued to find adherents through the end of the nineteenth century. In Germany, Rudolf Hermann Lotze tried to show that the necessity of absolute consciousness emerges even from a mechanistic study of nature.

Among the English, T.H. Green postulated the total interconnectedness of everything, with abstract intellectual relations filling any apparent gaps, and Edward Caird employed the philosophy of Kant and Hegel in explicit opposition to Mill's empiricism. Despite vigorous opposition, absolute idealism was the dominant view in British and American philosophy through the nineteenth century.

The most cautious and penetrating of the British idealists was F. H. Bradley, who devoted great attention to the logical development of his philosophical system. In an effort to link thought and reality without identifying them completely, Bradley analyzed individual judgments as requiring internal relations, abstracted by the mind in order to obtain genuine knowledge from a mere collocation of facts. Since reality is an undifferentiated absolute presented to us in a multitude of appearances, Bradley supposed, our task is always to see through the contradictory clues provided by experience to the ultimately rational status of reality that must lie behind them.

Scottish idealist Andrew Seth (Pringle-Pattison) emphasized the role of the individual human knower in securing the systematic unity of reality, while J.M.E. McTaggart developed powerful reasons for denying that time is real. Bernard Bosanquet rejected these innovations, returning to Bradley's conviction that the true nature of the Absolute is exhibited (imperfectly) in ordinary experience, which must be interpreted by rigorous adherence to a coherence theory of truth.

In the United States, Josiah Royce developed an eclectic blend of these idealistic trends, centered on his unique analysis of the experience of knowing and error. Since knowledge would be utterly impossible if objects actually existed independently of our awareness of them, Royce argued, reality must simply be the sum total of our experiences, and all error must result from mistaken intentions on our part. It was in opposition to this view that the pragmatism of William James later emerged. Long after absolute idealism had ceased to dominate the philosophical landscape, American philosopher Brand Blanshard continued to use it as the basis for his trenchant criticism of logical positivism. With only slight exaggeration, however, it is possible to state that idealism died with the arrival of the new/ century.

8.4 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: communism

Nineteenth-century hought about social issues took a different turn with the work of such reformers as Godwin and Proudhon.

The most comprehensive and influential new way of thinking about social, economic, and political issues was that developed by German philosopher Karl Marx. Like Ludwig Feuerbach, Marx belonged to a generation of German scholars who appropriated but diverged significantly from the teachings of Hegel.

Early in his own career, Marx outlined his disagreement with the master's political theories in A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Hegel's emphasis on the abstract achievements of art, religion, and philosophy overlooked what is truly important in human life, according to Marx. Religion in particular is nothing more than a human creation with its own social origins and consequences: it gives expression to human suffering without offering any relief from it by disguising its genuine sources in social and economic injustice. Even philosophy, as an abstract discipline, is pointless unless it is transformed or actualized by direct application to practice.

Marx maintained that progress would best be founded on a proper understanding of industry and the origins of wealth, together with a realistic view of social conflict. Struggle between distinct economic classes, with the perpetual possibility of revolution, is the inevitable fate of European society. Specifically, Marx argued that the working-class of Germany has become the ideal vehicle for social revolution because of the loss of humanity it has suffered as a result of the industrialization of the German economy.

In the unfinished section on Alienated Labor from the Economic and Political Manuscripts of 1844 (1844) Marx tried to draw out the practical consequences of the classical analysis of the creation of value through investment of human labor. To the very extent that the process is effective, he argued, it has a devastating effect on the lives of individual human beings.

Workers create products by mixing their own labor in with natural resources to make new, composite things that have greater economic value. Thus, the labor itself is objectified, its worth turned into an ordinary thing that can be bought and sold on the open market, a mere commodity. The labor now exists in a form entirely external to the worker, separated forever from the human being whose very life it once was. This is the root of what Marx called **alienation**, a destructive feature of industrial life.

Workers in a capitalistic economic system become trapped in a vicious circle: the harder they work, the more resources in the natural world are appropriated for production, which leaves fewer resources for the workers to live on, so that they have to pay for their own livelihood out of their wages, to earn which they must work even harder. When the very means of subsistence are commodities along with labor, their is no escape for the «wage slave».

Thus, Marx pointed out, workers are alienated in several distinct ways: from their products as externalized objects existing independently of their makers; from the natural world out of which the raw material of these products has been appropriated; from their own labor, which becomes a grudging necessity instead of a worthwhile activity; and from each other as the consumers of the composite products. These dire conditions, according to Marx, are the invariable consequences of industrial society.

8.4.1 The Communist Manifesto

Marx did not suppose the situation to be inescapable, however. Together with his collaborator, Friedrich Engels, Marx developed not only an analysis of current conditions but also a plan for political action, together with a theory about the historical inevitability of its success. In the Communist Manifesto (1848), Marx and Engels presented their practical proposals for changing the world.

Social history is nothing other than a record of past struggles between distinct social classes. In the modern, industrial world, the most significant classes are the **bourgeoisie**, people who own land, resources, factories, and other means of production, and the **proletariat**, people who work for wages. In its efforts to succeed, the bourgeoisie must constantly revise and renew the means of production, ensuring a constant infusion of capital by building larger cities, promoting new products, and securing cheaper commodities.

As capital increases and the means of production expand, however, the labor of the proletariat becomes ever less valuable. Alienated from themselves and each other, workers have little political influence.

Even small shopkeepers and skilled laborers are encouraged to join with the bourgeoisie in its drive for capital, instead of expressing their natural alliance with wage workers. Nevertheless, Marx and Engels noted, the proletariat constitutes a majority of the population, and the prospect of its organization for effective political action is what raised the «spectre» of communism in industrial Europe.

Thus, Part II of the Manifesto declares the intention of communism to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to situate all political power in the proletariat instead. This would have lots of practical consequences: Although the surplus value of capital would be undermined, individual property interest in one's own labor would be restored, so that alienation can be avoided. Child labor would be ended, and universal provision for education would guarantee that future generations have greater control of their own destiny. Women would be empowered in their own right as workers, instead of being subject to domination by male bourgeois. Progressive taxation would provide for a re-distribution of capital, and the struggle between classes would be ended.

The list of practical aims at the end of Part II is impressive, and many of its features have been implemented throughout the world during the past century-and-a-half.

The Manifesto continues with an effort to position the Communist Party favorably in relation to other social and political movements of the nineteenth century. Its conclusion is a stirring call for political action by the great, sleeping giant of the proletariat.

8.4.2 Economic details

For the rest of his life, Marx worked on a massive effort to explain and defend his economic theories. The multi-volume work, Capital (1867-95) began to appear during his lifetime, but was left unfinished at his death. More scholarly in tone than the popular Manifesto, this grand statement of principles provided a legacy of economic theory for future generations.

8.5 Utilitarianism

At the outset of the nineteenth century, an influential group of British thinkers developed a set of basic principles for addressing social problems.

Extrapolating from Hume's emphasis on the natural human interest in utility, reformer Jeremy Bentham proposed a straightforward quantification of morality by reference to utilitarian outcomes. His An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (1789) offers a simple statement of the application of this ethical doctrine.

Bentham's moral theory was founded on the assumption that it is the consequences of human actions that count in evaluating their merit and that the kind of consequence that matters for human happiness is just the **achievement of pleasure and avoidance of pain**.

He argued that the hedonistic value of any human action is easily calculated by considering how intensely its pleasure is felt, how long that pleasure lasts, how certainly and how quickly it follows upon the performance of the action, and how likely it is to produce collateral benefits and avoid collateral harms.

Taking such matters into account, we arrive at a net value of each action for any human being affected by it.

All that remains, Bentham supposed, is to consider the extent of this pleasure, since the happiness of the community as a whole is nothing other than the sum of individual human interests. The principle of utility, then, defines the meaning of moral obligation by reference to the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people who are affected by performance of an action.

Similarly, Bentham supposed that social policies are properly evaluated in light of their effect on the general well-being of the populations they involve. Punishing criminals is an effective way of deterring crime precisely because it pointedly alters the likely outcome of their actions, attaching the likelihood of future pain in order to outweigh the apparent gain of committing the crime.

Thus, punishment must «fit» the crime by changing the likely perception of the value of committing it.

8.6 Søren Kierkegaard: the passionate individual

An entirely different kind of reaction against the severe rationalism of Hegel came from Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. Although he wrote extensively, Kierkegaard employed the rhetorical device of irony so successfully that it is difficult to be sure what views he would have defended seriously. Approaching the work through some of his self-conscious reflections upon the task may prove helpful.

At first, one might be inclined to accept Kierkegaard's straightforward declaration that his entire career as an author is nothing more than an earnest desire to achieve worldly fame. But even this appears in a work he published pseudonymously! Perhaps his claim to be preaching Christianity to the Christians is closer to the mark. Opposing the staid, traditional complacency in which many people live out their lives is a worthwhile goal that calls for an unusual approach.

Kierkegaard's life and work exemplify the paradox that he saw at the heart of modern life. Ever scornful of human pretensions, he deliberately chose the reverse deception of pretending to be less than he was. Since serious work should stand on its own, without deriving any arbitrary force from the presumed authority of its creator, Kierkegaard wrote privately and published under a variety of pseudonyms while frequently making flighty public appearances in his native Copenhagen. Perhaps this was a great project of personal ironic exhibitionism: how better to illustrate the uselessness of customary «social» life than by living it out to the fullest?

8.6.1 That individual

But why would anyone take such great pains in a deliberate effort to be out-of-step with his own world? For Kierkegaard, this was the only way to be sure of the truth, by eliminating every possible ulterior motive for what one says. The pseudonymous writer is notably freed from any temptation to tailor his message to popular opinion, since it is impossible for him to achieve any fame. This is what mattered to Kierkegaard.

With regard to everything that counts in human life, including especially matters of ethical and religious concern, Kierkegaard held that the crowd is always wrong. Any appeal to the opinions of others is inherently false, since it involves an effort to avoid responsibility for the content and justification of my own convictions. Genuine action must always arise from the Individual, without any prospect of support or agreement from others. Thus, on Kierkegaard's view, both self-denial and the self-realization to which it may lead require absolute and uncompromising independence from the group. Social institutions – embodying «the system» of Hegelian idealism – are invariably bad; only the solitary perception of self can be worthwhile.

8.6.2 Freedom and dread

Utter self-reliance, however, is a frightening prospect. Although we are strongly inclined to seek human freedom, Kierkegaard noted, contemplation of such a transcendence of all mental and bodily determinations tends only to produce grave anxiety in the individual person. Genuine innocence entails an inability to forsee all outcomes, which thereby renders one incapable of gaining control over one's own life.

Thus, in The Concept of Dread (1844), Kierkegaard examined the only appropriate emotional response to the condition of human freedom. **Anxiety** (Ger. Angst) is the dizziness produced in any reasonable being who stands at the brink of genuine freedom. Knowing that we can think and do as we will naturally inspires deep fear about what we shall think and do.

Even religious verities, Kierkegaard supposed, offer no lasting relief from the predicament. Christianity (as Paul had pointed out) makes no sense; its genius lies not in any appeal to the dictates of reason but rather in its total reliance on faith. But from our point of view, the content of an authoritative command is entirely irrelevant; all that matters is the claim that the command places upon our lives. There can be no proof of the authority behind the command, since any such demonstration of its value would make it impossible for us to accept it as a matter of faith.

8.6.3 Subjective truth

What is at stake here is Kierkegaard's theoretical distinction between objective and subjective truth, worked out in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846) to the Philosophical Fragments. Considered objectively, truth merely seeks attachment to the right object, correspondence with an independent reality. Considered subjectively, however, truth seeks achievement of the right attitude, an appropriate relation between object and knower. Thus, for example, although Christianity is objectively merely one of many available religions in the world, it subjectively demands our complete devotion.

For Kierkegaard, it is clearly subjective truth that counts in life. **How** we believe matters much more than **what** we believe, since the «passionate inwardness» of subjective adherence is the only way to deal with our anxiety. Passionate attachment to a palpable falsehood, Kierkegaard supposed, is preferable to detached conviction of the obvious truth. Mild acceptance of traditional, institutional religion is useless, since god's existence can only be appreciated on wholly subjective grounds.

At one level, this amounts to acceptance of something like the slogan, «It doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you're sincere». But of course the Kierkegaardian standards for sincerity are very high.

8.7 Friedrich Nietzsche

8.7.1 Moral nihilism

German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche shared Kierkegaard's conviction that philosophy should deeply reflect the personal concerns of individual human beings. But for Nietzsche, this entailed rejection of traditional values, including the Christian religion. Nietzche's declaration of «the death of god» draws attention to our culture's general abandonment of any genuine commitment to the Christian faith.

According to Nietzsche's Twilight of the Idols (1889), Western philosophers since Socrates represent a degeneration of the natural strengths of humanity. A noble taste for heroic styles of life can only be corrupted and undermined by the interminable debates of dialectical reason. Traditional Western morality philosophy – and the Christian religion in particular – therefore opposes a healthy life, trying vainly to escape unfortunate circumstances by destroying native human desires.

Only perverse tenacity and cowardice, he believed, encourages us to cling to this servile morality, It would be more brave, more honest, and much more noble to cut ourselves loose and dare to live in a world without God. In such a world, death is not to be feared, since it represents nothing more significant than the fitting conclusion of a life devoted to personal gain.

All of this is, of course, a variety of **nihilism**. Nietzsche insists that there are no rules for human life, no absolute values, no certainties on which to rely. If truth can be achieved at all, it can come only from an individual who purposefully disregards everything that is traditionally taken to be «important». Such a super-human person (Ger. Übermensch), Nietzsche supposed, can live an authentic and successful human life.

8.7.2 Beyond good and evil

Nietzsche offered a quasi-historical account of the harmful consequences of traditional ethics in On the Genealogy of Morals (1887). «Good» initially and properly designated only the right of those individuals with social and political power to live their lives by sheer force of will. But a «priestly» caste, motivated by their resentment of their natural superiors, generated a corrupt alternative that would appeal to «the herd» of less capable persons, turning values inside-out. In the «slave morality» endorsed by religious establishments, Nietzsche argued, forceful action which should be admired gets labelled as «evil», while the cowardly tendency to think through everything in advance is transformed into the supposed virtue of prudence.

Genuine autonomy, Nietzsche maintained, could only mean freedom from all external constraints on one's behavior. In this (natural and admirable)

state of existence, each individual human being would live a life without the artificial limits of moral obligation. No other sanction on conduct would be necessary than the natural punishment involved in the victory of a superior person over a vanquished enemy.

But the wish of lesser people to secure themselves against interference from those who are better gives rise to a false sense of moral responsibility. The natural fear of being overwhelmed by a superior foe becomes internalized as the self-generated sense of guilt, and individual conscience places severe limits on the normal exercize of human desire. Thus, on Nietzsche's view, the fundamental self-betrayal of the human race is to submit its freedom to the ficticious demands of an imaginary god. Afraid to live by the strength of our own wills, we invent religion as a way of generating and then explaining our perpetual sense of being downtrodden and defeated in life.

8.8 Pragmatism and empiricism

8.8.1 Charles Peirce

8.8.1.1 The pragmatist principle

The most significant indigenous philosophical movement of the United States is pragmatism. Pursuant to discussions of the «Metaphysical Club» at Harvard (which also included William James and Oliver Wendell Holmes as members), Charles Sanders Peirce proposed an important set of methodological principles for scientific investigation.

Noting that the pace of progress in science is often accompanied by confusion about its underlying principles, Peirce suggested in The Fixation of Belief (1877) that this confusion can be eliminated by devoting appropriate attention to the structure of logical inference. This, in turn, Peirce understood to be nothing other than a habit of mind that leads us toward the truth.

According to Peirce, all human inquiry is a struggle against the irritation of uncertainty or doubt. Feeling keenly dissatisfied by any suspension in judgment, we invariably seek to eliminate it by forming a **belief**, to which we then cling firmly even in the face of evidence to the contrary. So powerful is this urge to believe something in every circumstance that many people (as Bacon had noted centuries before) adopt beliefs upon whatever seems ready-to-hand, including individual interest, appeals to authority, or the dictates of a priori reasoning. But Peirce – rebelling against the excessive rationalism of Hegel, argued that reliance upon such principles is bound to distract us from what matters.

Productive human inquiry, Peirce maintained, must be grounded firmly in reality; only then will our beliefs tend to correspond with the facts. Inquiry of this kind is the process described by **scientific method** – a systematic set of

suggestions that guide us in the acquisition of habits of belief that tend to conform to the ways in which our experiences are most likely to turn out. Although the alternative methods offer many personal advantages, Peirce noted, only science selects for acceptance a belief that is true in the sense that «if acted on it should . . . carry us to the point we aim at and not astray». Preference for such beliefs is the starting-point for Peirce's pragmatism.

8.8.1.2 Comprehending reality

In a sequel article entitled How to Make Our Ideas Clear (1878), Peirce applied similar principles to the nature of our conceptions of the world. Decrying the obscurity and confusion surrounding us of the notion of clear and distinct ideas in traditional logic, Peirce proposed a new way of thinking about our mental contents: «Consider what effects which might conceivably have practical bearings we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object».

This principle arises directly from the notion of belief as a habit of thinking that tends to provide a suitable guide to action. But the examples of its application Peirce presented make it even more clear that his pragmatic principles govern the very meaning, as well as the truth, of our beliefs.

In this paper, however, Peirce made it clear that the notion of truth involves not only an appropriate pragmatic connection with reality for the individual believer, but also entails a social relation with other believers. As each one of an indefinitely large number of individual people engages in scientific investigation, their habits of belief will – over the long run – tend to converge upon the same conception of the world, one that most clearly corresponds with reality. As Peirce noted, even human stubbornness, deception, and error can only delay, not completely prevent, our eventual acknowledgement of the natural order.

8.8.1.3 Philosophical method

Having failed to gain the academic employment he desired, Peirce in his later years came to resent the greater popular attention that James achieved for pragmatism. In What Pragmatism Is (1905) Peirce correctly claimed credit for having invented the name of the movement – only to disavow it, claiming to prefer «pragmaticism» as a more descriptive title for his own philosophical method.

The method itself remained clear, however, with its firm basis in experimental reasoning, its determination of the meaning of concepts by reference to their consequences for future observation, and its hope for the eventual convergence of human opinion. In fact, Peirce declared even more directly that ontological claim failing to have clear implications for future

experience must be dismissed as utterly meaningless. Since his more technical logical writings have only recently come to the attention of scholars who can appreciate them, it was this deliberately anti-metaphysical spirit that constituted Peirce's lasting legacy to American philosophy.

8.8.2 William James

William James was a fellow-member of the «Metaphysical Club», where Peirce established the pragmatist movement. But James had greater academic success than his friend, using his M.D. as the basis for a respectable career teaching in the Department of Philosophy and Psychology at Harvard. Wide-ranging interests in human life, behavior, and religion led James to develop the pragmatic method more explicitly as a foundation for a thoroughly empiricist alternative to the prevailing idealism of his era.

James vigorously supported the development of psychology as an academic discipline independent of philosophy at Harvard. His own most significant contribution to the scientific study of mind was The Principles of Psychology (1890), a monumental compendium of psychological research. Although James presumed the reliability of an introspective method, his emphasis on empirical foundations helped to foster more narrowly experimental approaches.

Thus, for example, James's study was tempered by his firm supposition that the self is invariably embodied. Sensation of the external world, memory, the formation of habit, and personal identity all therefore rest upon organic features of the living body. Such realism standpoint clearly differentiated James from the idealistic theories of his American philosophical contemporaries.

Nevertheless, James himself identified consciousness as the central object of psychological investigation and devoted great attention to the «stream of thought» as experienced by the individual thinker. Most dramatically, James analyzed human volition as a the result of a deliberate exercise of will that not only secures the freedom presupposed by moral agency but also established the person as an independent being. For James, free will is both theoretically and personally essential to the character of human life.

8.8.2.1 Pragmatic meaning

James willingly incorporated many of Peirce's pragmatic principles as part of his own conception of the philosophical method. In What Pragmatism Means (1907), for example, he offered a simple story about someone chasing a squirrel around a tree and suggested that a verbal dispute over whether or not the person «goes round» the squirrel can best be resolved by asking

disputants about the practical bearing of each alternative. Thusly exemplified, the «pragmatic method» seems little more than the time-honored philosophical demand for precision in the use of language.

As James noted, «A pragmatist . . . turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. . . turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power».

Here it is clear that pragmatism not only reacts againts the excesses of absolute idealism, but is likely to oppose rationalism in any form; it is small wonder that James published his later work in Essays in Radical Empiricism (1912) as radically empiricist.

Appealing to Dewey and Schiller as well as Peirce in What Pragmatism Means, however, James described the acquisition of new beliefs and their assimilation to old opinions as a complex process whose features somewhat resemble traditional idealistic applications of the coherence theory of truth.

Ultimately, he supposed, the crucial issue is what it would be «better for us» to believe in every instance.

8.8.2.2 Pragmatic truth

This amounts to the development of a distinctively pragmatic theory of truth. In a later lecture from the same series Pragmatism's Theory of Truth James wrote: «*Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its veri-fication».*

Although he accepted the most general definition of truth as a correspondence with reality, James supposed that the most crucial aspect of reality is experiential regularity. It is, then, by reference to what we (pragmatically) expect to happen that any belief acquires its use for us.

Decrying as trivial all rationalistic efforts to define truth as a system of interconnected beliefs, James baldly asserted that «'The true' . . . is only the expedient in the way of our thinking». Some reasonable qualifications follow, of course.

The «payoffs» may take any number of different forms, and long-term outcomes matter more than those in the immediate present. There remains a clear sense that truth is the characteristic feature of beliefs that tend to help us to be ready for what happens in our experience.

That is, belief has a function in the life of human beings – namely, to prepare us for successful action in the face of recurrent circumstances – and beliefs that best fulfil that function are the ones most deserve to be called true.

8.8.2.3 The will to believe

In some instances, naturally, we don't yet have enough experiential evidence upon which to base a reliable judgment. English mathematician W. K. Clifford had argued in The Ethics of Belief (1879) that the proper response in such cases is an agnostic one: given the social consequences of adherence to particular beliefs, it would be immoral to accept the truth of any proposition about which we cannot be wholly certain.

In The Will to Believe (1897), James took a very different approach, explicitly defending the exercise of faith.

Note well that James here considered only those cases in which the usual methods of arriving at the truth have not (yet) yielded satisfactory results.

A **genuine** option between two (or more) undertain hypotheses arises only when:

1. Each hypothesis is **living** (rather than dead) in the sense that it holds some minimal degree of appeal;
2. The choice among them is **forced** (rather than avoidable) in the sense that some course of action is inevitable; and
3. The outcome is **momentous** (rather than trivial) in the sense that the alternatives are significant to the whole of life.

James argued that it is appropriate to resolve such cases on non-rational grounds, as a matter of choice, passion, or volition.

The goals or aims of human cognition include both «believe truth» and «shun error», James pointed out, even though the two purposes may be contrary to each other in particular applications.

According to James, Clifford honored the second maxim so rigidly as to risk violating the first, while a dogmatist would do the reverse. James himself supposed it vital at least to allow for a deliberate decision to believe in the absence of rational demonstration or scientific confirmation.

As a description of how many human beings do, in fact, arrive at beliefs upon which they are willing to live their lives, of course, this view is hard to dispute.

But James clearly meant to recommend «the will to believe» as a practice, especially with regard to religious convictions. Like Pascal, he supposed that belief in the existence of god is, if undemonstrable, nevertheless a good wager.

For the next generation of American philosophers, the pragmatism of Peirce and James became a powerful tool for understanding logical inquiry and improving the quality of human life.

8.8.3 John Dewey

8.8.3.1 Experience and nature

After studying with Peirce at Johns Hopkins, John Dewey pursued a lengthy academic career, expounding pragmatic principles in professional philosophical journals and promoting their application to social and educational settings. From the outset, he denied that there is any significant metaphysical distinction between mind and body. As The Unit of Behavior (The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology) (1896) made clear, Dewey supposed that human awareness and action occur as indistinguishable elements within a coherent experience. In any adequate analysis, what we know is just what we do. Thus, as Dewey noted in «The Practical Character of Reality» (1908), the order of the natural world itself necessarily includes our interaction with it through scientific investigation. **What the world is depends upon what we do with it.**

The pattern of our thought about the world is explicitly described in Logic: The Theory of Inquiry (1938). There, Dewey identifies a six-step process that includes:

1. The presence of an **indeterminate situation** in our experience of the world to which we respond with subjective doubt;
2. Our recognition of this situation as a **problem** to which the principles of inquiry may be applied;
3. Our invention of various hypotheses as potential **solutions** that might (if viable) resolve the problem;
4. Our careful **reasoning** about the meaning of these solutions in relation to the problem itself and to our other convictions;
5. The application of our results to the **facts** of the situation, understood by reference to the operation of our observations on them;
6. Acceptance of a **scientific or common-sense** explanation of the situation that provisionally reduces the original indeterminacy.

Notice that at every stage of this process, Dewey emphasized the dynamic and tentative character of our knowledge of the world. The best outcome for which we can legitimately hope is what he called the «warranted assertability» of a belief upon which we can successfully act, without any presumption of its independent, universal, or timeless truth.

8.8.3.2 Morality and education

Dewey's moral philosophy was thoroughly naturalistic in its vigorous rejection of the traditional dichotomy between fact and value. Human conduct – like every other aspect of experience – is susceptible to the same pattern of thought, as Dewey argued in Logical Conditions of a Scientific Treatment of Morality (1903). Thus, in The Construction of Good (1929)

Dewey argued that ethical and aesthetic choices are properly addressed as practical, scientific issues.

Judgments about values are judgments about the conditions and the results of experienced objects; judgments about that which should regulate the formation of our desires, affections, and enjoyments.

This, Dewey believed, completes the great work of empiricism. An experimental approach to moral decision making promises: to secure a proper regard for the future practical consequences of our actions; to reduce the dangerous influence of subjective egoism; and to encourage adoption of a reasonable, modest fallibilism with respect to our moral precepts.

Dewey's application of pragmatic principles to educational and social contexts is expressed in Democracy and Education (1916).

8.8.4 Mead and Addams: social dimensions

Dewey's friend and colleague George Herbert Mead placed even greater emphasis on the application of pragmatic philosophy to human society. He argued in Social Consciousness and the Consciousness of Meaning (1910) that social acts are the irreducible units of all human experience. This social **behaviorism** became even more explicit in The Social Self (1913), where Mead proposed that an adequate understanding of the self or person invariably requires consideration of its overt relations with other selves.

Also in Chicago, Jane Addams put pragmatism to work in vigorous public activities on behalf of social justice. Twenty Years at Hull House (1912), and Women, War, and Suffrage (1915) describe in detail her efforts to provide basic social services for the disadvantaged. She also participated in the campaign to secure women's suffrage in the United States. A Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Addams was a vocal pacifist, whose Democracy or Militarism (1899) and Newer Ideals of Peace (1907) offer reasoned defences of the potential social and economic value of world peace.

8.9 Phenomenology

Late in the nineteenth century, a group of Austrian philosophers grew dissatisfied with the excessive subjectivity fostered by the philosophy of the later German idealists. Borrowing their methods from the emerging sciences of psychology and sociology, these phenomenologists sought to restore a proper balance by securing the objectivity of experiential content at all costs.

8.9.1 Franz Brentano

The basic approach of phenomenology was first developed by Franz Brentano, who was influenced both by scholastic versions of Aristotelian

thought and by the radical empiricism of Hume. The central concern of philosophy, Brentano supposed, is to understand the nature and content of awareness in ways that illuminate the distinction between the mental and the non-mental.

In Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint (1874) Brentano proposed that every mental act be understood to have a doubly significant representational function, designating both themselves reflectively and a phenomenal object intentionally. Indeed, this distinction between acts and their objects precisely delineates the crucial distinction for Brentano, since *«intentionality is the mark of the mental».* One and the same phenomenal object can be intended by mental acts of different modalities – believing, imagining, etc. Thus, Brentano held that although each intentional act is itself subjective, its intention is an objective thing or fact in the world.

Brentano applied a similar set of distinctions with respect to moral theory in The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong (1889). Although our emotional attitudes about human behavior are thoroughly subjective, the particular human actions they intend are objective features of the world, which sometimes carry self-evident value in the same way that other right judgments do.

8.9.2 Alexius Meinong

Brentano's emphasis on the objectivity of intentional objects gives rise to a serious question about our ability to think about non-existent objects. If «the golden mountain» does not exist, what feature of reality preserves the objectivity of our intention?

Alexius Meinong tried to provide a systematic answer to such questions by introducing a third element that mediates between a mental act and its object, the content of the act (rather like Frege's sense).

Extrapolating from this idea, Meinong distinguished several levels of reality among objects and facts about them in On Possibility and Probability (1915):

- existent objects participate in actual (true) facts about the world;
- subsistent (real but non-existent) objects appear in possible (but false) facts;
- objects that neither exist nor subsist can only belong to impossible facts.

Although Meinong's scheme successfully guarantees the objective reality of intentional objects of every sort, its ontological cost is high.

The world according to Meinong is crowded with false facts and non-existent realities. It was (at least partly) in reaction to such a lush landscape that Russell and Quine later developed more parsimonious notions about what is.

8.9.3 Edmund Husserl

Another of Brentano's students, Edmund Husserl, developed the phenomenological method in a less formal vein. In his Logical Investigations (1901, 1913) and Cartesian Meditations (1931), Husserl aimed for a science of pure abstract thought that arrives at truth about the atemporal essenses of things. From our experience of the phenomena, Husserl supposed, we must somehow intuit the genuine, lasting character of what most truly persists through all. Thus, although human consciousness remains supremely important as the unique source of our knowledge, our goal must always be to transcend the temporal limitations of ordinary experience in order to fathom the timeless reality that underlies it. It was this version of phenomenology that most significantly influenced the philosophy of Heidegger.

8.10 Bertrand Russell

8.10.1 Philosophy as logical analysis

Analytic philosophy in the twentieth century aims to resolve philosophical disputes by clarifying the significance of ordinary assertions.

One of the earliest practicioners of this method was Bertrand Russell, an English peer who proposed reliance upon logic as the basis for dealing with every other branch of the discipline. Careful re-statement of philosophical problems in precise logical terminology, Russell believed, makes evident their likely solutions.

Such optimism naturally depended upon a vigorous sense of the value of logic itself. Neither the simplistic treatment of predicates in the Aristotelian logic of the scholastics nor the crypto-metaphysical account of internal relations in the Hegelian dialectic of the Absolute idealists provides an adequate foundation for philosophy, Russell supposed, and the inductive reasoning of Bacon, Hume, and Mill offers grounds only for tentative empirical generalizations. Russell's hopes rested instead on a modern notion of the logical enterprise, in which inferential relations depend solely upon the logical form of individual propositions that can be shown to be tautologous.

One advantage of this notion is that it promised to establish formally the essential **unity of logic and mathematics**. As Russell and Cambridge mathematician Alfred North Whitehead demonstrated in Principia Mathematica (1910-13), it is possible to begin with a restricted set of logical symbols and, using only simple inferential techniques, prove the truth of the Peano axioms for basic arithmetic. Although its ultimate success was significantly undermined by Gödel's proof that some propositions necessarily remained undecidable, the construction of this formal system was an intellectual achievment of the first order.

Moreover, the logicization of arithmetic required attention to significant philosophical issues. Russell and Whitehead used the principle of abstraction to eliminate properties from their logical system entirely, instead using classes of objects, defined entirely by their extension. Thus, for example, the number «5» is nothing other than the class of all classes that have quintuple membership. But this technique gave rise to a significant paradox. Since there can be classes of classes, it must be possible to offer extensional definitions of classes that have themselves as members. But then consider «the class of all classes that are not members of themselves». If this class is included within its own extension, then by definition, it should not be; but if it is not included, then it should be. This appears to establish the formal inconsistency of the entire system. Russell's solution to the difficulty was a theory of types, according to which classes are arrayed hierarchically: although each class may have as members classes of lower orders, no class can contain any class of its own order (including itself). Even if this solution worked for the technical apparatus of logic, we may still be faced with similar, less formal difficulties with self-referential statements.

8.10.2 The theory of descriptions

From his work on the logical foundations of mathematics, Russell derived an enormous confidence in the possibility of resolving philosophical problems by offering careful analyses of the **logical** structure (rather than the grammatical form) of what we say. The most clearly successful application of this technique is the «theory of descriptions» Russell expounded in On Denoting (1905).

We certainly make frequent use of «denoting phrases» in ordinary language, but if we uncritically accept their substantive use in grammar, we'll be inclined to suppose that they represent objects in the same way that proper names do. This gives rise to difficulties of three sorts:

1. Excluded middle

The traditional principle seems violated by subject-less assertions such as «Either the present king of France is bald or the present king of France is not bald».

2. Assertions of non-existence

If denoting phrases invariably have referents, then (as Meinong pointed out) «The golden mountain does not exist» says of something that there is no such thing.

3. Opaque contexts

The substitution of equivalent expressions seems not to preserve truth in such statements as, «Alan believes that Sarah's father is Joy's son».

Russell attacked these problems by emphasizing that descriptions signify differently than do logically proper names. A name denotes its referent

directly, carrying its own existential import; but a description denotes only indirectly and must be regarded in a different way. In fact, Russell held that denoting phrases cannot be correctly understood in isolation (since that invariably makes names of them). In order to see how a denoting phrase refers, we must analyze the whoe proposition of which it is a part. A statement that incorporates an indefinite description, such as «John met a person», should be analyzed as, «There is something that is a person and John met it».

An assertion that includes a definite description, such as «The author of Waverly was Scotch», should be analyzed as, «At least one person wrote Waverly; at most one person wrote Waverly; and whoever wrote Waverly was Scotch».

Notice that what seem to be simple statements in ordinary language turn out, on logical analysis, to involve two or three distinct assertions, all of which must be true if the statement as a whole is true. This, Russell maintained, resolves problems of all three sorts:

1. Excluded middle. On proper analysis «Either the present king of France is bald or the present king of France is not bald» asserts that either there is a present king of France who is bald or there is a present king of France who is not bald. When, in fact, there is no king of France, both disjuncts are clearly false.

2. Assertions of non-existence. Similarly, «The golden mountain does not exist» simply points out that it is not the case that there is something that is both golden and a mountain.

3. Opaque contexts. Finally «Alan believes that Sarah's father is Joy's son» attributes to Alan belief in a complex proposition, the falsity of any component of which will render Alan's belief incorrect.

In each case, Russell's solution to potential philosophical difficulties derives from a clear recognition that the logical form of an assertion may be significantly different from its grammatical structure. That's the whole point of analysis.

Decades later, Strawson criticized Russell's treatment of descriptions by insisting that ordinary language be taken more seriously as it is. On the other hand, relying upon Russell's suggestion that even proper names can be treated as definite descriptions, Quine eliminated the presumed ontological implications of their use. Despite these later developments, Russell's treatment of descriptions stands as a notable example of the potential benefits of philosophical analysis.

8.10.3 Logical atomism

Russell himself went on to apply analytic methods to discussion of basic epistemological and metaphysical issues. In On the Relations of Universals and Particulars (1911), for example, Russell used logical arguments to resolve

the ancient problem of universals. Ordinary language certainly permits the attribution of a common predicate to more than one subject: «a is P» and «b is P» may both be true. If only particular things exist, then a and b would be distinct, featureless beings whose likeness with respect to P could only be understood as a shared – and hence universal – property. If only universal things exist, then P would exist in two places at once, which would fail to account for the distinctness of a and b. Thus, Russell argued, both universals and bare particulars exist; only a robust realism can explain both the sameness and the diversity that we observe in ordinary experience.

More generally, Russell's lectures on Our Knowledge of the External World (1914) and Logical Atomism (1918) offered a comprehensive view of reality and our knowledge of it. As an empiricist, Russell assumed that all human knowledge must begin with sensory experience. Sense-data provide the primitive content of our experience, and for Russell (unlike the phenomenalists) these sense-data are not merely mental events, but rather the physical effects caused in us by external objects. Although each occurs immediately within the private space of an individual perceiver, he argued, classes of similar sense-data in various perceivers constitute a public space from which even unperceived (though in principle perceivable) sensibilia may be said to occur. Thus, the contents of sensory experience are both public and objective.

From this beginning, according to Russell, all else follows by logical analysis. Simple observations involving sense-data, such as «This patch is now green», are the **atomic facts** upon which all human knowledge is grounded. What we ordinarily call physical objects are definite descriptions constructed logically out of just such epistemic atoms. As Russell claimed in the fifth chapter of The Problems of Philosophy (1912), every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted.

Careful application of this principle, together with the techniques of logical analysis, accounts for everything we can know either by acquaintance or by description.

Some cases do call for special treatment. Russell feared that some «negative facts» might require lengthy analysis in order to establish their ground without presuming acquaintance with non-existence objects. «General facts» certainly do presume something more than a collection of atomic facts. The truth of «All dogs are mammals», for example, depends not only on the truth of many propositions – «Houston is a mammal», «Chloë is a mammal», etc. – about individual dogs, but also on the further assertion that these individuals constitute the entire extension of the term «dog». Suitably analyzed, however, all of human knowledge can be seen to rest solely upon the collective content of human experience.

8.10.4 Social concerns

Abstract philosophical matters were not all that *Russell* cared about. As he noted in the prologue to his Autobiography (1967), pity for human suffering (along with love and knowledge) was among his deepest concerns. At the height of his career, Russell spent years in jail as a conscientious objector to British involvement in the First World War, and this vocal pacifism resulted in the termination of his professorship at Cambridge. Although he came to regard the threat of Fascism as great enough to warrant the Second World War, Russell was profoundly concerned about the invention of atomic weapons with the capacity to destroy human civilization on an unprecedented scale. The warnings contained in his The Bomb and Civilization (1945) were expressed repeatedly throughout his life.

Russell's efforts to secure an academic career in the United States were thwarted by conservative opponents who drew attention to his unconventional opinions regarding sexual morality and organized religion. In the notorious lecture entitled Why I Am Not a Christian (1927) Russell pointed out the inadequacy of traditional efforts to demonstrate existence of god, offered a balanced evaluation of the teachings of Jesus, and decried the harmful moral and social consequences of adherence to Christian religion. Agnosticism was no more popular in America than divorce, and Russell's uncompromising honesty about these issues contributed greatly to his public reputation.

8.11 Logical positivism

Shortly after the end of the first World War, a group of mathematicians, scientists, and philosophers began meeting in Vienna to discuss the implications of recent developments in logic, including Wittgenstein's Tractatus. Under the leadership of Moritz Schlick, this informal gathering (the «Vienna Circle») campaigned for a systematic reduction of human knowledge to logical and scientific foundations. Because the resulting logical positivism (or «logical empiricism») allowed only for the use of logical tautologies and first-person observations from experience, it dismissed as nonsense the metaphysical and normative pretensions of the philosophical tradition. Although participants sometimes found it difficult to defend the strict principles on which their programme depended, this movement offered a powerful vision of the possibilities for modern knowledge.

During the thirties, many of the younger positivists left Europe for England and the United States, where their influence over succeeding generations was enormous. Herbert Feigl and Otto Neurath concentrated on the philosophy of science, developing and refining systematic principles for study of the natural world. Mathematician Kurt Gödel used sophisticated reasoning to explore the limits of the logicist programme.

Others became interested in the philosophy of language: Gustav Bergmann continued efforts to achieve a perspicuous representation of reality through an ideal logical language, while Friedrich Waismann began to examine the analysis of ordinary language.

8.11.1 Verifiability and meaning

British philosopher A. J. Ayer presented many of the central doctrines of the positivist movement in his 1936 book, Language, Truth, and Logic. Ayer's polemical writing tried to show how the **principle of verification** could be used as a tool for the elimination of nonsense of every sort. In Ayer's formulation, the principle itself is a simple test: we say that a sentence is factually significant to any given person, if and only if, she or he knows how to verify the proposition which it purports to express – that is, if she or he knows what observations would lead her or him, under certain conditions, to accept the proposition as being true, or reject it as being false.

Like the pragmatic theory put forward by Peirce, verificationism proposes that assertions are meaningful only when their content meets a (minimal) condition about the ways in which we would go about determining their truth. Moreover, like Hume's distinction between matters of fact and relations of ideas, the principle leaves no room for anything other than verifiable empirical observations of the natural world and the meaningless but useful tautologies of logic and mathematics.

Thus, much of Ayer's book was negative, emphasizing the consequences of a strict application of the positivist program to human pretensions at transcendental knowledge. Traditional metaphysics, with its abstract speculation about the supposed nature of reality, cannot be grounded on scientific observation, and is therefore devoid of significance. For the same reason, traditional religious claims are meaningless since it is impossible to state any observable circumstances under which we could be sure – one way or the other – about their truth. Even much of traditional epistemology is likely to fail the test; only the psychological study of observable human behavior regarding beliefs will remain. Mathematics and natural science are secure, but little else remains.

Although Ayer, Hempel, and other positivists spent a great deal of energy on technical refinements of the principle of verification, its basic content continued to guide the direction of the positivist movement. The major point is that much of what we try to say is meaningless blather.

8.11.2 The logical construction of the world

On a more positive note, the positivists supposed that what remains – consistent logical and mathematical reasoning, together with cautious

observation of nature – comprises a great deal of worthwhile human knowledge. Rudolf Carnap's The Logical Structure of the World (1929) outlined the world-view that is likely to result from a thorough application of the positivist program. The logical rigor of articles like Testability and Meaning (1936-37) illustrates both the power and the limitations of this procedure.

Carnap begins with an account of the methods and procedures by means of which we employ sensory observations to verify (or at least to confirm) the truth of scientific hypotheses about the operation of the physical universe. Using the formal methods of mathematical logic, then, the goal is to construct a strictly scientific language that perspicuously represents the structure of the world as a whole. The details are highly technical, of course, but it is only with the detailed treatment that the difficulties of the procedure become evident. The fundamental problem is that empirical generalizations are themselves incapable of direct support within such a system.

This was a crucial part of the insight of Karl Popper, another Viennese philosopher of science. Popper proposed abandonment of the quest for verification, noting that the key feature of scientific hypotheses is precisely their **falsifiability** rather than their confirmation. We best know what we mean when we carefully state the conditions under which we would be forced to give up what we have supposed.

8.12 Ethical emotivism

The central tenets of logical positivism clearly have serious consequences when applied to moral philosophy. Attributions of value are not easily verifiable, so moral judgments may be neither true nor false, but as meaningless as those of metaphysics. Among the original members of the Vienna Circle, only Moritz Schlick devoted any attention to ethics at all, and he regarded it as the descriptive task of cataloging the ways in which members of a society express their feelings about human behavior of various sorts.

It was the American philosopher C.L. Stevenson who worked out the full implications of postivistic theories for expressions of moral praise or blame. The most vital issue to be considered is the meta-ethical question of what moral terms mean. Although Moore had correctly noted that good cannot be defined simply in terms of the approval of human beings, Stevenson made the even more radical suggestion that moral judgments have no factual content at all. Analysis of moral language should focus instead on its unique function as a guide to human behavior, what Stevenson called the «magnetism» of moral terms.

In The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms (1937) Stevenson argued that we must distinguish clearly between the descriptive or cognitive content of a term and its non-descriptive or emotive meaning. At a purely literal descriptive level, statements about moral value are indeed unverifiable and therefore

meaningless, but considered as appeals to human emotions, they may have powerful dynamic effects. Saying «Murder is wrong», may have no factual significance, but it does succinctly convey a host of expressive suggestions, including (at least) «I don't like murder», «You shouldn't like murder», and «We should disapprove of murderers». Stevenson's ethical emotivism, further developed in Ethics and Language (1944), quickly became an influential twentieth-century noncognitivist theory about the meaning of moral language.

8.13 Ludwig Wittgenstein

8.13.1 Analysis of language

The direction of analytic philosophy in the twentieth century was altered not once but twice by the enigmatic Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. By his own philosophical work and through his influence on several generations of other thinkers, Wittgenstein transformed the nature of philosophical activity in the English-speaking world. From two distinct approaches, he sought to show that traditional philosophical problems can be avoided entirely by application of an appropriate methodology, one that focuses on analysis of language.

The «early» Wittgenstein worked closely with Russell and shared his conviction that the use of mathematical logic held great promise for an understanding of the world. In the tightly-structured declarationss of the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1922), Wittgenstein tried to spell out precisely what a logically constructed language can (and cannot) be used to say. Its seven basic propositions simply state that language, thought, and reality share a common structure, fully expressible in logical terms.

On Wittgenstein's view, the world consists entirely of facts. Human beings are aware of the facts by virtue of our mental representations or thoughts, which are most fruitfully understood as **picturing** the way things are. These thoughts are, in turn, expressed in propostitions, whose form indicates the position of these facts within the nature of reality as a whole and whose content presents the truth-conditions under which they correspond to that reality. Everything that is true – that is, all the facts that constitute the world – can in principle be expressed by atomic sentences. Imagine a comprehensive list of all the true sentences. They would picture all of the facts there are, and this would be an adequate representation of the world as a whole.

The **tautological expressions** of logic occupy a special role in this language-scheme. Because they are true under all conditions whatsoever, tautologies are literally nonsense: they convey no information about what the facts truly are. But since they are true under all conditions whatsoever, tautologies reveal the underlying structure of all language, thought, and reality.

Thus, on Wittgenstein's view, the most significant logical features of the world are not themselves additional facts about it.

8.13.2 What cannot be said

This is the major theme of the Tractatus as a whole: since propositions merely express facts about the world, propositions in themselves are entirely devoid of value. The facts are just the facts. Everything else, everything about which we care, everything that might render the world meaningful, must reside elsewhere. A properly logical language, Wittgenstein held, deals only with what is true. Aesthetic judgments about what is beautiful and ethical judgments about what is good cannot even be expressed within the logical language, since they transcend what can be pictured in thought. They aren't facts. The achievement of a wholly satisfactory description of the way things are would leave unanswered (but also unaskable) all of the most significant questions with which traditional philosophy was concerned.

Thus, even the philosophical achievements of the Tractatus itself are nothing more than useful nonsense; once appreciated, they are themselves to be discarded. The book concludes with the lone statement: «Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent».

This is a stark message indeed, for it renders literally unspeakable so much of human life. As Wittgenstein's friend and colleague Frank Ramsey put it, «What we can't say we can't say, and we can't whistle it either».

It was this carefully-delineated sense of what a logical language can properly express that influenced members of the Vienna Circle in their formulation of the principles of logical positivism. Wittgenstein himself supposed that there was nothing left for philosophers to do. True to this conviction, he abandoned the discipline for nearly a decade.

8.13.3 New directions

By the time Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge in 1928, however, he had begun to question the truth of his earlier pronouncements. The problem with logical analysis is that it demands too much precision, both in the definition of words and in the representation of logical structure. In ordinary language, applications of a word often bear only a «family resemblance» to each other, and a variety of grammatical forms may be used to express the same basic thought. But under these conditions, Wittgenstein now realized, the hope of developing an ideal formal language that accurately pictures the world is not only impossibly difficult but also wrong-headed.

During this fertile period, Wittgenstein published nothing, but worked through his new notions in classroom lectures. Students who witnessed these presentations tried to convey both the style and the content in their shared

notes, which were later published as The Blue and Brown Books (1958). G.E. Moore also sat in on Wittgenstein's lectures during the early thirties and later published a summary of his own copious notes. What appears in these partial records is the emergence of a new conception of philosophy.

The picture theory of meaning and logical atomism are untenable, Wittgenstein now maintained, and there is no reason to hope that any better versions of these basic positions will ever come along. Claims to have achieved a correct, final analysis of language are invariably mistaken. Since philosophical problems arise from the intellectual bewilderment induced by the misuse of language, the only way to resolve them is to use examples from ordinary language to deflate the pretensions of traditional thought. The only legitimate role for philosophy, then, is as a kind of therapy – a remedy for the bewitchment of human thought by philosophical language. Careful attention to the actual usage of ordinary language should help avoid the conceptual confusions that give rise to traditional difficulties.

8.13.4 Language as game

On this conception of the philosophical enterprise, the vagueness of ordinary usage is not a problem to be eliminated but rather the source of linguistic riches. It is misleading even to attempt to fix the meaning of particular expressions by linking them referentially to things in the world. The meaning of a word or phrase or proposition is nothing other than the set of (informal) rules governing the use of the expression in actual life.

Like the rules of a game*,* Wittgenstein argued, these rules for the use of ordinary language are neither right nor wrong, neither true nor false: they are merely useful for the particular applications in which we apply them. The members of any community – cost accountants, college students, or rap musicians, for example – develop ways of speaking that serve their needs as a group, and these constitute the language-game (Moore's notes refer to the «system» of language) they employ. Human beings at large constitute a greater community within which similar, though more widely-shared, language-games get played. Although there is little to be said in general about language as a whole, therefore, it may often be fruitful to consider in detail the ways in which particular portions of the language are used.

Even the fundamental truths of arithmetic, Wittgenstein now supposed, are nothing more than relatively stable ways of playing a particular language-game. This account rejects both logicist and intuitionist views of mathematics in favor of a normative conception of its use. $2 + 3 = 5$ is nothing other than a way we have collectively decided to speak and write, a handy, shared language-game. The point once more is merely to clarify the way we use ordinary language about numbers.

8.14 Martin Heidegger

German philosopher Martin Heidegger employed the methods of phenomenology in pursuit of more comprehensive metaphysical goals. In Heidegger's full-fledged existentialism, the primary task of philosophy is to understand Being itself, not merely our knowledge of it.

8.14.1 Being-there (or Nothing)

In the lecture, «What is Metaphysics?» Heidegger developed several of his themes in characteristically cumbersome language. The best way to exhibit the subject-matter of first philosophy is to pursue one actual metaphysical question; since all of them are inter-connected, each inevitably leads us into all of the others. Although traditional learning focusses on what is, Heidegger noted, it may be far more illuminating to examine the boundaries of ordinary knowledge by trying to study what is not.

What is Nothing, anyway?

It's not anything, and it's not something, yet it isn't the negation of something, either. Traditional logic is no help, since it merely regards all negation as derivative from something positive. So, Heidegger proposed, we must abandon logic in order to explore the character of Nothing as the background out of which everything emerges.

Carefully contemplating Nothing in itself, we begin to notice the importance and vitality of our own moods. Above all else, Nothing is what produces in us a feeling of dread (Ger. Angst). This deep feeling of dread, Heidegger held, is the most fundamental human clue to the nature and reality of Nothing.

8.14.2 Human life as being-there

Human beings truly exist, yet our «**being-there**» (Ger. Dasein) is subject to a systematic, radical uncertainty. Because we know that we will die, concern with our annihilation is an ever-present feature of human experience: death is the key to life. The only genuine question is why we are at all. Once we experience the joy of dread, we recognize that our lives are limited – and therefore shaped – by death.

In just the same way, Heidegger argued, so nothing is what shapes being generally. This reveals the most fundamental, transcendent reality, beyond all notions of what-is slipping over into what-is-not. Even in the historical tradition, according to Heidegger, nothing is shown to be the concomitant rather than the opposite of being. The only genuine philosophical question is why there is something rather than nothing.

8.14.3 The ground of metaphysics

Writing allegorically in The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics, Heidegger notes that although metaphysics is undeniably the root of all human knowledge, we may yet wonder from what soil it springs. Since the study of beings qua beings can only be rooted in the ground of being itself, there is a sense in which we must overcome metaphysics in order to appreciate its basis. Looking at beings of particular sorts – especially through the distorted lens of representational thinking – blocks every effort at profound understanding. We cannot grasp Being by looking at beings.

This was the point of Heidegger's introduction of the term **Dasein**. It isn't simply a synonym for «consciousness», he maintained, but indicates the vital fact that human beings – and only human beings – truly exist, in the fullest sense, only when being-there for-themselves. Properly understood, self-awareness leads to the authenticity of a life created out of nothing, in the face of dread, by reference only to one's own deliberate purposes.

For this process of self-creation, Time is crucial. What we are at present matters less than what we are becoming, through the dynamic temporal process that constitutes our personal histories. There is no abstract essence of human nature; there are only individual human beings unfolding themselves historically. In the end, this is the answer to the question of why there is something rather than nothing.

It is only because we choose being-there.

8.15 Jean-Paul Sartre

French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre focussed more sharply on the moral consequences of existentialist thought. In literary texts as well as in philosophical treatises, Sartre emphasized the vital implications of human subjectivity.

8.15.1 Existential life

Sartre's 1946 lecture «Existentialism is a Humanism» offers a convenient summary of his basic views. The most fundamental doctrine of existentialism is the claim that – for human beings at least – existence precedes essence. As an atheism, Sartre demands that we completely abandon the traditional notion of human beings as the carefully designed artifacts of a divine creator. There is no abstract nature that one is destined to fill. Instead, each of us simply is in the world; what we will be is then entirely up to us. Being human just means having the capacity to create one's own essence in time.

But my exercise of this capacity inevitably makes me totally responsible for **the life I choose**. Since I could always have chosen some other path in life, the one I follow is my own. Since nothing has been imposed on me from outside, there are no excuses for what I am. Since the choices I make are ones I deem best, they constitute my proposal for what any human being ought to be. On Sartre's view, the inescapable condition of human life is the requirement of choosing something and accepting the responsibility for the consequences.

8.15.2 Responsibility

But accepting such total responsibility entails a profound alteration of my attitude towards life. Sharing in the awesome business of determining the future development of humanity generally through the particular decisions I make for myself produces an overwhelming sense of **anguish**. Moreover, since there is no external authority to which I can turn in an effort to escape my duty in this regard, I am bound to feel **abandonment** as well. Finally, since I repeatedly experience evidence that my own powers are inadequate to the task, I am driven to **despair**. There can be no relief, no help, no hope. Human life demands total commitment to a path whose significance will always remain open to doubt.

Although this account of human life is thoroughly subjective, that does not reduce the importance of moral judgment. Indeed, Sartre maintained that only this account does justice to the fundamental dignity and value of human life. Since all of us share in the same situation, we must embrace our awesome freedom, deliberately rejecting any (false) promise of authoritative moral determination. Even when we choose to seek or accept advice about what to do, we remain ourselves responsible for choosing which advice to accept.

This doesn't mean that I can do whatever I want, since free choice is never exercised capriciously. Making a moral decision is an act of creation, like the creation of a work of art; nothing about it is predetermined, so its value lies wholly within itself. Nor does this mean that it is impossible to make mistakes. Although there can be no objective failure to meet external standards, an individual human being can choose badly. When that happens, it is not that I have betrayed my abstract essence, but rather that I have failed to keep faith with myself.

8.15.3 Self-deception

Sartre thoroughly expounded his notion of the self-negation of freedom in Being and Nothingness (1943). Since the central feature of human existence is the capacity to choose in full awareness of one's own non-being, it

follows that the basic question is always whether or not I will be true to myself. Self-deception invariably involves an attempt to evade responsibility for myself. If, for example, I attribute undesirable thoughts and actions to the influence upon me of the subconscious or unconscious, I have made part of myself into an «other» that I then suppose to control the real me. Thus, using psychological theory to distinguish between a «good I» and a «bad me» only serves to perpetuate my evasion of responsibility and its concomitants.

Sartre offered practical examples of bad faith in action. People who pretend to keep all options open while on a date by deliberately ignoring the sexual implications of their partners' behavior, for example, illustrate the perpetual tension between facticity and transcendence. Focussing exclusively on what-we-might-become is a handy (though self-deceptive) way of overlooking the truth about what-we-are. Similarly, servers who extravagantly «play at» performing their roles illustrate the tendency to embrace an externally-determined essence, an artificial expectation about what we ought-to-be. But once again, of course, the cost is losing what we uniquely are in fact.

The ability to accept ourselves for what we are – without exaggeration – is the key, since the chief value of human life is fidelity to our selves, sincerity in the most profound sense. In our relationships with other human beings, what we truly are is all that counts, yet it is precisely here that we most often betray ourselves by trying to be whatever the other person expects us to be. This is invidious, on Sartre's view, since it exhibits a total lack of faith in ourselves: to the extent that I have faith in anyone else, I reveal my lack of the courage to be myself. There are, in the end, only two choices – sincerity or self-deception, to be or not to be.

8.15.4 Despair

Sartre's short story The Wall captures his central philosophical themes in a fictional setting. Only in the true-to-life moment of someone facing up to the immanence of his own death will the nature of human life be revealed.

Pablo fully experiences his own weakness in the face of death. But then his captors offer him the choice of saving himself by betraying his comrade. Now he must decide whether to defend the great cause or to live. After sweating it out, he chooses to give the authorities a phony story, knowing that it will guarantee his death. But the tables are turned when the lie turns out to be true.

Here are all of the consequences of human responsibility: anguish over the decision, abandonment in making it alone, and despair when it backfires. This, Sartre believed, is the character of human life.

8.16 Sigismund Schlomo Freud

Freud (1856 – 1939) was an Austrian neurologist who founded the discipline of psychoanalysis. An early neurological researcher into cerebral palsy, aphasia and microscopic neuroanatomy, Freud later developed theories about the unconscious mind and the mechanism of repression, and established the field of verbal psychotherapy by creating psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology through dialogue between a patient (or «analysand») and a psychoanalyst. Psychoanalysis has in turn helped inspire the development of many other forms of psychotherapy, some diverging from Freud's original ideas and approach.

Freud postulated that sexual drives were the primary motivational forces of human life, developed therapeutic techniques such as the use of free association, discovered the phenomenon of transference in the therapeutic relationship and established its central role in the analytic process, and interpreted dreams as sources of insight into unconscious desires. He was also a prolific essayist, drawing on psychoanalysis to contribute to the history, interpretation and critique of culture.

8.16.1 The unconscious

Freud argued for the importance of the unconscious mind in understanding conscious thought and behavior. However, as psychologist Jacques Van Rillaer pointed out, «the unconscious was not discovered by Freud. In 1890, when psychoanalysis was still unheard of, William James, in his monumental treatise on psychology, examined the way Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, Janet, Binet and others had used the term 'unconscious' and 'subconscious'». Moreover, as historian of psychology Mark Altschule observed, «It is difficult – or perhaps impossible – to find a nineteenth-century psychologist or psychiatrist who did not recognize unconscious cerebration as not only real but of the highest importance».

Freud's theory of dreams has been compared to Plato's. Ernest Gellner writes that, «Plato and Freud hold virtually the same theory of dreams», but Michel Foucault denies any such equivalence: «The sentence 'dreams fulfil desires' may have been repeated throughout the centuries; it is not the same statement in Plato and in Freud». Freud's dream theory was criticized during his life by Lydiard H. Horton, who in 1915 read a paper at a joint meeting of the American Psychological Association and the New York Academy of Sciences that called Freud's dream theory «dangerously inaccurate» and suggested that «rank confabulations...appear to hold water, psychoanalytically».

Freud developed his first topology of the psyche in The Interpretation of Dreams (1899) in which he proposed that the **unconscious** exists and

described a method for gaining access to it. The preconscious was described as a layer between conscious and unconscious thought; its contents could be accessed with a little effort. One key factor in the operation of the unconscious is **repression**. Freud believed that many people «repress» painful memories deep into their unconscious mind. Although Freud later attempted to find patterns of repression among his patients in order to derive a general model of the mind, he also observed that repression varies among individual patients. Freud also argued that the act of repression did not take place within a person's consciousness. Thus, people are unaware of the fact that they have buried memories or traumatic experiences.

Later, Freud distinguished between three concepts of the unconscious: the descriptive unconscious, the dynamic unconscious, and the system unconscious. The descriptive unconscious referred to all those features of mental life of which people are not subjectively aware. The dynamic unconscious, a more specific construct, referred to mental processes and contents that are defensively removed from consciousness as a result of conflicting attitudes. The system unconscious denoted the idea that when mental processes are repressed, they become organized by principles different from those of the conscious mind, such as condensation and displacement.

Eventually, Freud abandoned the idea of the system unconscious, replacing it with the concept of the id, ego, and super-ego. Throughout his career, however, he retained the descriptive and dynamic conceptions of the unconscious.

8.16.2 Psychosexual development

Freud hoped to prove that his model was universally valid and thus turned to ancient mythology and contemporary ethnography for comparative material. Freud named his new theory the Oedipus complex after the famous Greek tragedy Oedipus Rex by Sophocles. «I found in myself a constant love for my mother, and jealousy of my father. I now consider this to be a universal event in childhood», Freud said. Freud sought to anchor this pattern of development in the dynamics of the mind. Each stage is a progression into adult sexual maturity, characterized by a strong ego and the ability to delay gratification. He used the Oedipus conflict to point out how much he believed that people desire incest and must repress that desire. The Oedipus conflict was described as a state of psychosexual development and awareness. He also turned to anthropological studies of totemism and argued that totemism reflected a ritualized enactment of a tribal Oedipal conflict. Freud also believed that the Oedipus complex was bisexual, involving an attraction to both parents.

Traditional accounts have held that, as a result of frequent reports from his patients, in the mid-1890s Freud posited that psychoneuroses were

a consequence of early childhood sexual abuse. More specifically, in three papers published in 1896 he contended that **unconscious memories** of sexual abuse in infancy are a necessary precondition for the development of adult psychoneuroses. However, examination of Freud's original papers has revealed that his clinical claims were not based on patients' reports but were findings deriving from his analytical clinical methodology, which at that time included coercive procedures. He privately expressed his loss of faith in the theory to his friend Fliess in September 1897, giving several reasons, including that he had not been able to bring a single case to a successful conclusion. In 1906, while still maintaining that his earlier claims to have uncovered early childhood sexual abuse events remained valid, he postulated a new theory of the occurrence of unconscious infantile fantasies.[99] He had incorporated his notions of unconscious fantasies in The Interpretation of Dreams (1900), but did not explicitly relate his seduction theory claims to the Oedipus theory until 1925. Notwithstanding his abandonment of the seduction theory, Freud always recognized that some neurotics had experienced childhood sexual abuse.

Freud also believed that the libido developed in individuals by changing its object, a process codified by the concept of sublimation. He argued that humans are born «polymorphously perverse», meaning that any number of objects could be a source of pleasure. He further argued that, as humans develop, they become fixated on different and specific objects through their stages of development – first in the oral stage (exemplified by an infant's pleasure in nursing), then in the anal stage (exemplified by a toddler's pleasure in evacuating his or her bowels), then in the phallic stage. In the latter stage, Freud contended, male infants become fixated on the mother as a sexual object (known as the Oedipus Complex), a phase brought to an end by threats of castration, resulting in the castration complex, the severest trauma in his young life. In his later writings Freud postulated an equivalent Oedipus situation for infant girls, the sexual fixation being on the father. Though not advocated by Freud himself, the term 'Electra complex' is sometimes used in this context. The repressive or dormant latency stage of psychosexual development preceded the sexually mature genital stage of psychosexual development.

8.16.3 Id, ego, and super-ego

In his later work, Freud proposed that the human psyche could be divided into three parts: Id, ego, and super-ego. Freud discussed this model in the 1920 essay Beyond the Pleasure Principle, and fully elaborated upon it in The Ego and the Id (1923), in which he developed it as an alternative to his previous topographic schema (i.e., conscious, unconscious, and preconscious). The **Id** is the impulsive, child-like portion of the psyche that

operates on the «pleasure principle» and only takes into account what it wants and disregards all consequences.

The **super-ego** is the moral component of the psyche, which takes into account no special circumstances in which the morally right thing may not be right for a given situation. The rational **ego** attempts to exact a balance between the impractical hedonism of the id and the equally impractical moralism of the super-ego; it is the part of the psyche that is usually reflected most directly in a person's actions. When overburdened or threatened by its tasks, it may employ defense mechanisms including denial, repression, and displacement. This concept is usually represented by the «iceberg model». This model represents the roles the Id, ego, and super-ego play in relation to conscious and unconscious thought.

8.16.4 Life and death drives

Freud believed that people are driven by two conflicting central desires: the life drive (**libido** or **Eros**) (survival, propagation, hunger, thirst, and sex) and the death drive. The death drive was also termed **Thanatos**, although Freud did not use that term; Thanatos was introduced in this context by Paul Federn.

In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud inferred the existence of the death instinct. Its premise was a regulatory principle that has been described as «the principle of psychic inertia», «the Nirvana principle», and «the conservatism of instinct». Its background was Freud's earlier Project for a Scientific Psychology, where he had defined the principle governing the mental apparatus as its tendency to divest itself of quantity or to reduce tension to zero. Freud had been obliged to abandon that definition, since it proved adequate only to the most rudimentary kinds of mental functioning, and replaced the idea that the apparatus tends toward a level of zero tension with the idea that it tends toward a minimum level of tension.

Freud in effect readopted the original definition in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, this time applying it to a different principle. He asserted that on certain occasions the mind acts as though could eliminate tension entirely, or in effect to reduce itself to a state of extinction; his key evidence for this was the existence of the compulsion to repeat. Examples of such repetition included the dream life of traumatic neurotics and children's play. In the phenomenon of repetition, Freud saw a psychic trend to work over earlier impressions, to master them and derive pleasure from them, a trend was prior to the pleasure principle but not opposed to it. In addition to that trend, however, there was also a principle at work that was opposed to, and thus «beyond» the pleasure principle. If repetition is a necessary element in the binding of energy or adaptation, when carried to inordinate lengths it becomes a means of abandoning adaptations and reinstating earlier or less evolved

psychic positions. By combining this idea with the hypothesis that all repetition is a form of discharge, Freud reached the conclusion that the compulsion to repeat is an effort to restore a state that is both historically primitive and marked by the total draining of energy: death.

Questions for self-testing:

1. What does Schopenhauer believe the true reality?
2. How does Feuerbach define religion?
3. In what ways was the development of idealism in the 19-20 century?
4. Characterize the basic concepts and ideas of Marxism.
5. How does Bentham formulate the main principle of utilitarianism?
6. What role in the life of a human does the fear play according to Kierkegaard?
7. Is there a correlation between the individual being and the social life in Kierkegaard's philosophy?
8. What is the essence of the original concept of immorality Nietzsche?
9. Describe the principles of pragmatism.
10. What is the specific of the phenomenological thinking methods?
11. What are the main directions and principles of analytic philosophy?
12. What is the significance of the principle of verification and falsifiability criteria in contemporary science?
13. How does Heidegger reveal the concept of «being-there»?
14. What does Sartre's sentence «Human is condemned to be free» mean? Does this mean that the freedom is lack of responsibility?
15. What is the «Id», «ego», «super-ego»? What philosophical theory uses these concepts?

Recommended reading:

1. Arthur Schopenhauer, Philosophical Writings, ed. by Wolfgang Schirmacher (Continuum, 1994).
2. Karl Marx: Selected Writings, 2nd edition, David McLellan (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
3. The Essential Kierkegaard, ed. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, 2000).
4. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge, 2002).
5. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, The Will to Power, tr. by R. Hollingdale and Walter Kaufmann (Random House, 1987).
6. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, tr. by R.J. Hollingdale and Walter Kauffmann (Penguin, 1978).
7. Philosophical Writing of Peirce, ed. by Justus Buchler (Dover, 1986).

8. William James, Principles of Psychology (Dover, 1955).
9. William James, The Will to Believe and Human Immortality (Dover, 1985).
10. William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (Random House, 1999).
11. John Dewey, Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education (Simon & Schuster, 1997).
12. John Dewey, Experience and Nature (Dover, 1958).
13. John Dewey, How We Think (Prometheus, 1991).
14. The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology, ed. by Donn Welton (Indiana, 1999).
15. Bertrand Russell, Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy (Dover, 1993).
16. Bertrand Russell, The Philosophy of Logical Atomism, ed. by David Pears (Open Court, 1985).
17. Bertrand Russell, Why I Am Not a Christian, and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects (Simon & Schuster, 1977).
18. Logical Empiricism at Its Peak: Schlick, Carnap, and Neurath, ed. by Sahotra Sarkar (Garland, 1996).
19. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, ed. by D. F. Pears (Routledge, 1981).
20. Martin Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, tr. by Ralph Manheim (Yale, 1986).
21. Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions (Lyle Stuart, 1984).
22. Freud Among the Philosophers: The Psychoanalytic Unconscious and Its Philosophical Critics (Yale, 1996).

9 POSTMODERNISM

9.1 Basic facts

Postmodernism is a philosophical movement evolved in reaction to modernism, the tendency in contemporary culture to accept only objective truth and to be inherently suspicious towards a global cultural narrative or meta-narrative. Postmodernist thought is an intentional departure from the previously dominant modernist approaches. The term «postmodernism» comes from its critique of the «modernist» scientific mentality of objectivity and the progress associated with the Enlightenment.

Postmodernism postulates that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs and are therefore subject to change. It emphasises the role of language, power relations, and motivations in the formation of ideas

and beliefs. In particular it attacks the use of sharp classifications such as male versus female, straight versus gay, white versus black, and imperial versus colonial; it holds realities to be plural and relative, and to be dependent on whom the interested parties are and of what their interests consist. It supports the belief that there is no absolute truth and that the way in which different people perceive the world is subjective. Postmodernism has influenced many cultural fields, including religion, literary criticism, sociology, linguistics, architecture, history, anthropology, visual arts, and music.

Modernism and postmodernism are understood as a cultural stance or set of perspectives. «Postmodernism» is used in critical theory to refer to a point of departure for works of literature, drama, architecture, cinema, journalism, and design. It has also influenced marketing, business and the interpretation of law, culture, and religion in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.[1] Postmodernism, particularly as an academic movement, can be understood as a reaction to modernism in the Humanities. Whereas modernism was primarily concerned with principles such as identity, unity, authority, and certainty, postmodernism is often associated with difference, plurality, textuality, and skepticism.

Literary critic Fredric Jameson describes postmodernism as the «dominant cultural logic of late capitalism». «Late capitalism» refers to the phase of capitalism after World War II, as described by the Marxist theorist Ernest Mandel. The term refers to the same period described by «globalization», «multinational capitalism», or «consumer capitalism».

9.2 History and emergence

The term «Postmodern» was first used around the 1870s. John Watkins Chapman suggested «a Postmodern style of painting» as a way to move beyond French Impressionism. J. M. Thompson, in his 1914 article in The Hibbert Journal (a quarterly philosophical review), used it to describe changes in attitudes and beliefs in the critique of religion: «The raison d'etre of Post-Modernism is to escape from the double-mindedness of Modernism by being thorough in its criticism by extending it to religion as well as theology, to Catholic feeling as well as to Catholic tradition».

In 1917, Rudolf Pannwitz used the term to describe a philosophically-oriented culture. His idea of post-modernism drew from Friedrich Nietzsche's analysis of modernity and its end results of decadence and nihilism. Pannwitz's post-human would be able to overcome the predicaments of the modern human. Contrary to Nietzsche, Pannwitz also included nationalist and mythical elements in his use of the term.

In 1921 and 1925, Postmodernism had been used to describe new forms of art and music. In 1942 H. R. Hays described it as a new literary form. However, as a general theory for a historical movement it was first used in

1939 by Arnold J. Toynbee: «Our own Post-Modern Age has been inaugurated by the general war of 1914-1918.

In 1949 the term was used to describe a dissatisfaction with modern architecture, and led to the postmodern architecture movement, perhaps also a response to the modernist architectural movement known as the International Style. Postmodernism in architecture is marked by the re-emergence of surface ornament, reference to surrounding buildings in urban architecture, historical reference in decorative forms, and non-orthogonal angles.

After that, Postmodernism was applied to a whole host of movements, many in art, music, and literature, that reacted against tendencies in the imperialist phase of capitalism called «modernism», and are typically marked by revival of historical elements and techniques. Walter Truett Anderson identifies Postmodernism as one of four typological world views. These four world views are the Postmodern-ironist, which sees truth as socially constructed; the scientific-rational, in which truth is found through methodical, disciplined inquiry; the social-traditional, in which truth is found in the heritage of American and Western civilization; and the neo-romantic, in which truth is found through attaining harmony with nature and/or spiritual exploration of the inner self.

Postmodernist ideas in philosophy and the analysis of culture and society expanded the importance of critical theory and has been the point of departure for works of literature, architecture, and design, as well as being visible in marketing/business and the interpretation of history, law and culture, starting in the late 20th century. These developments – re-evaluation of the entire Western value system (love, marriage, popular culture, shift from industrial to service economy) that took place since the 1950s and 1960s, with a peak in the Social Revolution of 1968 – are described with the term Postmodernity, as opposed to Postmodernism, a term referring to an opinion or movement. Postmodernist describes part of a movement; Postmodern places it in the period of time since the 1950s, making it a part of contemporary history.

9.3 Contested definitions

The term «Postmodernism» is often used to refer to different, sometimes contradictory concepts. Conventional definitions include:

Compact Oxford English Dictionary: «a style and concept in the arts characterized by distrust of theories and ideologies and by the drawing of attention to conventions».[12]

Merriam-Webster: Either «of, relating to, or being an era after a modern one», or «of, relating to, or being any of various movements in reaction to modernism that are typically characterized by a return to traditional materials

and forms (as in architecture) or by ironic self-reference and absurdity (as in literature)», or, finally «of, relating to, or being a theory that involves a radical reappraisal of modern assumptions about culture, identity, history, or language».

American Heritage Dictionary: «Of or relating to art, architecture, or literature that reacts against earlier modernist principles, as by reintroducing traditional or classical elements of style or by carrying modernist styles or practices to extremes: 'It [a roadhouse] is so architecturally interesting ... with its postmodern wooden booths and sculptural clock'».

While the term Postmodern and its derivatives are freely used, with some uses apparently contradicting others, those outside the academic milieu have described it as merely a buzzword that means nothing.

Dick Hebdige, in his text Hiding in the Light, writes following. When it becomes possible for a people to describe as «postmodern» the décor of a room, the design of a building, the diegesis of a film, the construction of a record, or a «scratch» video, a television commercial, or an arts documentary, or the «intertextual» relations between them, the layout of a page in a fashion magazine or critical journal, an anti-teleological tendency within epistemology, the attack on the «metaphysics of presence», a general attenuation of feeling, the collective chagrin and morbid projections of a post-War generation of baby boomers confronting disillusioned middle-age, the «predicament» of reflexivity, a group of rhetorical tropes, a proliferation of surfaces, a new phase in commodity fetishism, a fascination for images, codes and styles, a process of cultural, political or existential fragmentation and/or crisis, the «de-centring» of the subject, an «incredulity towards metanarratives», the replacement of unitary power axes by a plurality of power/discourse formations, the «implosion of meaning», the collapse of cultural hierarchies, the dread engendered by the threat of nuclear self-destruction, the decline of the university, the functioning and effects of the new miniaturised technologies, broad societal and economic shifts into a «media», «consumer» or «multinational» phase, a sense (depending on who you read) of «placelessness» or the abandonment of placelessness («critical regionalism») or (even) a generalised substitution of spatial for temporal coordinates – when it becomes possible to describe all these things as Postmodern (or more simply using a current abbreviation as post or very post) then it»s clear we are in the presence of a buzzword.

British historian Perry Anderson's history of the term and its understanding, The Origins of Postmodernity, explains these apparent contradictions, and demonstrates the importance of Postmodernism as a category and a phenomenon in the analysis of contemporary culture.

9.4 Brief overview of the ideas

Thomas Samuel Kuhn (1922–1996) located the rapid change of the basis of scientific knowledge to a provisional consensus among scientists; coined the term **paradigm shift** in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions and in general contributed to the debate over the presumed neutrality and objectivity of empirical methodology in the Natural Sciences from disciplinarian or cultural bias.

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) re-examined the fundamentals of writing and its consequences on philosophy in general; sought to undermine the language of «presence» or metaphysics in an analytical technique which, beginning as a point of departure from Heidegger's notion of Destruktion, came to be known as **Deconstruction**. Derrida utilized, like Heidegger, references to Greek philosophical notions associated with the Skeptics and the Presocratics, such as epoché and aporia to articulate his notion of implicit circularity between premises and conclusions, origins and manifestations, but – in a manner analogous in certain respects to Gilles Deleuze – presented a radical re-reading of canonical philosophical figures such as Plato, Aristotle and Descartes as themselves being informed by such «destabilizing» notions.

One of the most popular postmodernist tendencies within aesthetics is deconstruction. As it is currently used, «deconstruction» is a Derridean approach to textual analysis (typically literary critique, but variously applied). Deconstructions work entirely within the studied text to expose and undermine the frame of reference, assumptions, and ideological underpinnings of the text. Although deconstructions can be developed using different methods and techniques, the process typically involves demonstrating the multiple possible readings of a text and their resulting internal conflicts, and undermining binary oppositions (e.g. masculine/feminine, old/new). Deconstruction is fundamental to many different fields of postmodernist thought, including postcolonialism.

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) introduced concepts such as «discursive regime», or re-invoked those of older philosophers like «episteme» and «genealogy» in order to explain the relationship among meaning, power, and social behavior within social orders (see The Order of Things, The Archaeology of Knowledge, Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality). In direct contradiction to what have been typified as Modernist perspectives on epistemology, Foucault asserted that rational judgment, social practice and what he called «biopower» are not only inseparable but co-determinant. While Foucault himself was deeply involved in a number of progressive political causes and maintained close personal ties with members of the far-Left, he was also controversial with Leftist thinkers of his day, including those associated with various strains of Marxism, proponents of Left libertarianism (e.g. Noam Chomsky) and Humanism (e.g. Jürgen Habermas), for his rejection of what he deemed to be Enlightenment-derived concepts of

freedom, liberation, self-determination and human nature. Instead, Foucault focused on the ways in which such constructs can foster cultural hegemony, violence and exclusion. In line with his rejection of such «positive» tenets of Enlightenment-era Humanism, he was active, with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in the Anti-Psychiatry Movement, considering much of institutionalized psychiatry and, in particular, Freud's concept of repression central to Psychoanalysis (which was still very influential in France during the 1960s and 70s), to be both harmful and misplaced. Foucault was known for his controversial aphorisms, such as «language is oppression», meaning that language functions in such a way as to render nonsensical, false or silent tendencies that might otherwise threaten or undermine the distributions of power backing a society's conventions – even when such distributions purport to celebrate liberation and expression or value minority groups and perspectives. His writings have had a major influence on the larger body of Postmodern academic literature.

Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) identified in The Postmodern Condition a crisis in the Biscourses of the Human Sciences latent in Modernism but catapulted to the fore by the advent of the «computerized» or «telematic» era (see Information Revolution). This crisis, insofar as it pertains to academia, concerns both the motivations and justification procedures for making research claims: unstated givens or values that have validated the basic efforts of academic research since the late 18th Century might no longer be valid (particularly, in Social Science & Humanities research, though examples from Mathematics are given by Lyotard as well). As formal conjecture about real-world issues becomes inextricably linked to automated calculation, information storage and retrieval, such knowledge becomes increasingly «exteriorised» from its knowers in the form of information. Knowledge is materialized and made into a commodity exchanged between producers and consumers; it ceases to be either an idealistic end-in-itself or a tool capable of bringing about liberty or social benefit; it is stripped of its humanistic and spiritual associations, its connection with education, teaching and human development, being simply rendered as «data» – omnipresent, material, unending and without any contexts or pre-requisites. Furthermore, the «diversity» of claims made by various disciplines begins to lack any unifying principle or intuition as objects of study become more and more specialized due to the emphasis on specificity, precision and uniformity of reference that competitive, database-oriented research implies. The value-premises upholding academic research have been maintained by what Lyotard considers to be quasi-mythological beliefs about human purpose, human reason and human progress – large, background constructs he calls «Metanarratives». These Metanarratives still remain in Western society but are now being undermined by rapid Informatization and the commercialization of the University and its functions. The **shift of authority** from the presence

and intuition of knowers – from the good-faith of кeason to seek diverse knowledge integrated for human benefit or truth fidelity – to the automated database and the market had, in Lyotard's view, the power to unravel the very idea of «justification» or «legitimation» and, with it, the rationale for research altogether – esp. in disciplines pertaining to human life, society and meaning. We are now controlled not by binding extra-linguistic value paradigms defining notions of collective identity and ultimate purpose, but rather by our automatic responses to different species of **language games** (a concept Lyotard imports from JL Austin's theory of Speech Acts). In his vision of a solution to this «vertigo», Lyotard opposes the assumptions of universality, consensus, and generality that he identified within the thought of Humanistic, Neo-Kantian philosophers like Jürgen Habermas and proposes a continuation of experimentation and diversity to be assessed pragmatically in the context of language games rather than via appeal to a resurrected series of transcendentals and metaphysical unities.

Richard Rorty (1931–2007) argues in Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature that contemporary Analytic philosophy mistakenly imitates scientific methods. In addition, he denounces the traditional epistemological perspectives of Representationalism and Correspondence theory that rely upon the independence of knowers and observers from phenomena and the passivity of natural phenomena in relation to consciousness. As a proponent of anti-foundationalism and anti-essentialism within a Pragmatist framework, he echoes Postmodern strains of Conventionalism and Philosophical Relativism, but opposes much Postmodern thinking with his commitment to Social Liberalism.

Fredric Jameson (born 1934) set forth one of the first expansive theoretical treatments of Postmodernism as a historical period, intellectual trend and social phenomenon in a series of lectures at the Whitney Museum, later expanded as Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (1991). Eclectic in his methodology, Jameson has continued a sustained examination of the role that periodization continues to play as a grounding assumption of critical methodologies in Humanities disciplines. He has contributed extensive effort to explicating the importance of concepts of Utopianism and Utopia as driving forces in the cultural and intellectual movements of Modernity, and outlining the political and existential uncertainties that may result from the decline or suspension of this trend in the theorized state of Postmodernity. Like Susan Sontag, Jameson served to introduce a wide audience of American readers to key figures of the 20th Century Continental European intellectual Left, particularly those associated with the Frankfurt School, structuralism and post-structuralism. Thus, his importance as a «translator» of their ideas to the common vocabularies of a variety of disciplines in the Anglo-American academic complex is equally as important as his own critical engagement with them.

9.5 Structuralism and post-structuralism

Structuralism was a broad philosophical movement that developed particularly in France in the 1950s, partly in response to French existentialism, but is considered by many to be an exponent of High-Modernism, though its categorization as either a Modernist or Postmodernist trend is contested. Many Structuralists later moved away from the most strict interpretations and applications of «structure», and are thus called «post-structuralists» in the United States (the term is uncommon in Europe). Though many Post-structuralists were referred to as Postmodern in their lifetimes, many explicitly rejected the term. Notwithstanding, Post-structuralism in much American academic literature in the Humanities is very strongly associated with the broader and more nebulous movement of Postmodernism. Thinkers most typically linked with Structuralism include anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, the early writings of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, the early writings of literary theorist Roland Barthes, and the semiotician Algirdas Greimas. Philosophers commonly referred to as Post-structuralists include Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze (all of whom began their careers within a Structuralist framework), Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-François Lyotard, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and, sometimes, the American cultural theorists, critics and intellectuals they influenced (e.g. Judith Butler, Jonathan Crary, John Fiske, Rosalind Krauss, Hayden White).

Though by no means a unified movement with a set of shared axioms or methodologies, Post-structuralism emphasizes the ways in which different aspects of a cultural order, from its most banal material details to its most abstract theoretical exponents, determine one another. Like Structuralism, it places particular focus on the determination of identities, values and economies in relation to one another, rather than assuming *intrinsic* properties or essences of signs or components as starting points. In this limited sense, there is a nascent relativism and constructionism within the French Structuralists that was consciously addressed by them but never examined to the point of dismantling their reductionist tendencies. Unlike structuralists, however, the Post-structuralists questioned the division between relation and component and, correspondingly, did not attempt to reduce the subjects of their study to an essential set of relations that could be portrayed with abstract, functional schemes or mathematical symbols (as in Claude Lévi-Strauss's algebraic formulation of mythological transformation in The Structural Study of Myth).

Post-structuralists tended to reject such formulations of «essential relations» in primitive cultures, languages or descriptions of psychological phenomena as subtle forms of Aristotelianism, rationalism or idealism, all

philosophies they rejected. Another common trend among thinkers associated with the post-structural movement is the criticism of the absolutist, quasi-scientific claims of structuralist theorists as more reflective of the mechanistic bias inspired by bureaucratization and industrialization than of the inner-workings of actual primitive cultures, languages or psyches. Generally, post-structuralists emphasized the inter-determination and contingency of social and historical phenomena with each other and with the cultural values and biases of perspective. Such realities were not to be dissected, in the manner of some structuralists, as a system of facts that could exist independently from values and paradigms (either those of the analysts or the subjects themselves), but to be understood as both causes and effects of each other. For this reason, most post-structuralists held a more open-ended view of function within systems than did structuralists and were sometimes accused of circularity and ambiguity. Post-structuralists countered that, when closely examined, all formalized claims describing phenomena, reality or truth, rely on some form or circular reasoning and self-referential logic that is often paradoxical in nature. Thus, it was important to uncover the hidden patterns of circularity, self-reference and paradox within a given set of statements rather that feign objectivity, as such an investigation might allow new perspectives to have influence and new practices to be sanctioned or adopted. In this latter respect, Post-structuralists were, as a group, continuing the philosophical project initiated by Martin Heidegger, who saw himself as extending the implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's work.

As would be expected, post-structuralist writing tends to connect observations and references from many, widely varying disciplines into a synthetic view of knowledge and its relationship to experience, the body, society and economy – a synthesis in which it sees itself as participating. Stucturalists, while also somewhat inter-disciplinary, were more comfortable within departmental boundaries and often maintained the autonomy of their analytical methods over the objects they analyzed. Post-structuralists, unlike Structuralists, did not privilege a system of (abstract) «relations» over the specifics to which such relations were applied, but tended to see the notion of «the relation» or of systemization itself as part-and-parcel of any stated conclusion rather than a reflection of reality as an independent, self-contained state or object. If anything, if a part of objective reality, theorization and systemization to Post-structuralists was an exponent of larger, more nebulous patterns of control in social orders – patterns that could not be encapsulated in theory without simultaneously conditioning it. For this reason, certain post-structural thinkers were also criticized by more realist, naturalist or essentialist thinkers of anti-intellectualism or anti-philosophy. In short, post-structuralists, unlike sructuralists, tended to place a great deal of skepticism on the independence of theoretical premises from collective bias and the influence of power, and rejected the notion of a «pure» or «scientific» methodology in

social analysis, semiotics or philosophical speculation. No theory, they said – especially when concerning human society or psychology – was capable of reducing phenomena to elemental systems or abstract patterns, nor could abstract systems be dismissed as secondary derivatives of a fundamental nature: systemization, phenomena and values were part of each other.

While many of the so-called post-structuralists vehemently disagreed on the specifics of such fundamental categories as «the real», «society», «totality», «desire» and «history», many also shared, in contrast to their so-called structuralist predecessors, the traits mentioned. Furthermore, a good number of them engaged in a re-assessment (positive or negative) of the philosophical traditions associated with Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Because of its general skepticism of analytical objectivity and mutually exclusive oppositions in logic, its emphasis on the social production of knowledge and of knowledge paradigms, and its portrayal of the sometimes ambiguous inter-determination of material culture, values, physical practices and socio-economic life, post-structuralism is often linked to Postmodernism.

9.6 Jean Baudrillard

Jean Baudrillard (1929 – 2007) was a French sociologist, philosopher, cultural theorist, political commentator. His work is frequently associated with postmodernism and post-structuralism.

9.6.1 Core ideas

Baudrillard was a social theorist and critic best known for his analyses of the modes of mediation and technological communication. His writing, though mostly concerned with the way technological progress affects social change, covers diverse subjects including consumerism, gender relations, the social understanding of history, journalistic commentaries about AIDS, cloning, the Rushdie affair, the first Gulf War and the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City.

His published work emerged as part of a generation of French thinkers including Gilles Deleuze, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan who all shared an interest in semiotics, and he is often seen as a part of the poststructuralist philosophical school. In common with many poststructuralists, his arguments consistently draw upon the notion that signification and meaning are both only understandable in terms of how particular words or «signs» interrelate. Baudrillard thought, as many post-structuralists, that meaning is brought about through systems of signs working together. Following on from the structuralist linguist Ferdinand de Saussure,

Baudrillard argued that meaning (value) is created through difference – through what something is not (so «dog» means «dog» because it is not-«cat», not-«goat», not-«tree», etc.). In fact, he viewed meaning as near enough self-referential: objects, images of objects, words and signs are situated in a web of meaning; one object's meaning is only understandable through its relation to the meaning of other objects; in other words, one thing's prestige relates to another's mundanity.

From this starting point Baudrillard constructed broad theories of human society based upon this kind of self-referentiality. His pictures of society portray societies always searching for a sense of meaning — or a «total» understanding of the world — that remains consistently elusive. In contrast to poststructuralists such as Foucault, for whom the formations of knowledge emerge only as the result of relations of power, Baudrillard developed theories in which the excessive, fruitless search for total knowledge lead almost inevitably to a kind of delusion. In Baudrillard's view, the (human) subject may try to understand the (non-human) object, but because the object can only be understood according to what it signifies (and because the process of signification immediately involves a web of other signs from which it is distinguished) this never produces the desired results. The subject, rather, becomes seduced (in the original Latin sense, seducere, to lead away) by the object. He therefore argued that, in the last analysis, a complete understanding of the minutiae of human life is impossible, and when people are seduced into thinking otherwise they become drawn toward a «simulated» version of reality, or, to use one of his neologisms, a state of «hyperreality». This is not to say that the world becomes unreal, but rather that the faster and more comprehensively societies begin to bring reality together into one supposedly coherent picture, the more insecure and unstable it looks and the more fearful societies become.[14] Reality, in this sense, «dies out».

Accordingly, Baudrillard argued that the excess of signs and of meaning in late 20th century «global» society had caused (quite paradoxically) an effacement of reality. In this world neither liberal nor Marxist utopias are any longer believed in. We live, he argued, not in a «global village», to use Marshall McLuhan's phrase, but rather in a world that is ever more easily petrified by even the smallest event. Because the «global» world operates at the level of the exchange of signs and commodities, it becomes ever more blind to symbolic acts such as, for example, terrorism. In Baudrillard's work the symbolic realm (which he develops a perspective on through the anthropological work of Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille) is seen as quite distinct from that of signs and signification. Signs can be exchanged like

commodities; symbols, on the other hand, operate quite differently: they are exchanged, like gifts, sometimes violently as a form of potlatch. Baudrillard, particularly in his later work, saw the «global» society as without this «symbolic» element, and therefore symbolically (if not militarily) defenseless against acts such as the Rushdie Fatwa or, indeed, the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States and its military establishment.

9.6.2 The object value system

In his early books, such as The System of Objects, For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, and The Consumer Society, Baudrillard's main focus is upon consumerism, and how different objects are consumed in different ways. At this time Baudrillard's political outlook was loosely associated with Marxism (and situationism), but in these books he differed from Marx in one significant way. For Baudrillard, it was **consumption**, rather than production, which was the main drive in capitalist society.

Baudrillard came to this conclusion by criticising Marx's concept of «use-value». Baudrillard thought that both Marx's and Adam Smith's economic thought accepted the idea of genuine needs relating to genuine uses too easily and too simply – despite the fact that Marx did not use the term «genuine» in relation to needs or use-values. Baudrillard argued, drawing from Georges Bataille, that needs are constructed, rather than innate. He stressed that all purchases, because they always signify something socially, have their fetishistic side. Objects always, drawing from Roland Barthes, «say something» about their users. And this was, for him, why consumption was and remains more important than production: because the «ideological genesis of needs» precedes the production of goods to meet those needs.

He wrote that there are four ways of an object obtaining value. The four value-making processes are as follows:

1. The first is the **functional** value of an object; its instrumental purpose. A pen, for instance, writes; and a refrigerator cools.

2. The second is the **exchange** value of an object; its economic value. One pen may be worth three pencils; and one refrigerator may be worth the salary earned by three months of work.

3. The third is the **symbolic** value of an object; a value that a subject assigns to an object in relation to another subject. A pen might symbolize a student's school graduation gift or a commencement speaker's gift; or a diamond may be a symbol of publicly declared marital love.

4. The last is the **sign** value of an object; its value within a system of objects. A particular pen may, while having no added functional benefit, signify prestige relative to another pen; a diamond ring may have no function at all, but may suggest particular social values, such as taste or class.

Baudrillard's earlier books were attempts to argue that the first two of these values are not simply associated, but are disrupted by the third and, particularly, the fourth. Later, Baudrillard rejected Marxism totally (The Mirror of Production and Symbolic Exchange and Death). But the focus on the difference between sign value (which relates to commodity exchange) and symbolic value (which relates to Maussian gift exchange) remained in his work up until his death. Indeed it came to play a more and more important role, particularly in his writings on world events.

9.6.3 Simulacra and Simulation

As he developed his work throughout the 1980s, he moved from economically based theory to the consideration of mediation and mass communications. Although retaining his interest in Saussurean semiotics and the logic of symbolic exchange (as influenced by anthropologist Marcel Mauss), Baudrillard turned his attention to Marshall McLuhan, developing ideas about how the nature of social relations is determined by the forms of communication that a society employs. In so doing, Baudrillard progressed beyond both Saussure's and Roland Barthes' formal semiology to consider the implications of a historically understood (and thus formless) version of structural semiology. The concept of Simulacra also involves a negation of the concept of reality as we usually understand it. Baudrillard argues that today there is no such thing as reality.

Simulation, Baudrillard claims, is the current stage of the simulacrum: All is composed of references with no referents, a hyperreality. Progressing historically from the Renaissance, in which the dominant simulacrum was in the form of the counterfeit – mostly people or objects appearing to stand for a real referent (for instance, royalty, nobility, holiness, etc.) that does not exist, in other words, in the spirit of pretense, in dissimulating others that a person or a thing does not really «have it» -- to the industrial revolution, in which the dominant simulacrum is the product, the series, which can be propagated on an endless production line; and finally to current times, in which the dominant simulacrum is the model, which by its nature already stands for endless reproducibility, and is itself already reproduced.

Some examples Baudrillard brings up of the **simulacrum** of the model are:

1. The development of nuclear weapons as deterrents – useful only in the hyperreal sense, a reference with no real referent, since they are always meant to be reproducible but are never intended to be used.

2. The (former) twin towers of the world trade center, which replaced a new york of constantly competing, distinct heights with a singular model of the ultimate new york building: already doubled, already reproduced, itself a reproduction, a singular model for all conceivable development.

3. A menage-a-trois with identical twins where the fantasy comprises having perfection reproduced in front of your eyes, though the reality behind this reproduction is nil and impossible to comprehend otherwise, since the twins are still just people.

The very act of perceiving these, Baudrillard insists, is in the tactile sense, since we already assume the reproducibility of everything, since it is not the reality of these simulations that we imagine (in fact, we no longer «imagine» in the same sense as before; both the imagined and the real are equally hyperreal, equally both reproducible and already reproductions themselves), but the reproducibility thereof. We do not imagine them reproduced for us, since the original image is itself a reproduction – rather, we perceive the model, the simulation.

9.6.4 The end of history and meaning

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, one of Baudrillard's most common themes was historicity, or, more specifically, how present day societies utilise the notions of progress and modernity in their political choices. He argued, much like the political theorist Francis Fukuyama, that history had ended or «vanished» with the spread of globalization; but, unlike Fukuyama, Baudrillard averred that this end should not be understood as the culmination of history's progress, but as the collapse of the very idea of historical progress. For Baudrillard, the end of the Cold War was not caused by one ideology's victory over the other, but the disappearance of the utopian visions that both the political Right and Left shared. Giving further evidence of his opposition toward Marxist visions of global communism and liberal visions of global civil society, Baudrillard contended that the ends they hoped for had always been illusions; indeed, as his book The Illusion of the End argued, he thought the idea of an end itself was nothing more than a misguided dream: «The end of history is, alas, also the end of the dustbins of history. There are no longer any dustbins

for disposing of old ideologies, old regimes, old values. Where are we going to throw Marxism, which actually invented the dustbins of history? (Yet there is some justice here since the very people who invented them have fallen in.) Conclusion: if there are no more dustbins of history, this is because History itself has become a dustbin. It has become its own dustbin, just as the planet itself is becoming its own dustbin».

Within a society subject to and ruled by fast-paced electronic communication and global information networks the collapse of this façade was always going to be, he thought, inevitable. Employing a quasi-scientific vocabulary that attracted the ire of the physicist Alan Sokal, Baudrillard wrote that the speed society moved at had destabilized the linearity of history: «we have the particle accelerator that has smashed the referential orbit of things once and for all».

In making this argument Baudrillard found some affinity with the postmodern philosophy of Jean-François Lyotard, who famously argued that in the late Twentieth Century there was no longer any room for «metanarratives». The triumph of a coming communism being one such metanarrative. But, in addition to simply lamenting this collapse of history, Baudrillard also went beyond Lyotard and attempted to analyse how the idea of forward progress was being employed in spite of the notion's declining validity. Baudrillard argued that although genuine belief in a universal endpoint of history, wherein all conflicts would find their resolution, had been deemed redundant, universality was still a notion utilised in world politics as an excuse for actions. Universal values which, according to him, no one any longer believed universal were and are still rhetorically employed to justify otherwise unjustifiable choices. The means, he wrote, are there even though the ends are no longer believed in, and are employed in order to hide the present's harsh realities (or, as he would have put it, unrealities). «In the Enlightenment, universalization was viewed as unlimited growth and forward progress. Today, by contrast, universalization is expressed as a forward escape».

Questions for self-testing:

1. What principles underlie the postmodern?
2. What philosophical doctrines have given rise to the emergence of postmodernism?
3. What accounts difficulty in determining the postmodern?
4. What ideas and concepts could you allocate of postmodern thought?
5. How do structuralism and post-structuralism view culture?
6. What is the meaning of the postmodern concept of simulacrum?

7. How did the role and place of Western civilization change in the postmodern world? Which philosophical concepts is reflected it?

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2. Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida, ed. by John Sallis (Chicago, 1989).
3. Michel Foucault. The Archaeology of Knowledge (Routledge, 1972).
4. Jean-Francois Lyotard, Postmodern Fables, tr. by Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minnesota, 1999).
5. Richard Rorty, Philosophy and Social Hope (Penguin, 2000).
6. Deleuze: A Critical Reader, ed. by Paul Patton (Blackwell, 1996).
7. Jean Baudrillard, The System of Objects (London, 1996).
8. Jean Baudrillard, Simulations (New York, 1983).
9. Jean Baudrillard, The Ecstacy of Communication», in The Anti-Aesthetic, Hal Foster (ed.) (Washington, 1983).

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