

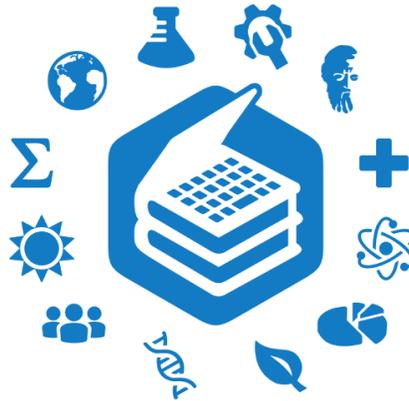
PHILOSOPHY

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This text was compiled on 01/29/2024

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: The Philosophical Venture

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1.1: Why do Philosophy?

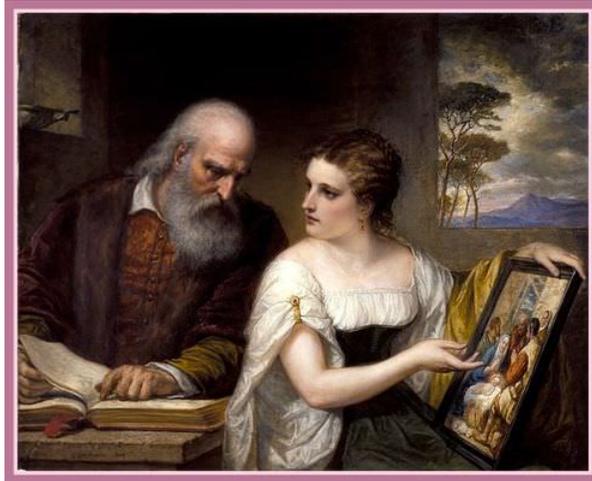


Figure 1.1.1

Philosophy is one of the most challenging undertakings a human can enter into. It is one of the most powerful mental disciplines humans have developed in their time on this planet. It has changed the course of human events around the world in manners that are both subtle and in some that are quite obvious. Philosophy has evolved or arisen in every major human civilization. It is a natural development for minds that are inquiring and critical.

People come to the reading and studying of Philosophy through different paths. Many, perhaps most, do so because they have entered some formal educational program that has the study of Philosophy as part of a curriculum of studies. Some, a few, come to Philosophy because they have a mind that is questioning and they want to learn more about the issue or problem that is on their minds and are so they led through this common but less traveled path to the door of philosophy as they discover that there are books on the topic that perplexes or befuddles them or stirs them to wonder and they learn that these books are written by philosophers.

Most people who take a course in Philosophy do so without having had another. Most will take only one and many of them do so primarily to satisfy some degree requirement. Indeed, many students in a high school Philosophy course are only interested in finishing the course in order to get their credits and those credits are to satisfy a degree requirement. The degree is desired as a means to some other end: going to college, getting a job, getting a different job or promotion. Be that as it may, this text is designed to stimulate your mind. Whether you read it because it is required or whether you are really interested in the subject matter, there will be plenty in this study of Philosophy to interest you, entertain your mind, challenge you, and frustrate you as well.

A Friendly Philosophical Warning

Most people think that it is all well and good and no big deal to read and accept such phrases as "there will be plenty in this study of Philosophy to interest you, entertain your mind, challenge you and frustrate you as well." Well, in the case of Philosophy and of this work in particular, the reader should be aware and forewarned that the issues raised in this work might just be disturbing to them in a personal manner, if they seriously consider the issues raised in this work, that are characteristic issues for Philosophy and how Philosophers approach them. What is meant by this? Is it just a "promo" for the book? Is it some "hype" or "come-on"? Well, I simply report to you that there are many who have read this work in connection with taking a class in Philosophy who have been disturbed in their thinking and have needed to make changes in the very manner in which they think, the manner in which they settle on their beliefs and on what they think is true after being encouraged to think most carefully and seriously and critically about a number of very basic questions and issues. Why would this be the case?

Well, in Philosophy people reflect on their thinking and on the contents of their minds in terms of the views, assumptions, presuppositions and beliefs and sets of beliefs that they hold and with which they do their thinking. Today when people do that after having been alive for say 18 years or more they find that in that time they have acquired a good number of ideas and beliefs and that when you get around to examining them with the slightest bit of careful thought it turns out that not all of the beliefs can be true. Yes, people learn through Philosophy that they have been holding beliefs that are inconsistent or even outright

contradictory to one another. This can be quite disturbing for some of those beliefs have provided some degree of comfort or even a feeling of certainty that makes life easier.

The beliefs that are serving as the most basic upon which others are founded or with others are supported can provide the overall view of life that serves those believers with a sense of identity and orientation and of life's value, even the basis for hope in the face of death that all is not for nothing. It can be quite disturbing to reach a point where one is facing the simple truth that some of the held beliefs are contradictory and realizing that they can't all be true requires that a decision be made as to which beliefs are better founded and more likely to be true and which are less so or even proven not to be true and needing to be rejected and abandoned. It is like being directed or forced to give up that which has been serving so well for so long to provide a sense of comfort. It is akin to being forced to open up the mind and venture out into new areas of thought and having to bear the possibility that this motion from the old and comfortable into the new and perhaps disturbing. What is most disturbing and a sign of intellectual growth is that one is "forced" into the new mode of thinking by the decisions made by the thinker based on the thinker's own realization and acceptance that the prior thoughts are now seen as being defective in some way. This is not a mental act that anyone performs being forced to do so from without but is only done from within once the mind has been opened up and educated into the consideration of more information and the examination of the relationship to one another of the ideas and beliefs that were being held in an uncritical fashion.

It is not a pleasant act to realize the need to surrender that which was once so certain and comforting for entry into a process with a resultant set of beliefs and positions that one does not yet know. Some will attempt to refuse to make the departure from past beliefs out of fear of the new and some will attempt to refuse in an effort to remain in close relationship to those who share the old ideas and beliefs, thinking erroneously that the relationships are absolutely dependent on the belief systems that are shared by those in the relationships. One reader expressed this view in this manner after having reached a point of realizing that some previous beliefs were simply no longer tenable "I feel like I am being disloyal if I were now to change my mind."

If this work is successful the reader will see that there are a number of positions that have been taken on many of the most basic problems or issues or questions faced by philosophers over the millennia and that some of them are better defended than are others. It is the intent of this work to encourage the reader to become a critical thinker and to make the best informed decision as to which position is at this time the best position to hold and then to move to adopt that position.



Figure 1.1.2

Here are some of those issues:

- What is real?
- What is truth?
- What is knowledge?
- What is the good?
- What is justice?
- Is the mind something separate from the body?
- Are we free or our actions determined by that over which we no longer have any control or influence?

It has happened in the past that readers of this work have come to understand that there are three or four or possibly more positions to take on any or each of these issues. They also have come to realize that the positions that they held upon entering into the

reading and the reflecting and the critical thinking process could no longer be accepted as the best position which they could defend using reasoning and evidence. Then they face the decision as to whether or not they will abandon their prior positions and move to the best defended position in their own view or attempt in some manner to deny what they have come to see as the faults in their positions and going on maintaining them for the sake of avoiding change, discomfort or some other perceived ill felling.

This difficulty can be expressed in this manner paraphrasing what more than one reader has disclosed: "I now know that there are five possible positions and that the one that I can best defend is position 'c', but I would like to go on believing in 'b' because that is what I was brought up with and what all my family and friends think." So be forewarned that if the reader takes seriously reflecting on and thinking about matters in this text there may be some difficult decision ahead as to how the reader will be fixing the beliefs with which the reader will be thinking about matters of great importance and of personal concern.

Back to Philosophy

At this time what I would like to do is to get you to gather some idea of what you think Philosophy is. So I have an assignment for you. Think about philosophy and about what questions you have about life. It is very easy really. I don't want you to do any research or to read anything before you answer the questions I just want you to think about these things. So, do so, and write your answers or responses down in some way and keep them somewhere and then review it when you have completed your reading of this work. See if your thoughts and views have changed any by that time.

Now read the next section and we'll be off on our excursion into Philosophy and some of the issues that have disturbed, challenged, perplexed and even excited humans around the world for over two thousand years!



Figure 1.1.3

Getting Started

I have been in Philosophy in some formal manner for over three decades. However, I have been doing philosophy since I was very, very, young, say about 9 years old. I would ask questions. I would ask lots of questions and most of those around me at the time, my friends and relatives, did not have answers. Most had no patience even for discussing the issues. I learned to keep my questions and ideas to myself. Oh, for sure, they would "leak out" once and a while but to no serious consequence other than for most folks to think I was different. It wasn't until I arrived in college that I learned that what it was that I had and it had a name. It is called Philosophy.

Now I have also learned that many people have a number of wrong ideas about what Philosophy is and does and how it operates. Let me give you an example of one of the improper but popular uses of the term "Philosophy".

A true story: I was in a New York City taxicab. The driver spoke English. Honest, he did. In fact he was listening in on a conversation I was having with a friend and at one point the driver volunteered the following remark: "You've got to take it one day at a time. That's my philosophy!"

I suppose that I could have ignored the remark, except that I really wasn't sure at all what the heck he meant. And I knew that uttering pithy remarks was not philosophy at all! So I answered the driver's remarks with a series of questions.

- What do you mean by "you", others don't?
- What do you mean by "got to"? Do you mean "got to" as in the laws of gravity and I have no choice or do you mean "got to" as in laws where I'll get punished if I don't? Just why do I "got to"?
- What do you mean by "take it"? What else is available? "Leave it"?

- “One day at a time”? Why not two days at a time? Heck, why “one day”? Why not one hour or one minute or one second?
- Well, when I was done the driver just said, “I’m sorry.” And that was the end of his contribution to our discussion.

Philosophers ask questions. In my classes I would ask students “what do they think Philosophy is?” Over the years I have heard a lot of answers to the question: What do you think Philosophy is? Let me list a few that are not correct. Some are very off the mark and others are only partially correct.

Past Students' Attempts to Define Philosophy

- Logical reasoning to answer any questions or problems.
- Means by which to view and encounter life.
- A system of beliefs and behaviors based upon experience and judgment.
- Different views and beliefs that people have.
- Just personal opinions.
- Logical thinking or reasoning, taking into account all that is known to be convincing.
- A frame of mind.
- A way of viewing the world and handling life’s experiences and explaining it.
- Great thinkers thought and ideas.
- The way a person is able to maneuver their intellectual ability.
- A theory based upon moral codes and reasoning.
- Study of one’s thoughts without the impact of external opinions.
- Someone’s ideas and outlook on life or anything.
- Someone’s point of view.
- The art of reasoning, thinking and discussing.
- Logic, knowledge, a body of principles to follow.
- A discipline of thinking, which involves moral reasoning, logic, and principles.
- View or Opinion or Belief or Theory.
- Ability to think and make your own judgments.
- Things I live by.
- A belief, way of life or religion.
- A way of Life.
- A translation of the complexities from all angles and summarizing it to its simplistic terms.
- The way the individual interprets or rationalizes what is encountered.
- Analyzing, questioning, discussing and thinking.
- Information handed down from generation to generation: Beliefs, stories, rituals, and experiences.

It is possible that I will be adding additional attempts at to this list. Students and readers continue to surprise me with answers to questions such as this one. Some of the answers appear as if the answer did go to some dictionary or reference work while others appear to be very direct and simplistic.

Now I do not want to start this introduction to Philosophy by giving you a clear definition of what Philosophy is. Instead, I shall tell you a great deal about it-- most of which you will forget. Then, I’ll show you some examples of Philosophy in the writings of Philosophers on the major issues Philosophers have been thinking about for over two thousand years, much of which you will remember, if only vaguely. Finally, I’ll attempt to engage you in doing philosophy through the discussions and presentations of various positions on many of the issues and that is when I think you will understand both what philosophy is and some of the most challenging and recurring issues with which philosophy has dealt and continues to pursue.

Philosophical Applications



Figure 1.1.4

Answer each of these questions. You will come to learn why it is important to do so as we proceed through the course. We need to establish a starting point. Make sure you keep your answers.

1. Do you believe that there is a real world?
2. Do you believe that you are real and are part of the real world?
3. Do you believe that you have a body?
4. Do you believe that you have a mind?
5. Do you believe that you have a soul or spirit that survives after death?
6. Do you believe that there is a force, agency, spirit or greater reality that is responsible for the existence of the universe?

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1.2: Philosophy and Wonder



Figure 1.2.1

Aristotle thought that Philosophy begins in wonder. Wonder is something children do quite well. It comes natural to them. Unfortunately as a lot of us grow older we stop wondering and stop questioning and stop attempting to look at things in new ways or non-traditional ways. We are rewarded for our acceptance and conformity to what is accepted by most people, for our adoption of whatever is popular. Some of us stop wondering altogether.

Consider Two “Stories”

One night a young mother brought her son (age 7) to class at the college where I was teaching an evening class. Her babysitter was not able to be with her son that night. Well I entered the room and he was sitting in a desk next to his mom and was looking in a book and later was coloring in coloring books. At the time I was about the same age as his mom. We sat around in a rectangular arrangement in the room so that everyone could see everyone’s face. I sat at a student desk in the midst of all the others. We started in on the topic for that evening class. After about 20 minutes, the little fellow said:” Hey, when is the teacher going to get here?” to his mom. She explained that the teacher was there and that the teacher was I. He was a bit surprised because I wasn’t at the front of the room and using the blackboard. He settled back in and the class went on to its conclusion. After class his mom and I were talking about something pertaining to the course. We were standing outside in the evening air and her son was standing beside his mom with his head down and after looking at the dirt around the hedges that were around the sides of the building he started to kick at the dirt lightly with the tip of one of his shoes. I noticed he was doing this while I was speaking to his mom. I asked her how her son was doing in school and she told me he was doing fine and that he was an average student. I stopped speaking to her and inquired of the young boy: “What are you doing there?” “Nothing.” He replied. Most likely he thought that he was doing something wrong. “No, you were doing something.” I said. “What was it?” “Nothing” came his response again. “ I saw you kicking in the dirt. Weren’t you kicking the dirt?” I asked. “Yes” he admitted. “Well, why were you doing that?” I asked further. “No reason” he answered. “You must have had some reason.” I responded. “No!” was his next response to me. “What were you thinking while you were kicking in the dirt?” I pressed on with my questions. “Nothing.” He answered. “You must have been thinking something. We all think something all the time.” I answered and then I got what I was hoping for. “I was just wondering about the dirt.” He said. “Wondering what?” I asked. “Well, where did it come from?” he responded. “You mean the dirt?” I asked. “Yeah” he said. “Well it has always been here as part of the earth.” I answered. Then he said. “No, I mean where did it come from before it was part of the earth?” I was surprised by his question. “You mean where it was before it was here?” He answered with, “How would you even know where here was if there were no earth, if there was nothing at all?”

Now I turned to his mother who thought that her son was only an average and well behaved little man and said to her, “Did you know that your son is wondering about the sort of questions that got Einstein thinking about matters that led him to the theory of relativity. Your son is thinking about matters or relativity versus absolute space and time and location!”

Well, nearly all of us when we are very young have questions about some of the most basic things that as we grow older we stop questioning and accept more and more what others tell us in many ways we must accept to be accepted ourselves. But it happens that some of us reach a point where we realize that:

NOT EVERYTHING WE BELIEVE IS TRUE

Philosophy begins in a sense of wonder. It begins when we wonder about what otherwise is taken for granted or assumed to be true. In this course I shall demonstrate how Philosophy arises in the West when a number of Greeks begin to wonder about the nature of the universe and about the nature of reality and the gods. Wonder is a marvelous thing that we should cherish and hold on to as long as we can. It is one of the hallmarks of youth. Small children are filled with wonder. Jesus, the Christ, and Confucius have spoken highly of the minds of children. Christ has said” Blessed are the children for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven” and “To enter the kingdom of heaven, you should have the mind of a child.” What is it about the mind of a child that merits such high value? Is it the curiosity, inquiry, and open-mindedness?

Now, here is the second story. This one is for you to wonder at.

At night when there are no clouds you can look up through the evening sky at what is it most would say they see? Nearly everyone would say that they see stars and the moon, if it is visible from their position at the time. Now, when asked what those stars are, most people know that they are suns as well and that they are giving off light as our own does. Many people would be able to answer that the suns are emitting light as they turn hydrogen into helium in a process that emits enormous amount of energy, a good part in the form of photons of light. And when asked what name do most people give to what they are looking out into at night? Many, most, maybe even all, would say “space.” Maybe “outer space” But *space* nonetheless.

This is the story that many of us have come to believe. We look out into space and see many suns. We know however that those little specks of twinkling light are very, very far away. In fact, we are taught that they are so far away that the distance cannot be measured as we normally do for the numbers would be so large. To make it easier the distances that the stars and galaxies are from earth are measured in light-years. A light-year is the distance light travels in one year. Light moves at over 186,000 miles per second-some velocity. So, the light we see that we associate with a star at night has been traveling for some time to get to your eyeball. One star is 70 million light years away. A galaxy may be 350 million light years away. Another star might be 125 million light years away and another 23 million and another 450,000 light years from earth. Another galaxy may be 5 billion light years away. Now since it takes quite a while for the light to reach earth by the time it does arrive at your eyeball the source of the light might not even exist anymore. A star may have gone into a nova or supernova, burnt out, or been merged into a black hole. A galaxy may have merged with another in a cosmic collision.

Now it may come as a shock to some of you to realize that when you look out into the evening sky and into what you are thinking of as space that what you are looking at it actually a composite of different periods of *time*. You are looking at a collection of pasts. What you are looking at, the exact configuration or arrangement of those points of light, well that configuration of the stars (some are galaxies): Does not exist as it appears to your eye, Never has existed as an actual arrangement in space as it appears to your eye, and Never will exist as some of those stars have gone into nova or black holes and no longer exist even when you are seeing the light from them in the present.

The relative locations of the stars and galaxies you are viewing are not real and never have been. You are looking at where things were different times ago. What you are experiencing as “seeing” is the intersection of light rays from different times in the past. The experience for those of us on earth is totally unique to us.

THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS AS THEY APPEAR



Figure 1.2.2

I want you to think about that idea. Consider how many things you may believe that may not be true. Think about how many things you believe may have other ways to be examined, viewed, or explained other than in the manner you have come to accept as the

only way or the one true way or as the truth.

We are going to look at the Greeks because they believed for a long time in stories that they took to be true and upon which they based their lives. About the time of Socrates many Greeks were coming to disbelieve in those stories and when they no longer believed they were at a loss as to how they were to live their lives, in particular what were they to use as the basis for a Good life: a moral life.

Socrates wondered and questioned. We shall wonder and question. Now many times I shall make efforts for you to look at things you take for granted as being true. I want you to open up your minds to the possibility that things may not be as you think they are.

A Dean at my college saw me one afternoon and asked me to come to his office. I had been teaching there for only two years and didn't know what to make of it. I thought I might have done something wrong. I met him in his office and he told me he just wanted to see how I was doing. I was very young and full of enthusiasm and told him about all the exercises and projects I was doing with my classes and showed him my outlines. He was interested but he wanted me to relax. He told me I should try to keep in mind that if by the time the course in Philosophy was over I would have accomplished a great deal if some of the students, just some of the students would leave the course thinking that the universe was not just the way they thought all things were on the first day of the course. This has become one of my goals: that some of you who read this text will come to consider that all things may not be as you think they are now.

Socrates and Plato learned and taught that the senses are not to be trusted. Trust more in reason. Here is why;

- The senses can deceive you.
- You should know better.
 - The sun looks to me to be
 - Not so far away,
 - Not so big and
 - Not so hot either.
 - And I swear that the sun looks like it moves.
- These ideas are the result of what my senses tell me.
- I see these things every day with my own eyes. Nothing could be plainer.
- Are these ideas true?

In the next section we shall examine why people believe and why they would believe in things that are not true.

- Philosophy attempts to arrive at a basis for belief resting on reason.
- Philosophy attempts to examine what is believed to be true and the very idea of truth itself.

Philosophy Application



Figure 1.2.3

Do **no** research before you answer these questions. Do your best based upon prior knowledge.

1. List the five or so of your most important questions or problems you think about.
2. If you had virtually unlimited financial resources at your disposal what would you begin doing with your life?
3. Why did you take this philosophy course?
4. What do you expect to put into this course?
5. What is Philosophy?

6. How do you use the term "philosophy"?
7. How do others use the term "philosophy"? Give examples.
8. What good is philosophy?
9. What importance might philosophy have in your future?

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1.3: Chaos and The Cosmos

Chaos and Cosmos

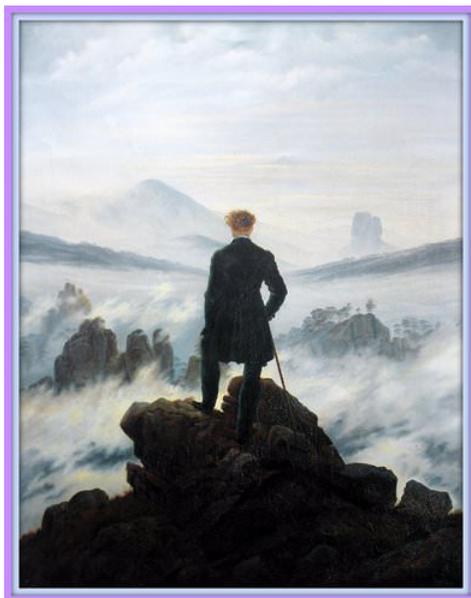


Figure 1.3.1

People prefer order to chaos and it appears they are willing to pay quite a price for that order. Humans are faced with a large number of important questions, such as: What is life all about? Where do we come from? What is the meaning of it all? How did the world come from? What is the right thing to do? Rather than figure out answers to these questions for themselves, most humans appear willing to accept those answers provided through their culture. They learn them through their language, their religious belief systems, their educational system, and other major social institutions. Most humans appear ill suited to reject the answers of their culture or even to subject them to careful scrutiny. Rather than live without answers and instead face the chaos, most humans accept the order as it is given to them.

Cosmos Is Better Than Chaos!

Over time there often develops serious questioning of the order, the foundation of the order, and what is dependent upon it. In order to maintain that order people need to turn aside from the criticisms and reaffirm their basic beliefs. The reward for continuing in that belief is order. The price they pay is to halt the questioning process. Many do so because they fear the result of displacing or surrendering the beliefs, they lose the safety and calm of the order.

Here is a story that many of you might find quite illustrative, entertaining, and educational.

Santa Claus



Figure 1.3.2

Now when I was growing up I learned about good old Santa Claus. For many years I received gifts from Santa at Christmas time. However, I came to ask questions about the fat guy with the red suit with white piping and the reindeer and the North Pole house and factory, the elves, Mrs. Claus, the whole deal! Whenever I asked questions such as, “but how does Santa get in here? We don’t have a chimney” I would be given an answer meant to assure me, to settle my doubts and restore me to the comfortable calm of being certain that there was a Santa and all would be well and work out. “He’ll find a way. He always does. Don’t worry”

Well, I did worry. I did have lots of questions. As I grew older the questions grew and the answers became less and less acceptable. “What about the other Santa’s? What about the reindeer? How big was the chimney? There are a lot of children in the world! How does he get it done in one night?” Now, I had friends my age who were believers and they would tell stories of Santa eating the cookies they left out for him. I thought that those cookies explain how he was so fat, but there were other problems. What about the reindeer? No one ever reported seeing signs of the deer. I am a city kid and I knew from my brief exposure to elephants at the circus, horses at parades and cows at expositions that large mammals were always dropping feces. Where was the reindeer sh...? I wondered. It had to be somewhere. All night long Santa working those deer. There had to be signs somewhere, but there never was.

Those of you who are born in this country and those who spend a few years here quickly come to learn about the story of Santa Claus, whether you are a Christian or not, it does not seem to matter. The holiday has been secularized and children from other cultures and religions are often, but not always, given gifts by family and friends so that the children will not feel slighted by the fat guy skipping them possibly making them think that there was something wrong with them or their family or making them feel marked as different from the other children. Children also come to learn that there is no Santa Claus. Oops, sorry if some of you didn’t know that already. Sometimes a child discovers the truth. Sometimes parents reveal the truth. Sometimes older brothers or sisters tease their younger siblings with the truth. Occasionally it is an older friend or friend of a friend who, for any one of a number of motives, may reveal the truth. And now we get to the point. As long as we believe we get gifts. We do not want to stop getting the gifts and so sometimes, we go on believing or pretending to believe so that the gifts will continue. This can go on for some time but not forever, in the case of the Santa Claus story.

Now, despite the fact that people know that the story is not true many people in this country go on telling the story to children. They act as if it were true in the presence of small children. They tease small children with warnings about being good or else they won’t get their gifts nor asking children what did Santa bring you? Why do people go on telling a story that they know isn’t true? In this case the answer lies in what it is of value that people derive from the telling of the tale. People who tell the tale to small children and bring them gifts in the name of Santa do so because it is fun. They enjoy doing so. They enjoy making small children happy. And so the tale goes on because people experience values in doings so. The telling of the tale assists children to learn the lesson that there is joy in giving, for Santa is joyful. The moral: it is better to give than to receive.

The telling of a tale that isn’t true and the desire to promulgate it is part of what is known as a broken myth: a story we know is not true but we repeat anyway because of the values derived from doing so.

In this course you will be challenged to consider many questions, many issues. Some of the issues deal with matters concerning which you share in a belief system with many other people. You will be challenged to consider the possibility that the ideas you take as given truths may not be true at all. You will be challenged to consider looking at matters from another point of view. It could just be that some of the ideas you have are stories, which may not be true. Perhaps, people believe in some of these stories because, as with the Santa story, they receive gifts for believing. They receive the gift of an order for their lives and they avoid chaos. People cannot live with chaos and so they may on believing in a story that provides order in their lives even if it, like the Santa tale, has a lot of holes in it. They may believe even if the stories have contradictions or are filled with many mysteries.

Now we learn from our culture a number of things and a way to look at all things. We inherit through our culture a worldview. Now what philosophers do is examine with a critical eye all things. It may just be that elements of that worldview are not correct or true. It could just be that some of our most cherished beliefs have flaws in them, such as in the Santa story, and we just don’t see them as yet.

Philosophy examines the most basic ideas with which humans think. It takes as little for granted as is possible. In fact it aims at taking nothing for granted and subjecting all ideas and beliefs to the examination of reason. Here is the best definition of Philosophy that I have ever come across:

Philosophy is the most critical and comprehensive thought process devised by humans.

Philosophy is not the means by which humans have erected systems of beliefs to help them answer the most perplexing and important issues but it is the means by which those answers are evaluated, examined and found to be acceptable or else rejected.

Some of the earliest forms for the answers to life's most basic questions have been found in the form of stories that were told long, long ago. These stories were passed on from generation to generation. The stories were told in the hope that those who heard them would believe them and be guided by them. Such stories are called myths. Myths may or may not be true. The point about a myth is that those who pass them on hope that those who hear them will believe them and be guided by them. In this manner you can think of the Santa Story as a myth, and a broken myth at that because most who tell the tales know that they are not true. It doesn't matter whether they are true or not. The teller of the myth- intends for the audience to believe.

OK, let's take a look at where we are. Humans have a sense of wonder. They ask all sorts of questions. Humans want answers to the most important questions. Humans want and need order in their lives. They abhor chaos. Humans can't abide a mental chaos. The earliest sets of answers to life's most pressing questions appear to have been contained in and passed on through stories. People like stories. They learn a lot from stories. People gravitate to the story, the gossip, and the tales about the professor more than they focus on the lesson. Some of the earliest stories meant to be instructive, answer questions, and provide order are myths. As time goes on within every culture there arise so many myths, so many stories that some people start to wonder about the stories themselves. Some people even question the tales.

- Are they true? They can't all be true at once! Which are true? How do we know?

Philosophy Arises Out of Wonder

Philosophy arises out of a cultural background. Philosophy arises out of a questioning of the myths, the accepted truths, the beliefs, and tales of a culture. We will start the course by examining how Philosophy arose in the West out of the questioning of the Greek myths and ideas current in the time of Socrates. We shall learn how Socrates struggled to find truth and wisdom and was put to death for his efforts to find true virtue and the Good. We shall learn how Plato, Socrates student, changed his life around after the execution and took up the quest of Socrates and how Plato found answers to the questions that perplexed Socrates. Plato found not only answers but also a method for humans everywhere to work out answers without needing to rely on memorizing the official answers of previous generations and to repeat them over and over again, despite obvious problems with them. Before we get to these Greeks and the origins of Philosophy I think you may want to know why it is important to look at them. In the next section we shall draw a number of parallels between our own time and that of the Greeks so that you can apply what we learn about them to our own times. You might also learn a few things that you could apply to your own life now! That wouldn't be at all undesirable.

View: Video



Philosophy Applications



Figure 1.3.3

Your friend has failed an exam and blames their failure on the difference between them and their professor's astrological signs.

1. Are astrological signs connected to passing or failing an exam? Explain.
2. Is your friend's remark logical? Why or why not.
3. In your opinion is the belief in zodiac signs a myth, a tale or a broken myth? Explain.

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1.4: The Origins of Philosophy - The Greeks and Us

The Greeks

At the time of Socrates (472-399 BC) many Greeks were no longer believers in the stories of the gods and goddesses. Those stories had provided them with guidance for their lives. They had believed that they could not go against the decrees of the deities and that they should follow the examples of the gods and goddesses which they knew of through the stories they all heard and memorized and repeated. They accepted ideas such as fate and destiny. Now they were hearing the stories being challenged and some declared their disbelief. The playwrights were raising questions on the stages. Some thought they could choose from among the tales those stories that supported whatever courses of conduct they choose. They believed that they could show that some god or other approved of the conduct because the god had done something similar. There were many who believed that morality was individual and relative.

Greek culture was undergoing a major revolution during this time. They were transforming from an oral culture to a literate culture. They were acquiring paper and so they could write down the stories and the plays and important ideas. They no longer needed to memorize what they heard and repeat it as exactly as possible in order to transmit ideas. Plato could write down ideas and examine them. He could write questions and reasoned arguments for readers to reflect upon.

Today, there are many people who no longer effectively believe in the stories of the one God. There are many who are convinced that there are no universal moral codes and people need to determine their own morality. Further, the world is being transformed from a literate culture to an electronic culture. We are at the beginning of a period in which we are attempting to develop a morality for the new age.

Many no longer accept the idea of universal truth. We shall be examining how we arrived at this point starting back with the Greeks at the time of Socrates. What Philosophy became then and offered to people, is still true today and could offer to all of us if we were to pursue the philosophical approach to handling the issues and key questions. All of the key issues in Philosophy were quite apparent in the works of Plato and Aristotle. We shall take a rather brief look at the Greeks in order to understand how Philosophy arises within a culture and at the key issues. We shall also make comparisons to the present time in order to appreciate the relevance of all of this for each of us today.

This text shall make use of a theory about education that pushes the belief that learning moves through stages. These stages are:

- Romance
- Precision
- Generalization

It starts with

- curiosity
- a story, and
- a problem.

There is not much critical thinking at all. In the second stage there is a great deal of critical thinking focusing on the problem and paying attention to

- consistency
- coherency, and
- non-contradiction.

In the last stage there is a return to the flights of imagination again as the mind applies what is developed in the second stage and then apply it further.

There will be a good deal of storytelling in the next chapter. You may find it very interesting and even a bit entertaining. In the remaining chapters the thinking will become more focused, intense, and demanding.

Belief Systems, Post Modernism, and Uncritical Thinking

As people grow and mature and learn they acquire beliefs and an entire belief system. They do so through receiving and accepting as true stories about how things are in this world and in a realm beyond this one and through the beliefs implicit in ordinary language and its usages. Thus are acquired assumptions and presuppositions for the thought processes entered into through life. In

the beginning those acquiring such beliefs want to be accepted and even valued by the various groups of which they are or desire to be members, so there is an emphasis on acceptance of the beliefs shared by members of those groups and not on review or criticism of them. There is little, if any, reflective thought or critical thinking taking place. Little is needed if the majority of group members are operating with the beliefs without questioning of them.

Once acquired the belief systems function as a basis for the acquisition of additional beliefs. As another idea is presented it is placed within the context of the previously acquired beliefs and if the new candidate for inclusion is consistent with or coherent with the prior beliefs and ideas it is accepted as also being true. This is the Coherentist Theory of Truth. The problem with that approach to truth is that there needs to be some other method for the establishment of the fundamental beliefs or else the entire structure of beliefs while internally coherent might not be supported by any evidence external to the beliefs themselves.

As belief systems expand they can reach a point where beliefs and ideas have been accepted too hastily and when a culture or individual reach a point where reflective thought can be afforded inconsistencies and perhaps even outright contradictions may appear upon reflection. Upon the first realization of problems, the belief systems will not be abandoned altogether and will not even be thrown into serious doubt. Rather there will be attempts to preserve the belief system through the introduction of qualifiers and alternate interpretations designed to account for what are to be termed “apparent” discrepancies. This process will continue until the introduction of the qualifiers and alternative interpretations reaches a point where they generate the need for even further such qualifiers and the process then becomes so burdensome that the fundamental beliefs and ideas may then come under the most careful scrutiny and there is an acceptance of a need for an alternate set of beliefs that are more internally coherent and satisfying to demands of reason and the desire for external grounding.

This occurred in the time of Socrates when the many stories about the gods and goddesses were seen through the eyes of critical reasoning to be inconsistent and incoherent. For Socrates a basis for the grounding of morality and the social order was needed other than that provided by the stories of the Greek deities. In addition to sharing this realization with Socrates, Plato saw that the ideas and theories of the Pre-Socratics were inconsistent and there was needed an alternate view of what made anything real and how one could know anything.

Now for Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle the idea of the Greek deities came to make little sense in the light of reason and so the idea of a more abstract entity emerges with them as more satisfying as an explanation of origins and order. Their ideas satisfy the dictates of reason for which they abandoned the blind adherence to the stories of their ancestors. These are developments that mark the origins of philosophical thought in the West.

With other western religious belief systems there were also prompts to the development of a critical thought tradition. The early Hebrew Deity is one that has apparent weaknesses and is not at all perfect in every way. It is jealous and vindictive and unjust. For the Christians the idea of the Hebrew Deity was not going to be acceptable to those who had come under the influence of the Greek manner of thought. The Christians take the idea of the all perfect being, the source of all that is true, good and beautiful, from the Greeks and layer it over the idea of the single deity of the Hebrews. The ideas about the qualities of the early Hebrew god when combined ideas about the Greek ideal deity have made for many problems. The Western traditions treat the Scriptures as being in some sense divinely inspired or authored and thus, for many in those traditions who are conservative and literalists, they carry the ideas of the early Hebrew deity along with them leading to complications as there arises the need to explain how an all good deity and an all merciful deity can be so cruel and vindictive as in some of the stories in the early books or chapters of the scriptures. The Problem of Evil arises as an attempt to give an account that makes sense as to how an all perfect being could exist at the same time that there exists moral evil. Troubles with a simple belief prompt critical reflection and the desire to use reason to support the belief system. Consideration of the troublesome issues led to Augustine and Aquinas moving beyond the traditions of faith and into philosophical thought and a reliance on reason to interpret and defend key beliefs in the Christian tradition.

In recent times people acquire beliefs and ideas that are originating from several different belief systems and periods: the classical, modern, and postmodern. Unfortunately, most start out by an unconscious acceptance that has them holding beliefs without question despite the many inconsistencies and incoherent features of the resultant collection. They accept the ideas as true as they originate from authorities and as they are shared in by peers. They accept out of a desire to be accepted and to please. The general postmodern culture promotes uncritical thought patterns and so there are no prompts for reflective or critical thought.

Among the contradictory beliefs are the ideas that are held simultaneously of relativism and absolutism, empiricism and idealism, free will and determinism, materialism and a dualism. Among the many odd combinations of beliefs are:

- A single deity must exist and everyone is entitled to believe in whatever they wish concerning the deity and it will be true.
- Reality consists of physical and spiritual entities and reality is whatever any group agrees that it is.

- There are moral wrong or evil acts and whatever people think is morally correct is morally correct for them.
- There are evil acts and there is no one way to declare anything to be evil.
- We must make moral judgments for our safety and survival and that no one should make moral judgments about other people and their behaviors.
- There are true and false claims and truth is not objective.
- There is knowledge and there is no absolute or objective or certain knowledge.
- Science is to be valued and trusted and folklore, mythology, and spiritualism are equally acceptable sources of knowledge.
- Human behavior is the result of causal factors and humans are totally free to decide for themselves what they will do.

Philosophy emerges within a culture when the belief systems no longer answer all the important questions and there are realized to be problems with the accepted set of beliefs. One of the many problems with the post-modern belief set is that there are no contradictions or difficulties with belief sets that need to be addressed because contradictions and inconsistencies are acceptable as there are no objective criteria for thought to satisfy and so there is no need for the formal school system to be developing critical thinking concerning them. Instead there is an exaggerated and harmful accenting of the value of tolerance of all beliefs and beliefs systems. Opinions are not to be distinguished from proven claims, there being no objective knowledge, and every claim is merely opinion. The inherited beliefs and beliefs systems are not examined within the formal educational system as it is infused throughout with postmodern relativism. Many of the teachers are themselves possessed of the incoherent belief systems.

So, many students arrive in high schools and colleges with poor habits of mind and beset with beliefs that are incoherent and contradictory. Further, they are possessed of beliefs that make the development of their critical thinking skills very difficult. They believe that all claims are opinions and that there is no reason for them to examine ideas and beliefs that they hold as they are entitled to hold whatever beliefs they choose to hold and they choose to remain within their social sets and to do so they believe that they need to continue to hold the belief systems that are popular with those groupings and in some cases define those groups.

Mental habits and belief systems are not easily disturbed or called into serious question when they perform useful functions for the believer and do so in a powerful manner. If a belief system offers hope and consolation in the face of death of a loved one or anticipated death of one's own self then there is a very strong impulse to retain those beliefs for fear of the intellectual chaos that is feared would result by the rejection of the familiar belief system. Further, there is the fear that in accepting another belief system one is disloyal to those groups to which one belongs that hold that belief set in common. Perhaps most influential in the decision to retain the beliefs that comfort one is the desire to have a soul that survives the death of the physical body and to have an eternal life in unimaginable pleasure which are thought to be lost if the belief system is rejected for another in which such desires are not guaranteed to be fulfilled.

The ability to have control over one's beliefs may also be so valued that many would exercise the choice to maintain the old comforting beliefs as a display of that ability thus maintaining the illusion of control rather than to view the choice of examination and possible revision or rejection of the belief system as another experience offering evidence of the ability to control some aspect of one's life. It is far simpler and economical to conserve beliefs than to consider revisions thereof. Accepting and continuing beliefs that one is presented with is far less taxing in effort than the careful and critical examination of belief systems and the evaluation and decision making involved in the development and maintenance of a belief systems that is coherent and supported by evidence.

People want to hold whatever beliefs that they choose to hold and give no account for them other than to assert their right to hold whatever beliefs they choose and to insist that they must be tolerated in doing so by all others. One of the accepted beliefs is that of tolerance as a value of the highest social importance. Tolerance is a value expounded upon in a postmodern culture as supportive of the relativism that is an essential component of the postmodern epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. Tolerance is not to be questioned as a value as it is promoted as a cornerstone to a desirable social arrangement.

Yet tolerance itself is a disvalue as post modernists would have promoted it. Tolerance is not respect. To be tolerant is to put up with something. It does not include accepting it or considering it as valuable or worthy. Tolerance of people and beliefs is promoted but it is misguided and harmful whenever to be tolerant of behaviors and ideas would hurt individuals and groups in physical and emotional ways. Those who advocate tolerance cannot possibly be sincere I doing so. This is so because they do not advocate being tolerant of:

- Rapists
- Murderers
- Child molesters
- Racists

- Misogynists
- Intolerant Groups and Individuals

They cannot be tolerant of such people and expect their promotion of tolerance to be accepted by others.

Postmodern pluralists continue to promote tolerance as if it were unqualified for they do not and expect no one else will subject their promotion to critical examination for such an examination would not be popular or “politically correct”. They continue to promote tolerance as if it were unqualified for they do not hold careful and critical thought as being valuable as they believe that such thought challenges relativism. They also mistakenly believe that critical thinking is somehow intolerant of individuals, groups and behaviors and beliefs they wish to have accepted. The formal educational system promotes an uncritical tolerance and the belief in such and value of such.

Philosophy, Opinions and Right Answers

Most folks think very little about Philosophy. Of those who do many have some erroneous ideas about the discipline and its history. One of the most troublesome, for Philosophers, is the mistaken idea is that it is about opinions. This idea when followed by the ideas that opinions are all humans have with which to think and all opinions are pretty much of equal value, these two ideas run directly opposed to what philosophers are attempting to do. Philosophers quest after wisdom, which for John Dewey is the *quest to use what we know to gain what we most value*. Philosophers do this by using critical thinking concerning all that humans claim to know and to value. This quickly becomes a quite involved process, examining the meaning of the word "knowledge" and other ideas such as; reality, truth, certainty, and value, among many other basic terms. Philosophers take positions on the questions, issues, and problems faced by the most critical of thinkers examining the most basic concerns that humans can entertain with thoughtful reflection.

Philosophers use critical thinking and reason and evidence to support the claims that they make and the positions that they hold. This is quite different than merely making a claim, a statement, which is supported by nothing and thus an expression of the speaker's opinion. Philosophers are willing to examine all claims and all positions with their supporting reasoning and evidence. They examine it looking for any flaws or problems. They want the most satisfactory and at times satisfying answers and solutions, to the questions and problems.

Philosophy: Looking for the Best Rafts

With Plato and his mentor Socrates we have a description of what Philosophy is about. Humans are on a journey. *En route* they face obstacles to overcome. Major questions, problems, and issues are like rivers that need to be crossed. Now along one side of the river there are these rafts. When you reach the river you may select any raft you want to use to get across the river. There are many different types. There are more than enough for everyone. They differ in color, shape, materials, method of construction and size. You want to select the best possible raft with which to cross the river. No raft is perfect. Each raft has a problem. Each raft takes on water. Some take on a lot and some very little. Some are put together in a very shoddy manner and some are very well constructed.

Some people select the raft to use based on its color. They like certain colors and have a favorite and that is all they care about. Others select their rafts based on size and they want the biggest one they can find. Each who selects has a reason and a method for the selection. What a reasonable sensible person should want is the best possible raft that will carry its occupants across the river safely.

Philosophy is a method of thinking used to make the best possible selection of the raft which is the answer to the most basic questions that humans have about life, knowledge, truth, goodness, beauty, etc... Philosophers hope to develop the best possible position and hope that it will do well when tested. Over the centuries those positions philosophers thought were the best have been revealed to have problems. New rafts were constructed and tested and found wanting again.

So, Philosophy is the quest for the best possible raft, knowing that it is highly probable that there is no perfect raft. As humans advance and progress and gather more experiences and develop more critical analysis and evaluation techniques philosophical positions are examined more closely and tested more thoroughly. Philosophy is a process. It is a method of thinking and as our knowledge grows so too will philosophy take all of it into consideration as the method attempts to produce the *best possible* answers to the most important questions.

Some folks look for the "correct" answer to a question or the "right" solution to a problem. Philosophers have learned that what they do is look for the best "possible" answers and solutions. So we shall look now at how Socrates developed a better method for finding the best answers and then we shall examine several important questions or issues and look at what philosophers have done

with them over time. In all of this the focus should be on the method of thinking that aims to arrive at the best possible, if not perfect, answers, solutions and positions.

But perhaps some prefer the comforts of beliefs even of blind faith to the effort at reaching positions closer to the truth. For many this choice is a dilemma or choice has been story of Adam and Eve and again represented in the Matrix.

Dilemma: The Blue Pill or the Red Pill

In The Matrix Universe, an authorized member of a Zion crew offers a prospective human in the Matrix a choice of ingesting a red pill. Doing so activates a trace program that allows the crew to locate the human's body in the Matrix power plant. Once the person is found, commands are sent to the pod to awaken the person.

The prospective human offered the Red pills appear to have either seen "glitches" from the Matrix (e.g. a book continuously reappearing on a shelf, regardless of attempts to remove the book), or have such a nature and/or awareness as to question their life within the Matrix, and refuse to dismiss the strange events - basically those who have figured out the illusion of the Matrix.

According to the character Morpheus, exiting the Matrix can be traumatic, particularly to those who have lived in it for too long. As a rule, crews normally only offer the red pill to those no older than teenage. After that, the risk of denial and psychotic episodes from the reality of separation could increase. This rule was violated by Morpheus in rescuing Neo, who was approximately 30 years old.

VIEW: Video



The question is asking us whether reality, truth, knowledge are worth pursuing. The blue pill will leave us as we are, in a life consisting of simple belief and blind faith and unexamined habits with what we have been handed and memorize and hold as truth. The blue pill leaves us with the comfort of the many things we believe we will receive if we take part in the everyday world and do not examine much at all. We choose this pill if we believe that we do not need truth to live. The blue pill lets us keep our identities and our allegiances with family and friends undisturbed.

Read:

- [On the MATRIX](#)
- On being a blue pill slave
- Surveys indicate many people prefer the comfort of the world of the BLUE Pill Click [here](#) for a survey.

The Garden of Eden

The Blue Pill or the Red Pill question in the story of the Matrix echoes the old story from the Bible of the Western Religious traditions and the choice of the fruit from either the Tree of Knowledge or from the Tree of Belief in Everlasting Life in the Garden of Eden.

The “Tree of Knowledge” or the “Tree of Life” (see text below from Genesis).

In the middle of the Garden of Eden was the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Tree of knowledge was of knowledge desirable for gaining wisdom of all things and of good and evil. Genesis 3:5 “*For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*”

The “Tree of Life” was the tree of “Belief” and the comfort of believing that one will live forever. Those who chose the “Tree of Knowledge” were expelled from Eden and barred from getting back to the fruit of belief in everlasting life by “a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.” Genesis, 3:21.

The purpose for offering this reference to Genesis is to raise the comparison of the choices being given: Knowledge and Belief. There is no intent here to suggest that Knowledge is morally incorrect or evil or sinful. The contrast is offered as between an approach to life based on faith motivated by a hope of some positive consequence or result such as everlasting life versus an approach to life guided by knowledge. Some may criticize either choice as being in some way incorrect or offering the lesser of a life. Some may even characterize one choice as being morally incorrect. Such criticism is avoided here as not relevant. The choices are presented here as relevant to what Philosophy is about.

Philosophy: The Blue Pill or the Red Pill?

The Red Pill is the path of philosophy and reasoning and critical thinking and science and testing. The Blue Pill is that of simple and uncritical belief and emotional decision making. Which shall it be? Education and the Liberal Arts and Sciences are about the Red Pill.

One of the core themes of The Matrix is the concept that if you want to transform your world, you must first identify how you have been programmed, decide whether the programming is accurate, then decide whether to reprogram yourself. Your ideas will be challenged in a Philosophy class and in many other classes. How will you respond to the challenge that education poses to your beliefs ... to your blue pill world?

You already should be aware that things are not always as they appear to be or as we are led to believe. Think of one such thing in your life. This should open up to the possibility that not all beliefs that we hold to be true are actually true and that it might be of some value to question beliefs and to examine them to determine which beliefs have more evidence and reason to support them and distinguish them from others with less support. Philosophy is a method for doing that examination concerning some of the most basic questions and issues human have ever confronted.

WARNING: The Dangers of the Blue Pill

Thinking that the Blue Pill is the way to go, it will provide you with comfort, security and stability and order will involve great costs to those that use that approach to life. It will imperil a society dominated by this type of uncritical thinking. It exposes those who use it to greater risks of infections and diseases as they will not use the latest scientific findings about the causes of illnesses and the spread of disease. It permits people to hold stereotypical and prejudicial notions of other peoples and to act on false claims. It supports racist and sexist ideas and practices and other forms of irrational discrimination and injustices based on uncritical beliefs. It subjects practitioners of the Blue Pill path to victimization by charlatans and hucksters and those that operate Ponzi schemes based on irrational hope. The Blue Pill path is attractive to those with concern for self over others and for the present over the long term but it too often proves to be quite the opposite of what was hoped for when choosing the Blue Pill.

Belief and Doubt

Belief and Doubt are opposing psychological states. They cannot exist with regard to the same idea at the same time. Philosophy rests on a Process of Inquiry using the dialectical method for thought. Inquiry is a process the mind can enter into to get from doubt to belief. For the method and the frame of mind of Philosophy whatever position is arrived at should be subject to continuing process of inquiry and examination. You cannot doubt your doubts. You can subject doubt to inquiry in order to resolve it one way or another and arrive at a belief. You can doubt or question a belief and subject it to critical examination. You cannot believe a doubt. You simply doubt.

So, Philosophy is about thinking about beliefs and settling on a belief using reasoning and evidence wherever possible. It is also about continuing the process of review of beliefs or positions taken using the continuing dialectical method in the midst of a community of inquirers that serve to reinforce the critical element in careful thinking...

READ

Genesis 3: The Story of Adam and Eve

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens-

5 and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth [b] and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth [c] and there was no man to work the ground,

6 but streams [d] came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground-

7 the LORD God formed the man [e] from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.

9 And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.

11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold.

12 (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin [f] and onyx are also there.)

13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. [g]

14 The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;

17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam [h] no suitable helper was found.

21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs [i] and closed up the place with flesh.

22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib [j] he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

she shall be called 'woman, [k] '

for she was taken out of man."

24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame

Genesis 3: The Fall of Man

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,

3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "

4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,
"Cursed are you above all the livestock
and all the wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.

15 And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring [a] and hers;
he will crush [b] your head,
and you will strike his heel."

16 To the woman he said,
"I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;
with pain you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you."

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'
"Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat of it
all the days of your life.

18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return."

20 Adam [c] named his wife Eve, [d] because she would become the mother of all the living.

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

22 And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." 23 So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

Philosophy Application



1. If you were faced with the Red or Blue pill choice which would you take and why? Be specific.
2. When facing a difficult decision, as suggested by the footprints and arrows, what process do you use to make your choice? Be honest and describe how you work thru to a solution/choice.
3. Compare and contrast the Biblical account of the choice between Tree of Knowledge vs the Tree of Life and The Matrix red vs blue pill. Be specific and account for what differences were brought about by advances in civilization.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: The Greeks- Origins of Western Philosophy

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2.1: Philosophical Origins in Greek History, Theater, and Culture

Greek Culture and History



Figure 2.1.1: Copy and Paste Caption here. (Copyright; author via source)

The Greeks wanted a good life. The question then, as well as now, is how to know what the good life is? How does one recognize the good life? The "good" itself? How does one gain the knowledge needed to pursue the good life and distinguish it from another that is less good or even not good but appearing as good for those who are foolish, impetuous and ignorant, lacking in wisdom?

The Greeks at the time of Socrates and Plato were undergoing a major change in the way in which they would think about the world, themselves and reality itself. Greek culture rose to great heights in the period from 525 BC to 350 BC, the period that brackets the lifespan of Socrates and Plato. In this period Athens, the Greek city-state, would rise to the height of its political and military powers and would come to represent the height of Greek cultural achievement as well. The Greeks during this time, and particularly in Athens, were moving from an oral to a literate culture and from a foundation of religious belief and mythology to another based upon the inventions and creations of artistic endeavor and rational thought.

The Greeks, prior to Plato, had a culture (the way a people learn to think, feel and act from the previous generation) that was transmitted orally. Few could read or write. There was little material to write upon. Papyrus from Egypt would be arriving and be popularized after Socrates' death. If the average Greek were to learn about anything it would need to be through hearing whatever it was spoken about. What they heard they made every effort to remember and then repeat. This pattern for transmitting information became a pattern for life itself. The tales of the gods and goddesses, the titans, heroes and heroines were placed in rhyme and meter to make it easier to remember. What they remembered of the tales they endeavored to repeat not only in the telling of the tales but also in their lives. The gods and goddesses supplied the examples, the paradigms, and the models for behavior. If the gods did it, it must be good and so I should do it as well: so went the thinking. When faced with a conflict or problem the Greeks had sought answers in the stories that they heard as they grew and which they believed were true and served as guides through life for each of them. By the time of Socrates there had grown a considerable amount of doubt about the stories. There was skepticism and outright denial as well.

The tales when examined often displayed a number of troublesome features including contradictions amongst the many stories and examples of divine beings acting in a morally outrageous manner, such as involving murder, patricide, matricide, rape, theft, lies etc... The playwrights were encouraging audiences to reflect upon the tales and consider the values and morality within them. Orators were distorting the tales for personal gain and some, such as Socrates, were examining the entire basis for the moral order.

The tales appear to describe a number of gods and goddesses who have each an assigned place in a general hierarchy. As the divine beings had an order, so too should the human community have an order. The question had arisen: upon what was the order to be based? Should it be based upon moira, fate or destiny, as with the gods or upon something else? The Greeks, as with most humans, hated chaos, disorder. As the gods enjoyed a cosmos, order, so too should humans have an order. The Greeks look for the order in the tales of the gods but by the time of Socrates that approach was no longer working.

Greek culture was mythopoetic, based upon myths and transmitted through poetry. These tales had an imaginative character and an emotional one as well. The myths proclaim a truth, which transcends reasoning. These myths try to bring about the truth that they

proclaim: the moral truths. The myths are a form of action or ritual behavior, which must proclaim and elaborate a poetic form of truth. The logic of the events, the order of causality, is anthropomorphic. If one asks "why" things are as they are, then the answer will be in the form of "who" is responsible or the agent behind the events. The function of these myths, as in most cultures, is to explain, unify, and order experience. The myths dispel chaos. They reveal a structure, order, coherence and meaning not otherwise evident.

The tales spoke of Zeus, Chronos, Poseidon, Hera, Athena and dozens of other divinities, each with a genealogy and an assigned place in the pantheon or general organization of the divine community. The divinities did not get along all that amicably. The tales told of terrible and violent conflicts. This is probably due to the coming together of the tales and divinities of two different peoples that became the Greeks of Plato's time. There were the original peoples of the land now called Greece and there were the Aryan invaders, the Ionians and Dorians. These peoples had different conceptions of the world and of the realm beyond it. The indigenous peoples were matriarchal with theriomorphic divinities. They tended to be pacific and agrarian. The Aryans, from Anatolia, were patriarchal with anthropomorphic deities. They were nomadic and belligerent. The tales of Homer and Hesiod contain an amalgamation of tales in which the deities (many female) are woven into the tales of the invading peoples in order to accommodate the belief systems of the indigenous peoples. For example, while Zeus is placed at the top of a hierarchy of deities, he has a wife, Hera, who is supposed to be by his side, but whom he regularly disrespects or insults. Hera is she who has no specific name; "she" or "her" the name for the highest female deity of the indigenous peoples. Athena, one of the highest of the native deities (the "th" indicates she was a deity of the indigenous peoples) is given a place very high in the order. Athena is reported to have been born or to have emerged directly from the head of Zeus, knowing no woman as mother. Athena, the protective deity of Athens, represents wisdom (what philosophers seek) and she also offers assistance to warriors. She takes on the form of an owl to bring information and advice to humans. (Owls are associated with wisdom in much of the western world to this day.)



The physical conflicts between the two peoples who merged into the Greeks is mirrored in the tales of the deities. Zeus takes several wives and has affairs, possibly to appease the indigenous peoples' beliefs in the high order of their female deities. The deities of the indigenous peoples are transformed, metamorphosed, into human-like beings with super-human qualities.

The tales organized under Homer and Hesiod were used by the people as an encyclopedia, as the foundation of the educational system. The tales were entertaining, containing stories of adventure. There was a great deal of sex and violence in them as well. They held the interest of generations of listeners and offered instruction on how to conduct war, raise children, administer assistance to the wounded, resolve family conflicts and much more. The tales, epic works, gave the Greeks a sense of history and their place in the general scheme of things. The myths provided a set of moral exemplars, which each Greek was to follow. Each Greek was to be the best that they could be, pursue virtue (arête), accept fate and prepare for the next life.

The vocabulary was not advanced and often the Greeks would think in terms of the stories and the characters in them rather than in the abstract. For example, if one were to call for justice the Greek would call upon the female deity who represented justice to come and settle the matter in some way. The figure of a robed woman with blindfold holding a scale in one arm, is the representation of the goddess whose actions are what the Greeks had thought of as Justice. Themis, the Divine Right or Divine Justice and Dike, human Justice, were the deities whose actions constituted the Greek idea of the Right or Justice. It is in Socrates' time that the Greeks are seeking an answer without recourse to those stories and without the picture-thinking methodology of the mythopoetic culture, which was rapidly waning.

The Greeks at the time of Socrates and Plato had experienced a criticism of the tales and the morality of the gods in their dramas performed in public amphitheaters. There was a raising of questions concerning the moral foundation that was disturbing the order. Chaos was threatening. There was a noticeable breakdown of traditions. There was a decline in respect for both the tradition and the laws. The Greeks were familiar with speculation about the nature of the universe that did not involve the deities. They had experienced a development in technology that afforded a much higher quality of life than known by their ancestors. Through trade, travel and warfare they had come to know of other peoples, their history and cultures; their belief systems and values. The Greeks were undergoing a shift in their worldviews and along with that a change in their values, their ethical orientation and conceptual

frameworks. In these ways the Greeks of 400 B.C. are like the peoples of advanced technological societies today in a post-modern era.

The key question for humans was and is: how to live a "good" life? Before 500 BC the Greeks answered that by thinking that the way was to follow the gods and to accept moira. After 400 BC the answer was not so clear at all. What had happened? This is something worth examining for what it may offer those in our time. Before 1800 the answer to the question in the West had been to obey God's commandments and accept God's will. Today that answer does not appear to be the actual approach in practice. There does not appear to be any commonly accepted answer to the question. In a post-modern age the general respect for the laws of God, the truth of science, the traditions of our ancestors all seems in doubt. Ideas of an objective truth and single standard for justice are regularly derided in discussions of the judicial system. Ideas of relative truths and morality are very popular.

The Greeks were clustered due to conditions of geography and geopolitics. They lived in city-states, polii. (The term "politics" comes from this condition.) They often quarreled and went to war with one another. The various city-states were organized under different forms of government. There were several: tyranny, military dictatorship, Oligarchy, Autocratic, Aristocracy and Democracy. These forms might change over time. Indeed, in Athens prior to Plato the Athenians had experienced several transitions; arriving at a form of democracy that would put Socrates to death and motivate Plato to become a philosopher and write about an ideal polis or state in his work, the Republic. The Greeks preferred any form of government and thus order to chaos or disorder as would be present with tyranny (no rule of law or constitution).

Athens had defeated great city-states and foreign empires in several wars; sea war in particular. Athens enjoyed a great prosperity as a result that brought many public works, theaters, temples, buildings, water works, streets, commerce, festivals, foreign "teachers" or speakers. Athens represented an open city and a way of life that was open to ideas, foreigners, trade etc.. Athens principle threat at the time of Socrates death was Sparta. If Athens represented the way of adventure, Sparta represented the way of safety. In the quest after cosmos over chaos, Sparta had become an oligarchic state with a strict disciplinary code and a great deal of uniformity. Sparta had a totalitarian government. Athens created a democracy. Just prior to Socrates trial and death, Sparta defeats Athens in battle and imposes a rule by thirty young men who would become the tyranny that would be overthrown an democracy put in its place. Socrates lived and died in Athens. He embodied much of its spirit. He was open minded and questioned all. His life in pursuit of the "good" was also one of intellectual adventure. The chaos that threatened Athens in 399 BC was associated with the openness of the preceding years. In an attempt to restore an order, to fashion a cosmos again, Socrates appears as a threat to the rulers of Athens and that threat must be removed. In the lives of many humans there often come moments when a choice must be made between the path of adventure versus that of safety. Athens and Sparta represented those paths.

The Greeks were moving from pre-history and the mythic time to history. They recorded events and preserved them and transmitted them. The Greeks were moving from the mythic mode of thought as well. Instead of accepting and repeating the tales they were starting to reflect upon them, to examine them closely and even to question, doubt and disbelieve. A clear indication of the process of rational reflection upon the mythic epics is given in the works of the playwrights. This is the material of the next section.

For more information see [The Greeks; Crucible of Civilization on PBS](#)

Greek Theater

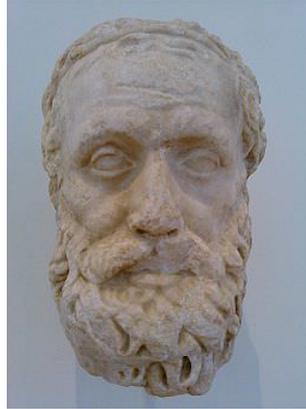
Throughout the year there were public performances of plays in all the Greek city-states. There were festivals that would last for several days and plays would be performed. Families would attend with children and servants. They would bring food. If the play met with disfavor the audience would shower the stage with food to drive the actors off the stage. Often prizes were awarded for the best play of the festival. Afterwards there would be a party for the winner. It was not too dissimilar to the parties after the Emmy Awards or the Oscars or Tony's.

The large amphitheaters would hold from 10 to 20,000 people. Almost an entire town would fill the theater to watch and listen to the plays. The acoustics are still to this day, amid the ruins, simply amazing. All those in the theater could hear the actors on stage. Assisting in the seeing of the action and the emotion of those on stage were large masks held before the faces of the actors; one mask with a smile representing joy the other with a frown for sorrow. These masks were the persona (or personalities) of the actors made more visible for the audience to see.

The following playwrights will be discussed in brief to permit an understanding of the type of thought being promoted by these artistic works. For more information see:

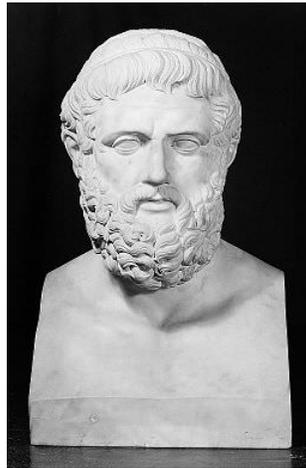
[Greek Theatre History and Archeology and Architecture Listing](#)

Aeschylus



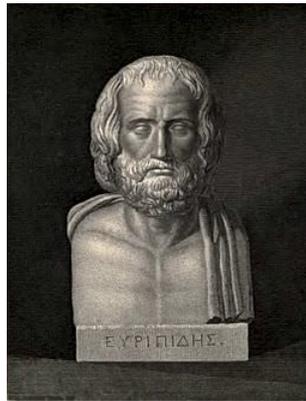
His plays appear to focus upon justifying the way of the gods to humans according to human notions of justice. He attempts to promote harmony and cooperation. In his plays he demonstrates how violence begets violence begets more violence until reason enters to settle the discord. He demonstrates that the principles which govern the gods are above those of humans. He favored the civilized life in which reason prevails over violence. He encourages humans to avoid the sin of pride (hubris) and be mindful of the proper place for everyone. He indicates that the state is the champion of justice and it promotes reasoned reconciliation.

Sophocles



Sophocles tragedies are concerned with the fate of human heroes. He accepts the principles of the gods but focuses on the human response to the actions of the gods. The hero is a human who has an extraordinary career, which pushes back the horizons of what is possible for a human. The hero is not a flawless character but a virtuous character. Sophocles acknowledges the power of the gods but he does not assume that their standards are the same for humans. The human hero takes responsibility for the action of the human. Oedipus could easily claim that he did not know that the man that he killed was his father and neither did he know that the woman who was the mother of his children was also his mother. Oedipus could have claimed it was all a matter of fate, the work of the gods. He could have offered excuses and "copped a plea". Instead, Oedipus takes responsibility for what he has done and acknowledging the horror of it all, he plucks out his eyes and abandons the palace and his kingship.

Euripides



While Euripides appears to have won fewer prizes in his lifetime than others, more of his plays survive to this day and are enacted in the principle cities of the Western world every year. His tragedies are very dark. They challenged the audience to radically reconsider some of their most cherished notions. He reduced the heroes to the level of the contemporary. He demonstrates that gods who do evil deeds are not to be considered as gods! Euripides encouraged his audience to criticize antiquated conventions and the restraints of the social order- a human made order.

Euripides' work promotes a psychological understanding or perception of events. The plays move from darkness to light. He promotes a questioning of the gods, often displaying their actions in a fashion so that they appear ludicrous or at least questionable. He illustrates how the gods whatever they may do are not responsible for human motivation. His human personages are seen struggling simply to survive in some tolerable manner. Euripides illustrates how human laws deny basic human rights to women, bastards, foreigners and slaves. His plays show the consequences of accepting those laws without question. He illustrates how the heroic deeds of the legends look when carried out by contemporary humans. Euripides discredits belief in the gods that promotes horrors. In his play *Medea*, he shows a horrible act of a mother killing her children in the light of unjust and inhumane conventions that drove her to such a horrible act. In the *Trojan Women* he shows the Athenians how their victory over the Trojans looked to the women and children of Troy who were raped and killed. The Greeks were made to think by Euripedes' works, to think and to question.

Aristophanes



Aristophanes was a comic playwright. He was a conservative minded artist. He liked to poke fun at man and his foibles. He delivered hilarious indictments concerning the politics, morality, law, economic theories and educational practices of his time.

His plays are an example of old comedy: burlesque, farce, comic opera, pantomime. It was fun with a serious intent to it.

In one play the *Lysistrata*, the men of a Greek city-state are off at war. The women are lamenting their fate as they await news of the war and learning whether their husbands and sons are still alive or not. The women do not like their station in life, the folly of war and the devaluation in the eyes of men. They are aware that the men appear to have only one interest in them. They use this as part of a scheme. The women send word to the front lines that no woman of the polis will have sex with the men while there is still a war going on. When word of this strike reaches the men at war not much times goes by before they have settled the matter and are at peace again. This play was greeted with much laughter by the audience for several reasons. It was Aristophanes way to condemn both the impatience to go to war and the narrow interest that men appear to have had in women.

In another of his plays, the *Clouds*, Aristophanes is poking fun at the Sophists. These public speakers, debaters, lawyers and educators were respected, feared and despised by many. The Sophists were destroying respect for the traditions, including the family. They taught a form of skepticism, atheism, cynicism and relativism that was undermining the foundations of the moral and social order. They did have tremendous skills as orators. It is connection with Socrates that this play becomes very important. Aristophanes play *The Clouds* was first produced in the drama festival in Athens—the City Dionysia—in 423 B.C., where it placed third. In this play, the author, a friend of Socrates, uses his name in a comedy that criticizes the Sophists. Many who see the play do not realize that the character named “Socrates” in the play did not depict the actual thinking of Socrates. It was burlesque and farce; an exaggerated comic depiction. For additional information on this playwright:

On Satire in Aristophanes's *The Clouds* a lecture by Ian Johnston

Aristophanes and Socrates were well known to one another. They were friends of a sort. They dined together as reported in the *Symposium* of Plato and Zenophanes. It was in the manner of a Friar's Club Roast where the host of honor is lampooned and kidded by his friends that Aristophanes thought that he would poke a little fun at Socrates. Aristophanes used the name of Socrates for one of the characters in his play. He made him the head of a school. It was a school of sophistry, something that in real life Socrates not only would have no part of but also would criticize. In the play the character Socrates spends his time suspended in air above the stage looking heavenward in contemplation of the clouds and the heavens and divine nature of things. Because of this association with the Sophistry, many who saw the play but who had never met Socrates or who had not learned of his actual works, his questioning and questing after virtue and wisdom, these people would mistakenly associate Socrates with being a Sophist and thus the animus born toward the Sophists was directed to Socrates. Some of the jurors at the trial of Socrates were probably in that group who knew of Socrates only indirectly and through the play. People today born after the events depicted in an Oliver Stone film might take the film to be an actual depiction of the events as they did occur. Those who were alive and experienced those events now that this is not the case.

In the *Clouds*, Aristophanes satirizes the intelligentsia of his day and decries the new educational programs of the Sophists. The play opens with a father confronted by his son who is begging for more money to pay off gambling debts. The father is a well-to-do businessman who wanted his son to assist him in business instead of going off entertaining himself and gambling. The father agrees to pay off the debt one last time if the son will agree to make something of his life, go off to school and learn how to assist his father in the business. The son must agree as the debtors are threatening. The father takes his son into town where he knocks on a door and enters a "school" where his son will be taught how to speak well so that he can conduct business, take up legal matters in a court and become educated. In the school the actor named Socrates appears above the stage engaged in reflections upon heavenly matters. The son is given a course in oratory, rhetoric and sophistry. The son returns home to meet his father. The father greets his son and expects him now to assist the father. The son, using his new speaking skills, attempts to convince the father that the father should turn over his business to his son in payment for what the father owes the son. The father is most distressed by this and expresses his concern about how his wife will receive this news of their son's attitude. Upon hearing this, the son proceeds to say insulting things about his mother which the father becomes enraged upon hearing. So enraged in fact, that the father drives the son away and then proceeds into town where he burns the school down. The audiences who feared the Sophists enjoyed seeing them made fun of and receive their just deserts at the hands of the father. Unfortunately, while entertaining to the general public Aristophanes, unwittingly contributed to the negative assessment some had of Socrates.

In the Greek theater there was a considerable amount of thinking going on. The dramatists and comedians were encouraging their audiences to consider and reconsider their accepted truths, their traditions and their laws, customs and values. It was not only on the stages that encouragement was given for thought. The Sophists were at work with their questioning process as well.

Philosophical Application



Discussion Questions

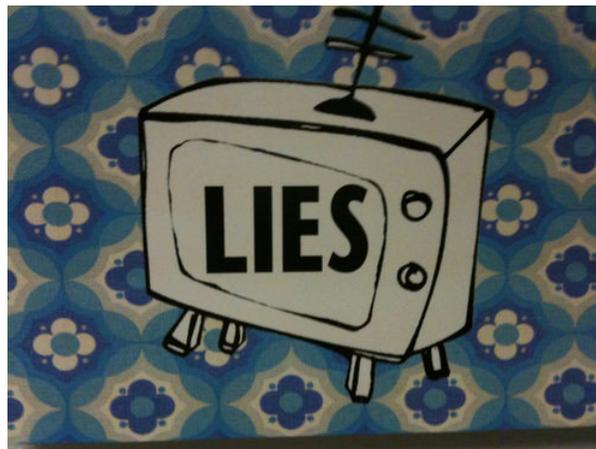
1. Identify the social conditions and cultural upheavals that were going on in Athens in the time of Socrates and Plato, from 440 to 370 B.C.
2. What conditions from above can you identify as similar today?

3. Compare and contrast at least 2 of the situations you identified.
4. For example, do you think that there is a decline in belief in god and the influence of religion over our lives? If so, where do you think people are getting the foundation for their morality?
5. Are there other ways in which the USA or the world today is similar to Athens in 399 BC?

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2.2: The Sophists

The Sophists Overview



The Sophists were orators, public speakers, mouths for hire in an oral culture. They were gifted with speech. They were skilled in what becomes known as Rhetoric. They were respected, feared and hated. They had a gift and used it in a manner that aroused the ire of many. They challenged, questioned and did not care to arrive at the very best answers. They cared about winning public speaking contests, debates, and lawsuits and in charging fees to teach others how to do as they did. To be able to speak well meant a great deal at that time. As there was no real paper available, there were no written contracts or deeds and disputes that would be settled today with a set of documents as evidence back then they would need to be settled through a contest of words: one person's words against another's. Whoever presented the best oral case would often prevail. To speak well was very important. The Sophists were very good speakers. Indeed, they had reputations for being able to convince a crowd that up was down, that day was night, that the wrong answer could be the right answer, that good was bad and bad is good, even that injustice is justice and justice would be made to appear as injustice.

To support one's position in any matter, nothing better could be offered than a quotation from one of the works, which told of the gods and their actions. If an action of the gods could be found that was similar to that being taken by a party to a debate then that was evidence of the correctness of that action. Therefore, those who were the fastest and most accurate at being able to locate quotations and take them and apply them to a given situation would often win the debate, the contest, the lawsuit or discussion. The Sophists were very well versed in the epic tales and poems. They were able to find the most appropriate quotation to support any position. They regularly entered contests and those who won were given prizes, but no prize was greater than being the victor and able to charge the highest rates of tuition to instruct the sons of the wealthy in how to speak in public. This skill was needed to defend oneself against lawsuits even against the most frivolous of lawsuits brought by one who thought himself to be the better speaker.

The Sophists taught courses that might have been labeled with such current phrasings as:

- How to win no matter how bad your case is.
- How to win friends and influence people
- How to succeed in business without really trying
- How to fall into a pigsty and come out smelling like a rose.
- How to succeed in life.
- How to play to win

The Sophists held no values other than winning and succeeding. They were not true believers in the myths of the Greeks but would use references and quotations from the tales for their own purposes. They were secular atheists, relativists and cynical about religious beliefs and all traditions. They believed and taught that "might makes right". They were pragmatists trusting in whatever works to bring about the desired end at whatever the cost. They made a business of their own form of education as developing skills in rhetoric and profited from it.

Their concerns were not with truth but with practical knowledge. They practiced rhetoric in order to persuade and not to discover truth. Their art was to persuade the crowd and not to convince people of the truth. They moved thought from cosmology and

cosmogony and theogony, stories of the gods and the universe, to a concern for humanity. Their focus was human civilization and human customs. Their theater was the ethical and political problems of immediate concern for humans. They put the individual human being at the center of all thought and value. They did not hold for any universals; not universal truths nor universal values. They sought and took payment for their lessons at speaking (and writing).

Here are some excerpts:

- **Protagoras:** Man is the measure of all things, There is relative truth only, Everyone has his won truth
- **Gorgias:** nothing exists, If something does exist we cannot know it, even if we can know it we cannot communicate it
- **Callicles:** Might is right and accident and not fate nor the gods nor destiny makes might
- **Thrasymachus:** Might makes right

The Sophists challenged and criticized and destroyed the foundations of traditions and the moral and social order and they put nothing in its place nor did they care to. While Socrates looked for objective and eternal truths the Sophists were promoting ideas of relativism and subjectivism, wherein each person decides for him or herself what the true and the good and the beautiful are. This appealed to the mob, the crowds, the unthinking horde but it is not an approach that serves as the foundation for a common life. Conflicts are resolved through the use of power. The Sophist held that might makes right. Society's demand for wisdom required more than what the Sophists offered. Socrates attempted another approach and in part due to the Sophists lost his life in his quest. Plato would be inspired by Socrates to take up the challenge and find answers to the questions that were most basic and most in need of answering in the quest after wisdom and the good.

The Sophists and Socrates



Socrates could debate with Sophists and do quite well. Socrates was skilled in the art of reasoning. In his exchanges with the Sophists, Socrates developed his ability to think using a dialectical process. This methodology would be not only an important part of his legacy to Plato but to Western thought as well. There were other influences on both Socrates and Plato.

"The poets were not the only target of Plato's attack. The sophists were criticized mercilessly by Socrates. These wandering teachers were the successors of the rhapsodes. Recently discovered fragments from the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. prove that they were also heirs of the tradition started by the poet Simonides (556 - 468 B.C.E.).[1] These few surviving documents have allowed scholars to trace the line of descent from poet to rhapsode to sophist as part of the transition from oral tradition to written record. When material from more than one source was put together, interpreters were needed to translate anachronistic expressions and foreign words.[2] As the epics came to be preserved in written collections, a group of rhapsodes became interpreters as well as presenters of poetry. Some of the earliest prose consists of their efforts to explain the meaning of traditional names and phrases in the old theogonies. Glosses, along with explanations of Homeric proper names and obscure words by "etymology," were developed, collected and transmitted by the rhapsodes. [3] Over time, they began to offer instruction in the interpretation of poetry, in the use of letters, as well as in the classifications and definitions laid down by their predecessors. They also taught techniques of oral presentation and public speaking in addition to the use of an "art of memory," which was said to have been invented by Simonides.[4] At some point, the most prominent of their number became known as teachers of wisdom. The early sophists wandered all over the Greek-speaking world. Later, they converged on Athens, the leading democratic city-state, where they could establish themselves as professional educators and gather their best students around them. A number of Plato's dialogues bear the names of the major sophists in the tradition - Gorgias, Protagoras, Critias and Hippias.

Socrates and Plato would criticize the Sophists for leading people away from the truth by calling up memorized passages and having the memory activated instead of reason. They would appeal to images and emotions rather than to reason. Socrates and Plato would use and advocate for the use of the dialectical process of inquiry over memorization and repetition and emotional appeals to persuade the crowds.

Both Socrates and Plato would find much of value in the speculative thought processes of those who took up another set of questions entirely. There were those who wondered at the universe itself. They questioned its composition and origins. It is to these naturalists or physicalists, these metaphysicians that we next turn. In the next section we shall learn about the group of thinkers who are collectively known as, the Pre-Socratics.

Read

- [Sophists](#)
- [Modern Sophists](#)

Philosophy Applications



In one of the Sophists arguments Gorgias is defending Helen for her role in triggering the Trojan war. *Gorgias wasn't simply trying to get Helen acquitted in criminal court, he was trying to get people to see her as not entirely responsible for the issue.* Imagine you are charged with a similar defense of Hillary Clinton. As a PR consultant and a Sophist for Clinton (or whatever other social/political controversial person you wish to defend) you would face an uphill battle due to the controversy surrounding her. How would you defend Clinton in the court of public opinion? What would you need to be able to say or do in our modern, culture to convince the American public to forgive Clinton?

This must be written in the form a tweet but should not be more than 4 tweets total. (a tweet consists of no more than 150 characters)

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2.3: Pre-Socratics and Socrates

Pre-Socratics

The underlying assumptions of the early philosophers, the early scientists of Greek culture were:

- There is an intelligible coherence in the phenomenal world
- The universe is an intelligible whole
- There is an order, a cosmos, that underlies the chaos of our perceptions and that
- The Order of the universe is comprehensible to reason

In the works of the pre-socratics there is obviously the progression from mythopoetic thought to a primitive scientific thinking in the form of speculative inquiry and from that form of thought to philosophy as rational inquiry. These thinker were searching for the *arche* or the very first or most fundamental principles or causes. They wondered about the immanent and lasting ground for existence. They were critical of the cosmogony they had in the mythopoetic tales. They were looking for a cosmology (an explanation for the order of the universe) that did not rely on the gods.They did not base their thinking on belief but on reason.

These thinkers were naturalists and materialists as they sought answers to physical questions that were rooted in the physical itself. They were looking for the stuff out of which the universe was composed and they wanted an answer that was itself made of the same stuff. The matter of the universe would have its explanation in matter. They were, for the most part, materialists, rejecting spiritual or religious explanations for the causes and stuff of the universe.

Introduction to the Presocratics



Thales

Thales was looking for the basic stuff (physis) out of which all else is made. He expressed his idea concerning the basic stuff in his claim that “All things are made of water” Now at first you might think that his idea is pretty silly and definitely wrong, however, that would be the wrong approach. What do you suppose was meant by that claim? Thales was attempting to express an idea at a time when his language was not developed to the point where he could express an abstraction. We are accustomed to thinking in abstraction and we are that way in part because we have a language with many words that are linked with abstractions. The Greeks at this time did not have that to work with. For example, if someone wanted to call for justice, they would call upon the goddess who in their tales represented what today we consider in the abstract as justice. So instead of saying” I want justice” or “Give me justice” they might say something of this sort ”May the goddess Themis settle this by sending us a sign”

Thales claim is most likely the claim that there is “Unity in Difference” In other words, Thales was attempting to claim that there was some basic stuff out of which all things are made. He selects water perhaps because it has properties which enable all the people of his time and our time to experience water in three different states: Liquid, solid and gas. Now if one thing such as water can exist in three very different forms then there must be something , like water, that is the basic stuff, physics, of the universe. Today, scientists make a similar claim. All reality, all that exists in the universe is made of or composed of or manifests as: energy. So from Thales comes the idea that no matter how things may appear, all things are made up of the same stuff: Everything is one thing!

Anaximander: (ca. 612-545 BC)

Anaximander rejected Thales basic stuff, water, and speculated that the ultimate reality could not be identified with any one particular element. He came up with the basic stuff being the boundaries or the infinite or the unlimited. This basic stuff was infinite and without a beginning. He also conceived of the theory of species evolving from one another through time in response to the need to adapt. He thought of the earth as revolving. He speculated that all life originated in the sea and moved onto the land. With this thinker abstraction and materialism developed further.

Anaximenes (585-528 BC)

Anaximenes hypothesized that it was not water but AIR that was the fundamental stuff of the universe and that air can be condensed or rarefied to take on the properties of what appear to be other elements. He sought to simplify and clarify the model of the universe.

Anaxagoras (500-428 BC)

Anaxagoras appears to have taught that all that is can be explained with a combination of nous and matter. For him the universe of matter was set into its form and motions by Nous or mind. This mind is immortal, homogeneous, omnipotent, omniscient and orders all phenomena. He did not believe in gods and goddesses. He did not think that the sun was a god and the moon a goddess. He thought the sun was a ball of fire and the moon a rock which reflected light from the sun. He was to be executed for blasphemy by the Athenians but escaped to another land. Socrates was interested in his theories until Socrates learned that for Anaxagoras the nous acted at the beginning of the universe, setting all in motion, and was not invoked by Anaxagoras to explain motions including those of humans. Socrates was to focus on the actions of humans and believed that their minds had a great deal to do with their actions.

[Introduction to Thales, Anaximenes, and Anaximander](#)



Empedocles (450 BC)



Empedocles conjectured that there are four basic elements: *Earth, Air, Fire* and *Water*. They were moved about by the two basic forces: *Love* and *Strife*. Together these ideas explained everything that was physical.

Leucippus (450 BC) and Democritus (460-370 BC)

These men believed that there were an infinite number of ever moving atoms (indivisible-not separable) that composed all that is. Each was imperceptible. The atoms exist in a void. They move and interact through necessity and chance.

Pythagoras (580-496 BC)

Pythagoras not only quests after the basic stuff of the universe but his works reveal that he explored truth itself and the idea of the good life; questions of ethics. He was concerned with the nature of reality and of life. He developed spiritualism in contrast to the materialist schools of his time. He was a mathematician, spiritualist, mystic, musician and leader of a cult. His fundamental contribution to the world of thought was that the world is really not material at all but made up of numbers. Numbers are things and in some way constitute the essence of reality. All things are, despite appearances, made up of numbers. The original number, the one, being as with fire, is in motion and set all else into being. He was inspired in this mode of thought by his observations. The sound made by a string pulled tight and picked will vary with its length. So he thought the amount of a thing leads to its properties and its very being. His is a naturalistic explanation. How far off is it from contemporary science which instructs us that all things are made up of energy and take on different properties depending on the amount of energy. Consider that the difference between hydrogen and oxygen is the number of protons in the nucleus of the atoms of each.

The more important contribution made by Pythagoras was in his thinking that is to be in what is reached by REASON over and against what is given to the senses. Truth is reached through reasoning. Reasoning reveals that mathematics is in all things. Numbers relate to shapes and all that exist has or takes on shape. The individual who develops reason is on the correct path for the truth and the path to realize the proper destiny for the reasoning soul. Reason is the source of the world itself. Pythagoras taught that people should surrender to their higher self, the soul, the reasoner. It is the reasoning part of the person that can contact reason itself, the *logos*, or universal reason that generates the universe. The reasoning principle is in all things. For Pythagoras that principle, god, is the hidden measure in all that is real.

Heraclitus (535-475 BC)



Heraclitus believed that all things are in perpetual flux. *Becoming* is the basis for all that is real. *Being* is unreal. All is changing. Permanence is an illusion. All things are one and one-in-many. That which is the essence of all is FIRE. The logos is the universal principle of reason through which there is a law like process in the universe that provides its existence and order.

Parmenides (540-470 BC)



Parmenides taught that all that is has always been and always will be. Reality is that which never changes. Reality is *being* and not becoming. Changelessness is the nature of all reality. This is not obvious to our senses. Parmenides trusted in his reason over his senses. The appearance of things can be deceiving, so trust in reason. All change is illusion for Parmenides. Change cannot be real. The truth is what is arrived at by thought and the truth is set over and against opinions based upon sense impressions and common beliefs. The REAL is changeless.

He arrives at his ideas through a process of reasoning. Consider the following:

- If something exists, it must come from something.
- Something can not come from nothing. If there ever were nothing, there would need to be nothing forever.
- Something can not come from nothing.
- There is something now.
- The something from which the present something comes must always have been.
- There must always have been something, because something can not come from nothing.
- So that which is has always been and will always be.
- Change is an illusion.
- Permanence is real.
- All is one, permanent and at rest.

Being never comes into existence, nor does it cease to be. Being always is. It cannot be added to or divided. It is whole and complete in itself, one. It is unmoved and unchangeable. Being is. Being does not become. Becoming is not. Becoming is unreal. Being is and is self-identical and uncaused.

Absolute Idealism

So with Parmenides Philosophy comes to trust in reason over the senses. His thought liberates reason from the senses. There is in his work the recognition of the autonomy of thought and the use of independent criteria for judging thought; namely, coherency & consistency over probability.

Philosophy is born in the recognition of the importance of abstract general principles. Philosophy develops as a rigorous process of inquiry involving insights and deductive reasoning. In Philosophy the human mind comes to recognize its own creation.

Further Readings:

- [Xenophones](#)
- [Xenophon](#)
- [Zeno's Paradoxes](#)
- [Diogenes of Appolonia](#)
- [Hellenistic Philosophy](#)
- [Thales](#)
- [Anaximander](#)
- [Anaximenes](#)
- [Anaxagoras](#)

- [Empedocles](#)
- [Leucippes](#)
- [Pythagoras](#)
- [Heraclitus](#)
- [Parmenides](#)
- Classic Persuasion: [Greek Philosophy Links](#)

Socrates

We now will now turn to look at the life and thought of Socrates. It was he who developed the philosophical process of thought and who focused on matters of great concern to humans. He was concerned with the question: How do I live a Good Life? He was concerned with questions of knowledge, truth, beauty and Goodness. He was executed for his beliefs and virtues. An interesting story and a life that produced such a great impact on the world that it is true to say that what Socrates did changed the world. If Socrates had not lived as he did you and I would not be as we are today. In fact we probably would not exist at all. Socrates led to Plato who led to Aristotle who together produced an impact on how people in the West thought about life and the world and reality and ethics. The ideas for which they provided the foundation and methodology led to movements and actions and creation of institutions that shaped the history of the world.

Socrates spent most of his life speaking with his fellow Athenians and anyone else who wished to speak with him. He spoke about matters of great importance to him, he sought after answers to important questions. He was not a Sophist as he never charged anyone for any lessons concerning anything. He did not claim to know the answers. He did not attempt to win contests with prizes. He was seriously interested in learning about truth, beauty, goodness and virtue. He entered the public spaces of Athens each day to speak with and question his fellows and pursue after wisdom to know the difference between what he knew and what he did not know.

Socrates seeks after the wise to learn what their wisdom is and how one could acquire it. He questions those who claim to have knowledge. In the *Ion* Socrates is questioning someone who has won a prize for public speaking (recitation and who thinks that because he has memorized some lines on a subject that he really understands what it is all about. Socrates questions show that he doesn't.

Socrates left the town limits of Athens only three times in his entire life. All three times was as a soldier to defend Athens! Socrates acts heroically. Alcibiades is a handsome young man and great warrior, a soldier of fortune, who enjoys himself a great deal.

Euthyphro

On his way to the trial Socrates comes across a young man named, Euthyphro, who is returning from the courthouse. Socrates learns that he is returning from posting charges against someone and so Socrates inquires as to the defendant. He is shocked to learn that the young man has brought charges against his own father! Socrates inquires as to why he is doing this and does he think that he is correct in doing so. The young man informs him that he has charged his father with murder for allowing a servant who killed another servant to die while tied up awaiting for the authorities to arrive to arrest him.

Socrates asks the young man why he thinks it is a good thing to bring charges against his own father. The young man replies that it is the pious thing to do. Socrates asks him if he knows what piety is. Euthyphro responds by saying that he believes that piety is to please the gods. Socrates asks how we know how to do that and Euthyphro responds that to do as the gods do is to please them. He cites passages from the epic tales that describe a god taking actions against his own father and provides this as a justification for doing what he is doing. Socrates presses on with his questions. For Socrates this is a most important matter. Socrates is attempting to learn how one knows what is good. How do you know what the right thing to do would be. It must be good. We all want to do good. We want good answers, good friends, and a good life. So how do you know what is good. Euthyphro thinks he knows what is the good. It is whatever is pleasing to the gods. The gods are the standard for goodness. Now Socrates has a major problem with this approach. There are problems with it. Socrates asks Euthyphro the key questions. Which gods are we to please. Not all the gods agree. The stories report that they war among themselves. So what is pleasing to one may be displeasing to another. There were stories of gods respecting their parents and stories of the gods killing their own parents. Likewise there were stories of the gods killing their own children, committing murder, lying, raping and every other horrible act.

So what is the basis for the good. Here is the question that set Socrates apart from all others of his day. A question that sets Philosophy apart from religion and a question that Socrates could not answer. He died without an answer. Plato devised an answer but Socrates had not reached that point at his death.

Do we call those acts good because the gods do them or do the gods do them because they are good? Are acts good just because the gods do them and whatever a god does is good just because the god did it? Or, are certain acts good and that is why a god does it?

Euthyphro can't even understand the question and states that he must be going and thus ends the dialogue. Most people of Socrates time could not understand the importance of the question. If the gods do what they do because it is good then there would be a standard for goodness, which even the gods would answer to and it would exist apart from the gods to be held over them for the sake of judgment. But for the Greeks there was nothing above the gods. The theory that Euthyphro put forward is called the Divine Command Theory. Many people who believe in a single deity also hold for such a theory. Perhaps you think so too.

Consider This:

For those who believe in the One God of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic Tradition are the commandments of this God good because God commands them or is there a standard of Goodness which even God must follow? Do all rules come from God? Does everything come from God?

- Can God make a square circle?
- If God makes a universe with blue in it and with yellow in it can it exist without green in it?
- Can God make $2+3=$ something other than 5?

If God were to do something horrible would it make it good because God was doing it, say killing an entire town, killing nearly every living being on earth, including innocent beings, ordering a father to kill his son? These are all in the Bible. Are these good things?

- Are the laws and rules of the physical universe and mathematics rules that even God must follow?
- Do they exist above or before God?
- Where would they exist or come from?

Consider This:

You hear a story about a mother who has killed her own daughter. She claims she heard God order her to do so. This happens! Do you think that yes, she heard God say that and so it was good for her to kill her daughter or do you think that there is something wrong with that woman? Do you think she may be suffering from a chemical imbalance in her brain or some other ailment but that it can not be true that God told her to do it because God would not do such a thing, because it is wrong, even horrible and God just would not do evil things?

Well when people make judgments about what God would or wouldn't do, make judgments about actions as to whether or not they are "evil" acts they are thinking that there is a standard for goodness by which they will even judge God! Well, where does this standard come from? Where are the rules about what is Good? If they are from God, God can make them and God can change them.

Socrates and many other Greeks were making judgments about the stories of the gods. They knew that certain acts of the gods should be followed and others definitely avoided. Socrates was searching for a basis to affirm the existence of a moral standard or set of rules that even the gods are subject to. This is known as Ethics in Philosophy. Socrates was one of the very first humans to pursue the answer to the question, "What is the good?" using reason alone and not belief.

Socrates and Plato would use reasoning and commend others to do so in the pursuit of the good life, answers to the question "What is the good?" They moved away from memorizing and repeating as the path to a good life. The stories of the gods had too many contradictions in them and it became too difficult to believe in them. As many must eventually give up a belief in Santa Claus, so too did they need to give up their belief in the gods. But just as a belief in Santa Claus is comforting and brings physical gifts, belief in the gods was comforting for it provided a basis for a moral order. Once belief in the gods was removed, what would the Greeks put in its place? What would serve as the basis for the social and moral order? Socrates was searching for it at the time of his death. Plato thought he had found it. More on this later.

The Trial of Socrates

Socrates is just over 70 years of age at the time he is accused of a crime. He had never before been accused of anything wrong or criminal. He had served as a justice but never been a defendant. He was very well known. He was at least regarded as a great thinker, something of a scientist for his musings on the nature of the universe and as a moralist for all his talk about virtue. Who were his accusers and why did they charge him?

The accuser, Meletus, went to the town hall and presented the charge along with a requested penalty. The charge was impiety—disbelieving in the gods of the Athenians and corrupting the young, the penalty was death.

When the Democratic Party overthrew the tyrants, the “Thirty”, they needed to bring about a harmony within the polis. They declared an amnesty for any and all crimes that may have been committed during the previous few years that the tyrants had been inducing people into crimes in order to silence their criticisms and gain their support. No one was to mention anything that had occurred or any one’s relation to the thirty tyrants. Now the democratic order did not rest upon the leaders being noble born. It did not rest upon the power of the military. The Athenians had governments run by kings, military commanders and wealthy people. Now they were ruling themselves -- Democracy. They rested that form of government on the will of the people and their willingness to accept that whatever the majority wanted would be the correct thing to do. This democracy did not involve the voting of all Athenians. The voting in Athens included only: males, born of Athenian mothers, born free, and born legitimate, no bastards. Those men would vote on all matters and the majority would rule.

Socrates presented a threat to the Democratic Party and form of government. Socrates had for many years been asking questions and he kept asking questions hoping to get the correct, final and truthful answer. He asked a series of questions that were threatening to the political order because they focused directly on the basic principle underlying the democratic rule. The answers to the questions below were the same in 399 BC as they are today. Even today to push this issue would result in someone be criticized for being anti-democratic or anti-American! Socrates would ask questions such as:

Is there any guarantee that whenever a majority of the people votes on something declaring that it is true, that that vote makes it true ?

The answer was, NO, there is no such guarantee!

Is there any guarantee that whenever a majority of the people votes on something declaring that it is beautiful, that that vote makes it beautiful?

The answer was, NO, there is no such guarantee!

Is there any guarantee that whenever a majority of the people vote on something declaring that it is good, that that vote makes it good?

The answer was, NO, there is no such guarantee!

Is there any guarantee that whenever a majority of the people votes on something declaring that it is justice, that that vote makes it justice?

The answer was, NO, there is no such guarantee!

Now this was a threat to the system of government and Socrates was seen as a danger to the state, a clear and present danger, that needed to be dealt with and removed in a manner that would not injure the state. Socrates questioning was a threat to national security.

What was at stake here was a clash between the way of adventure that had characterized the history of Athens with its open door policy and the way of safety that had characterized the development of the state of Sparta with its rigid discipline and narrow range of variations permitted. Socrates was the past of Athens and now in a precarious condition, some Athenians wanted to make the state more secure and the questioning of the old man, Socrates, was threatening to the order and security of the people.

Socrates was not accused of crimes because of his association with the thirty young tyrants. Although several of the thirty had known Socrates and had listened to him, he did not encourage or teach them to be tyrants. In fact when they attempted to silence him for his criticisms of them he refused to arrest Leon of Salamis on their orders and he refused to observe their ban against teaching people to speak in public.

So, why was he indicted and why was he found guilty and sentenced to die? There are a number of factors that probably contributed to a sizable amount of public opinion being set against Socrates.

1. Socrates was seen as a dangerous intellectual innovator, on the order of Anaxagoras, who had been driven out of Athens.
2. Socrates speculated about the universe. He was practicing the “new science” and was suspected of atheistic tendencies.
3. Socrates did question people in a manner similar to the Sophists. He cross examined many who claimed to have knowledge or wisdom in the hope of gaining what they had. Socrates used the dialectical method of inquiry. He, unfortunately, showed that many people who claimed to know things actually did not. He embarrassed the poets, statesman, and artisans of his day. Many people thought of Socrates as they did the Sophists, although he was not one of them.

4. Socrates was indiscriminate in his associations. He would allow anyone to question him and observe him. He did not care who they were. Over time, foreigners, mathematicians, the young, the Thirty who later became tyrants, Sophists, politicians all would come to speak with Socrates. Many Athenians might have harbored suspicions or distrust of Socrates associates and wonder about Socrates' true plans or role in their actions.
5. Socrates questioning process was a threat to the democratic ideal, the foundation of the political and social order.

What was really on trial then were the social values to be found in the actions and inquiries of Socrates.

Both Plato and Xenophon report on the trial itself. There is no text indicating that Plato has distorted what occurred at the trial. The prosecutor presented his charges and then Socrates was given his chance to speak. He knew that he had until sundown of that day to present whatever he wanted to present. He has taken an oath, sworn to the gods, to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He has sworn an oath to accept the verdict of the jury and the penalty imposed by the jury. It is his desire to keep these oaths that will be his undoing. His desire to be faithful to his oaths make him say things that disturb many of the jurors and make him remain in prison to die when he could have left and gone into exile.

Socrates opening points out that it is his duty to speak the truth and it is the duty of the jury to provide for justice. Socrates will speak in his normal manner and he maintains that he is not a clever speaker (in the fashion of the Sophists). He is not accustomed to dealing with courts, as he has never been a defendant. He attempts to deal with the two sets of charges. He fears that the rumors concerning him are more damaging than the charges. He can't deal with them, as he would want because the charges are not made specific. He thinks he is there due to the suspicions surrounding him that he is involved in strange investigations and that he is associated with sophistry. There were no witnesses to support these charges and no evidence to show that Socrates ever charged money for instruction as Sophists did. The god, the oracle at Delphos, has given him his business. When the oracle said, "There is no one wiser than Socrates", he took it to be giving him the charge to seek after wisdom. He began to question all who may have had wisdom in any form only to find that it was not so. His questioning of the statesmen, poets and artisans did find them guilty of pride (hubris) for thinking that they were wise when they were not. This also won Socrates their enmity. Socrates does not believe that he can deal with all the antagonisms by which he was disliked by so many. He does not believe that he can deal with the prejudices of so many in so short a time allotted. So he turns to the specific charges.

Corruption of the young

Socrates questions Meletos concerning this charge. Apparently, Meletos believes that Socrates is the only guilty of this. Socrates makes light of that idea. Socrates inquires as to whether or not the alleged corruption is deliberate or accidental and notes that either option leads to a course of action other than to charges and a death penalty.

Meletos could name no individuals that Socrates had corrupted. No one in the court room named a single corrupted child.

Impiety

The charge is explained by Meletos to mean that Socrates is an atheist and believes in no gods. Socrates points out that he is not like Anaxagoras who did not believe in the gods. Meletos admits under questioning that Socrates teaches about "spiritual" things and when he does so, Socrates forces Meletos to admit that Socrates must then believe in spirits if he teaches about spiritual things and that spirits are gods and so Socrates must believe in the gods.

Had Socrates concluded his defense at this point, he might have been acquitted, as the jury was most likely laughing at the prosecutor. But Socrates did not stop there. Under oath to tell the whole truth, Socrates proceeded to inform the jury as to the real reasons he believed he was charged with crimes. He informed Meletos and the Jury that Meletos and his conspirators did not know he true charge to place against him. They could not even bring up his loose association with some of the thirty tyrants due to the amnesty. Socrates knows why he is disliked by so many and now begins to make a defense of the type of life he has lived. He has only to consider whether one does right or wrong. The god has posted him to be a philosopher to test himself and others. He does not fear death. It is unknown. He fears disobeying god, this is definitely bad. He is not afraid to speak the truth as so many others are. He will act as the god has posted him to act. He will always be a philosopher, a seeker after wisdom. He will do this and obey god rather than the mob. He will always question others concerning truth and virtues and persuade them to care for its soul and its virtue rather than for fame or money or power. He has acted always according to what he thought to be right. If he considered doing otherwise, an inner voice (daemon) would speak to him to warn him away from doing wrong. He has done so and shall continue to do so in his private and public life. In public he has never done wrong. He never took money and his finances show it. In public he refused the demand of the mob for a trial of ten generals together and instead insisted on separate trials. He refused the tyrants order to arrest Leon of Salamis. He does not believe that he has done wrong anywhere. He does not believe that he corrupted anyone.

Socrates informs the jury that he is asking for justice and not mercy or charity. He would not resort to appeals for mercy as many others had done before him. He would not bring his wife and small children out to remind them of his family obligations. These appeals make Athens look ridiculous in the eyes of others. This encourages the jurors to disrespect their oaths to provide for justice. These are oaths they swore to the gods as jurors.

Nevertheless, Socrates is found guilty. 281 to 219!

At this point the prosecutor was to present a penalty and the defendant could either accept it or he would offer an alternative and defend it. Meletos asks for death. Socrates' friends are horrified. They encourage him to propose an alternative. Socrates speaks aloud wondering what is the punishment befitting his crime. As he does not believe that he hasn't committed a crime, how can he propose a punishment? Socrates states that it would appear that his "true" crime was not having the sense to live an idle life; neglecting his own household affairs, not making money, not pursuing military appointments and for believing himself too honest to involve himself in tawdry business affairs and political plots as so many others had done. For that "crime" he thinks the fitting punishment should be free room and board for he, his wife and children in the town hall for the rest of their lives! He could not recommend anything that was negative as a consequence of leading a good life. Many of the jurors become incensed over this offering. Socrates' friends on the jury encourage him to propose another penalty. Socrates considers alternatives. Death is not that upsetting since Socrates does not know for sure what that is, prison, fines and exile are considered. Exile is not acceptable since Socrates would be labeled as a criminal and wherever he went he would not be able to follow the instruction of the god for he would not be allowed to speak with others and continue his pursuit of wisdom. Socrates reconsiders a fine but he has no money. His friends take up a collection and he offers to pay that amount as a penalty for his crimes. The jury votes and he is sentenced to die by a larger vote than found him guilty. 360-140!. That meant that there were men on the jury who voted that he was not guilty and then voted to put him to death anyway! The old man had offended them with his brazen stance affirming his virtue over their practices.

Socrates now chastises the jurors who are putting him to death, pointing out that their deed will allow non-Athenians to criticize them. They will call Socrates wise and Athens foolish. He is an old man and they could not wait for him to die. They needed to go out of their way to kill him. Socrates spoke to his friends and encouraged them not to feel so badly for him. He was not afraid of death but of wickedness. He is confident that the result has been a good one since that inner voice or daemon had not spoken to him and warned him away from attending the trials and speaking as he did. He says it is far harder to out run wickedness than death. Death comes to us all but wickedness is what we should be concerned with and avoid. We can't avoid death. Death was either a dreamless sleep or a journey to another place. If it was a dreamless sleep, Socrates thought that it would not be bad at all. If it were a journey to another place where the gods and goddesses and heroes were he would be happy to be with them and question them and learn the answers that had eluded him.

Socrates was convinced that no harm can come to a good man either living or dead! He was taken away to prison to await his execution. In prison he is invited to flee and live in exile but refuses to do so!

You can read along with Plato's account of Socrates defense in the [Apology](#).

Or you can watch the cartoon version below



Questions from the Apology Video and the Reading

1. Why was he there? What was it all about?
2. Why did he make the defense that he did?
3. Why did they convict him? Why did they sentence him to death?
4. If Socrates was such a good person, someone who was pursuing truth and goodness and wisdom, how could it be that he would be executed by fellow citizens?

Prison, Death, and Legacy of Socrates

Socrates awaits his execution in prison. The Athenians have sent a boat laden with offerings to the gods in order to insure a better future for Athens. The Athenians won't execute him until the boat returns. Socrates and his friends know that there will be several days until the boat returns. While in prison Socrates is visited by his friends. One of his friends is an old and wealthy Athenian named Crito. Crito visits one day and informs Socrates that he has arranged for Socrates' escape. The guards have been bribed and he wants Socrates to leave with him. Socrates will go off and live in another town. Socrates is not eager to go off with his friend. He asks him why he should do this. Crito responds by informing Socrates that he loves him and does not want him to die. He asks Socrates to think of what people will say about Crito. They expect the old man to help out his friend. He has a great deal of money and people would think poorly of him if he did not assist Socrates. Crito's reputation is at stake. Socrates does not accept Crito's appeals to his emotions. Socrates again asks why he should leave. Crito informs Socrates that:

- a. it is not a great deal of money.
- b. Crito's reputation is at stake.
- c. Socrates' children would be let down by his leaving them.
- d. Socrates should remain alive to raise his children in a virtuous manner.

Socrates is not quick to give in. Instead he reminds Crito that they had agreed through all the years that a person should act according to what reasoning seems to be the best and not give in to emotions or to what the mob wants. Socrates shall not respect the opinions of the many or even the all, only the reasons given by the few who have positions resting upon knowledge of justice and the good.

For Socrates the only consideration is whether or not he would be doing the right thing by leaving. Socrates wants to do no wrong at all. Crito reminds Socrates that he has been done wrong by the jury. Socrates is not guilty of the crimes he was charged with and is being asked to die. Crito urges him to leave. He does not need to accept the verdict of a jury that has wronged him. Socrates responds by pointing out that we must do no wrong at all even in return for a wrong. The laws did not wrong Socrates the jury did. Socrates does not want to harm the Laws by doing wrong to them. Two wrongs do not make a right! Do not return a wrong for a wrong. Crito does not quite understand Socrates point. In order to make it easier to understand Socrates asks Crito to consider the Laws of Athens as a being standing at the doorway as Socrates is about to leave. The Laws ask Socrates why is he leaving and

Socrates repeats Crito's reasoning. The Laws would object that it was not the understanding that the Laws had with Socrates. The Laws were like a father in assisting Socrates as he grew. They educated him and enriched him. They gave him a share in all the beautiful things of the city, citizenship and the right to leave at any time. Socrates in particular is bound to them because for all his life he remained in the city, leaving only to defend it in battles. He could have emigrated at any time but he choose to remain and in so doing to obey its Laws.

- a. hurting the Laws, as they are as Parents to him
- b. defying the laws, who were his nurturers
- c. he would be breaking his agreement to obey

Socrates cannot leave. He swore an oath to accept the verdict and penalty. He swore to the gods. If he leaves he will not convince anyone that he was right and they were wrong. No, rather it would be proof that they were right in convicting and executing him. If he leaves he would become guilty of the two crimes he had been accused of:

If Socrates were to leave he would be disobedient and wrong toward the Laws in different ways:

- a. **Impiety**- he would be breaking his oath to the gods and thus show that either he disbelieves in them or is insulting them deliberately
- b. **Corrupting the young**- he would be setting a very bad example for the youth of Athens as they would see Socrates run off into exile and think that they could do likewise in a similar situation and thus did not need to keep their oaths.
- c. Socrates believed in the Law that said if you make an oath, keep it. If you make a promise, keep it.
- d. Socrates must stay and die to prove that he is innocent. In order to remain innocent he must die. He stays to die because he is innocent and wants to remain innocent and virtuous. If he leaves he becomes guilty and deserves to die!
- e. Men and not the Laws wronged Socrates. He sees no reason to harm the Laws now. He does not want to do wrong and thereby deserve the penalty. He wanted always and everywhere to do what reason directed him to see as the good, the virtuous.

Plato's Crito outlines Socrates arguments for why he would not leave prison and run away.

Crito



The decision made by Socrates changed the course of events for the entire world! If Socrates had left the prison there would have been no Plato and had there been no Plato there would have been a different course of events in the Western world and therefore in the entire world. The development of science and ideas of political reform were as they are because of the works of Plato. Had Socrates not remained in prison to die, Plato would not have become a Philosopher and would not have written the dialogues that impacted history. If Socrates had not remained to die in prison, I would not have been born! Socrates remains in prison and is executed by drinking hemlock. He offers arguments for the existence and immortality of the soul in the last hours of his life

These arguments can be found in Plato's Phaedo.



Philosophical Applications



Answer and discuss at least ONE of the following questions.

1. Socrates believed that no one does wrong voluntarily. Evil is the result of ignorance. If people knew what was the right thing to do they would do it. We always choose what we think is the best or good for us. So, if someone chooses to do what we think is wrong, then that person made a mistake and must be educated to see the error. They mistook good for the evil. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. If Socrates had the same principles at the age of 37 that he had at the age of 72 do you think that he would have remained in prison to be executed or would he have accepted the offer of his friends and left the prison and gone into exile? Why or why not? Give reasons.
3. If Socrates had left the prison Plato would not have become a philosopher and the Western world would have developed along other lines and at a different pace. The entire world would be different and you and I would not exist! Plato's ideas contributed to science, religion, to Locke, Rousseau, Jefferson and Adams and to Hegel and to Marx and to communism. The world would be different. Socrates' decision not to escape prison was one of those moments that changed all of history! Do you agree? Why or why not?

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2.4: Plato



Plato's Theory of the Ideal Forms

Plato describes the death of Socrates in the dialogue, the *Phaedo*. In that dialogue Plato becomes the first human to set into written form an attempt to prove that human beings have souls which are spiritual and immortal. Many cultures have such a belief. It can be found all around the world. However, the Greeks were the first to attempt to offer a proof for its existence and a proof based upon reasoning. In order to understand the *Phaedo* and its arguments one must first be aware of Plato's Theory of the Forms. Plato makes use of them in attempting to prove that the soul exists and that it survives the death of the body.

In the *Phaedo* Plato uses the Theory of the Forms. Aristotle made it clear that Socrates did not use that theory, it was developed later by Plato. So what is most likely is that Plato probably began the dialogue right after the death of Socrates. He must have taken notes. He was not present at the death; he was ill. He probably recorded what others told him occurred and then years later returned to the notes and finished the dialogue. So the *Phaedo* is a mix of what Socrates actually said and words Plato placed into the mouth of Socrates to complete the arguments and offer stronger ones consistent with Plato's views. It is likely a dialogue from Plato's middle period of creativity (see mini-lecture on Plato's Dialogues). The dialogue contains four different arguments to prove the existence of the soul. Socrates states at the conclusion of the first that it is sufficient. The other three were probably added later by Plato and utilize references to Plato's theory of the forms.

The Theory of the Forms

For many years I presented this theory in class utilizing a series of questions and practical demonstrations. In this medium we shall attempt to get as close as possible to that. We start off with a simple question:

What is this a picture of?



You probably answered that it is a chair. And you are correct! Now answer this question: What is a chair?

You may have answered “ It is something that you sit on” Over the years everyone who volunteers the answer in class has said that. It seems so obvious! A chair is something that you sit on. Now look at this photo and consider that answer.



Arguments for the Existence of the Soul

Now just because someone sits on a desk it doesn't mean it is a chair but a chair can't be just something that you sit on. You can sit on many things; desks, stairs, large rocks, benches, tree stumps, cars, your little brother or sister, etc....

What is a chair?

By now you should realize that the original simple answer, “Something that you sit on” , is wrong or at least not really correct. We can do better than that. You may now be thinking that a chair is something that was made to have people sit on it. Further to prevent a human or other animal from being a chair you should also realize that whatever a chair is--it is non-living matter. It is inanimate. In a classroom someone or other, by now, is offering the following as the definition of a chair: A chair is an inanimate object made for the purpose of having humans sit on it. Better yet: A chair is an inanimate object expressly designed and manufactured for the purpose of having humans sit upon it.

Now if you agree with that definition being much better than “Something that you sit on” We are off to a good start in attempting to understand Plato's Theory of the forms.

A chair is an object that humans can sit on, we can also stand on them to get your picture taken!.



We can use them to hold a door open. We can do a number of things with them but we realize that they are made for one purpose in particular. Chairs do not need to have four legs. They can have three legs, two legs even one leg or no legs at all. Chairs do not need to be blue or brown or green or any color at all. Chairs do not need to be made of wood or metal. Chairs could be made of clear glass, several large blocks. To understand what a chair is you must abstract from any one particular chair and use your mind to get at the essence of a chair. Its essence is in its purpose. Before the first chair was ever made by a human that human probably got tired of sitting on piles of animal hides or tree stumps or large rocks. That human had the idea of making something to sit on. The idea of the chair preceded its existence. The idea of the chair contains its purpose.

Theory of Knowledge

Plato believed that just as you have realized what a chair is, so can all humans do so by thinking, by using their minds. Plato believed that a human achieves knowledge by recollecting what was known before that human's soul entered the body. There is a realm of eternal forms, of ideas and ideals that never change. These ideal forms universe, what it is. When humans come to have knowledge of something it is recollecting the ideal form. So Socrates could lead people through questioning to an understanding and knowledge of something without needing to lecture or tell a person what the answer is. Plato demonstrates this in the *Meno*, in which Socrates leads a person with no knowledge of geometry to correct answers concerning geometric shapes by asking questions. So this universe is what it is to the degree it participates in the realm of the forms. The particular things are what they are because they have the forms in them or behind their creation and existence. The essence of a thing is what we know and that essence is its form. The essence is also its purpose. Knowledge consists of awareness of the essence, the eternal form that makes something what it is. The soul existed in the realm of the eternal forms before it entered the human body. It had all knowledge. As it enters the body the soul becomes confused as it experiences particular things that have particular shapes and colors and other attributes that the ideal form does not have. A person knows what a chair is, its essence, its form, before that person is ever born. A person becomes confused after entering the body and seeing particular chairs with their particular forms and hearing people speak a particular human language. Other humans attempt to get that person to identify a sound like "Chair" or a series of letters like "c-h-a-i-r" with a particular object, such as a brown, wooden, four legged, chair with a straight back. The child makes the identification and the mind of the child is led away from the knowledge of the pure essence of what a chair is. The child knows the essence of mother and father and table and tree and all things before it is born but gets confused by people uttering sounds like "mommy" and "mamma", "say "mommy, baby" "say mommy".

Plato on the Forms



Plato was the first to put into writing a theory of how it is we have knowledge and to explain how we make mistakes. For Plato knowledge is recollecting (Anamnesis), remembering what we were in contact with (knew) before our souls (minds) entered our bodies. Plato accepted an idea that many Greeks believed: reincarnation. So he believed that we live in some form before we enter the body and that we survive after leaving the body and might enter another body to experience another lifetime. He developed this theory of the forms and used it to explain knowledge.

Things are what they are because of their forms. We know the form and not the thing itself. We know the group or category a thing fits into, participates in, is made real by and not the concrete particular thing. What we know about a thing such as:



That it is a chair. That it is a member of a group or set or category of things called "chair" because it has the same essence, purpose or form. "Chair" is also a member of another set or form called "furniture" again because it shares in the same essence as other members of that set such as; "table" and "lamp".

Plato believed that all people can reason and it is reason that can cause a person to have knowledge, to move away from focusing on the particular concrete object and to recollect the universal abstract essence or form of the thing. That knowledge was necessary for understanding and for wisdom. The senses are a distraction for humans and often confuse humans. For genuine understanding a human needs to get beyond the senses to reach the truth through reasoning. Reasoning would have us deal with ideas and not the particular phenomenal aspects of the object. If we keep looking at the four legs of a chair we will not come to understand truly what a chair is.

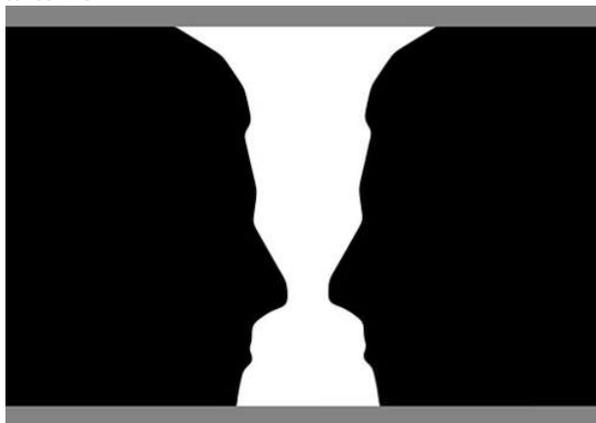
Plato believed that just as all people can come to understand and agree that: $2+3=5$, then all people can come to understand that a chair is an inanimate object designed and manufactured for the purpose of having humans sit on it.

He believed that with proper concentration and reasoning all people would also come to understand the essence of: **Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Temperance, Courage, Justice, Love, Friendship** and all the Virtues and all the important matters for humans to know.

He thought this because he thought that all those words referred to ideal forms that are in all of us and need only the proper thinking, led by questioning and guided by dialectical reasoning.

Plato's contribution to the world of thought was this Theory of the Ideal Forms. They would explain how things come to be as they are, the order of the universe, how we come to know things, how we make mistakes, how we should live our lives. It is the form and not the particular thing that is important, virtue and not the particular life that is important. To be in a human body and thus to be ensnared by its distractions and temptations was an embarrassment to Socrates and to Plato. Humans need to get out of their bodies (to die a bit) through reflection and reasoning to get at the truth and understanding. The body misleads us, the senses confuse us, our perceptions are not to be trusted.

Things Are Not What They Appear to Be



I can swear to you that for me still, the sun looks to me as if it is not that hot, not that big and not that far away. And I swear it moves! However, I have “learned” that the truth is quite the opposite. But I swear that the earth does not look or feel as if it is moving. It does not look round. To me the earth looks flat and stationary. But I am informed that it is actually spherical and rotating as it moves around the sun. It rotates at over 17,000 miles an hour. Imagine that! Well I can't imagine it. I can not see it. I have no feeling for it. And yet it is true?

If you are inclined to dismiss Plato's theory, consider this: much of what you know and believe and much of modern science owes a great deal to Plato's theory. The laws of Nature are discernible to those who can detach from the particular observations and look for patterns, look for forms in the data. It was Plato who commanded us to measure things and to look for what only reason could see operating in the universe in order to discover (remember) the truth and gain knowledge!

View an Excerpt from a *Timaeus* a dialogue by Plato below.

I will therefore now proceed to speak of the higher use and purpose for which God has given eyes to us. The sight in my opinion is the source of the greatest benefit to us, for had we never seen the stars, and the sun, and the heaven, none of the words which we have spoken about the universe would ever have been uttered. But now the sight of day and night, and the months and the revolutions of the years, have created number, and have given us a conception of time, and the power of inquiring about the nature of the universe; and from this source we have derived philosophy, than which no greater good ever was or will be given by the gods to mortal man. This is the greatest boon of sight: and of the lesser benefits why should I speak? even the ordinary man if he were deprived of them would bewail his loss, but in vain. Thus much let me say however: God invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heaven, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence which are akin to them, the unperturbed to the perturbed; and that we, learning them and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries. The same may be affirmed of speech and hearing: they have been given by the gods to the same end and for a like reason. For this is the principal end of speech, whereto it most contributes. Moreover, so much of music as is adapted to the sound of the voice and to the sense of hearing is granted to us for the sake of harmony; and harmony, which has motions akin to the revolutions of our souls, is not regarded by the intelligent votary of the Muses as given by them with a view to irrational pleasure, which is deemed to be the purpose of it in our day, but as meant to correct any discord which may have arisen in the

courses of the soul, and to be our ally in bringing her into harmony and agreement with herself; and rhythm too was given by them for the same reason, on account of the irregular and graceless ways which prevail among mankind generally, and to help us against them.

Thus far in what we have been saying, with small exception, the works of intelligence have been set forth; and now we must place by the side of them in our discourse the things which come into being through necessity—for the creation is mixed, being made up of necessity and mind. Mind, the ruling power, persuaded necessity to bring the greater part of created things to perfection, and thus and after this manner in the beginning, when the influence of reason got the better of necessity, the universe was created. But if a person will truly tell of the way in which the work was accomplished, he must include the other influence of the variable cause as well. Wherefore, we must return again and find another suitable beginning, as about the former matters, so also about these. To which end we must consider the nature of fire, and water, and air, and earth, such as they were prior to the creation of the heaven, and what was happening to them in this previous state; for no one has as yet explained the manner of their generation, but we speak of fire and the rest of them, whatever they mean, as though men knew their natures, and we maintain them to be the first principles and letters or elements of the whole, when they cannot reasonably be compared by a man of any sense even to syllables or first compounds.This new beginning of our discussion of the universe requires a fuller division than the former; for then we made two classes, now a third must be revealed. The two sufficed for the former discussion: one, which we assumed, was a pattern intelligible and always the same; and the second was only the imitation of the pattern, generated and visible.

Philosophical Applications



Plato: Philosophy, the Process

A chance to do a little Philosophy; Platonic style! What is Love? What is its essence?

Short answer: Follow a Platonic approach to arrive at the essence of love. Does it have necessary or sufficient conditions?

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2.5: The Legacy of Socrates and Plato

The Legacy of Socrates



Socrates Theory of the Soul

Socrates believed that he had a mission to seek after wisdom. He died being faithful to that mission. He attempted to find a stable and certain truth and a wisdom that would serve as a guide for life. He attempted to lead others to real insight. He wanted to persuade others to look into themselves, to seek wisdom and virtue and to care for their noblest possession, their soul, before all else. He attempted this even at his trial and in his final days and hours. He used the dialectical method as a midwife to ideas to lead others to knowledge, truth and virtue. He used the dialectical process to arrive at universal definitions. Plato would develop the explanatory schema in which the universal definition is attainable due to a process of recollection through which all people can gain knowledge of what is within them, their minds from birth. Socrates himself believed in the universality of the inner rational being. He believed that:

The unexamined life is not worth living! The best manner to examine that life is through reasoning which employs the dialectical method of inquiry. Plato inherits this belief, expands upon it and promulgates this belief.

Plato's Theory of Immortality



The Socratic Method

The Socratic method, also known as **maieutics**, **method of elenchus**, **elenctic method**, or **Socratic debate**, is a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue between individuals, based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presumptions. It is a dialectical method, often involving a discussion in which the defense of one point of view is questioned; one participant may lead another to contradict themselves in some way, thus weakening the

defender's point. This method is named after the Classical Greek philosopher Socrates and is introduced by him in Plato's *Timeus* to bring out definitions implicit in the interlocutors' beliefs, or to help them further their understanding.

The Socratic method is a method of hypothesis elimination, in that better hypotheses are found by steadily identifying and eliminating those that lead to contradictions. The Socratic method searches for general, commonly held truths that shape beliefs and scrutinizes them to determine their consistency with other beliefs. The basic form is a series of questions formulated as tests of logic and fact intended to help a person or group discover their beliefs about some topic, exploring definitions or *logos* and seeking to characterize general characteristics shared by various particular instances.

Socratic Method



Example of Socratic Dialogue



Ethics

For Socrates the key to a virtuous life was knowledge of the good and this links ethics with epistemology. If one knew the *good* one would choose it. One always chooses the best of the options available. The question was, what is the *good*? What is *best*? Virtue would depend on knowledge. Knowledge itself is a virtue but knowledge of the good and of virtue was necessary for the *good* life. The soul must choose the good but only if it knows what it is. Evil is the result of ignorance. The soul chooses what it thinks is the *good* but if it isn't, the soul has made a mistake. Wrong doing is involuntary. Evil doers must be educated, instructed as to what truly is the *good* and then they will choose it.

Socrates believed that no one does wrong voluntarily. Evil is the result of ignorance. If people knew what was the right thing to do they would do it. We always choose what we think is the best or good for us. So, if someone chooses to do what we think is wrong,

then that person made a mistake and must be educated to see the error. They mistook evil for the good. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Socrates held that people know that other people think that it is wrong but they do not totally agree. The wrong doers think that there is something good in doing the evil act even if it is only good for them. So, they do it. If the wrong doers understood why the act was considered to be wrong they would not do it. They do it because they mistake the evil act for a good act in some way. Given options humans will choose the options that appears to be good for them. When they choose what other people call evil it is because they do not agree. They will continue to do the evil acts unless and until they no longer think of them as good.

- Socrates' theory doesn't claim that people who do wrong do not know that the act is wrong.
- Socrates' theory doesn't claim that people who do wrong do think that it is correct or right to do.

The theory is that people who do wrong know that other people think that it is wrong but that the wrong doer does not accept that and does not agree because the wrong doer sees some benefit or good result for the wrong doer.

As long as the wrong doer continues to see some benefit or good result for the wrong doer then the wrong doer will continue to do the act that is considered wrong by other people. When the wrong doer comes to understand and to know why the *other people* think of the act as being wrong and the wrong doer accepts that, then the wrong doer will stop doing that act.

1. Person P does act X.
2. Person P knows that other people think that act X is wrong or bad or evil.
3. Person P does X anyway because person P thinks that X is in some way good for P. (X is fun or relieves pain or will bring money or power or fame to P)
4. P thinks that X will benefit P. Bene = good and fit= Make or do. So P thinks that X will in some way make a good for P.
5. Unless and until P stops thinking of X as a good, P will continue to do X. P does X because people always choose what they think is on some way good for them.

For Socrates the soul always goes to the good. The soul "volunteers" or wills to do the good. So P chooses X out of ignorance of what is truly good as other people see the good as different from X.

Further, Socrates held that all virtue is one. Virtue is good. Truth is good. Beauty is good. Knowledge is good. The true, good and beautiful are all good and united in the good as one. How was one to teach others what the *good* is? Socrates sought an answer to that and many other questions. The Sophists claimed to teach but they trained in technique. They dealt with specialized actions. Virtue is not specialized.

[Plato on the Good Life \(Socratic Ethics\)](#)



Epistemology

Socrates developed the dialectical process for gaining knowledge. He used an inductive method of argumentation in order to develop universal definitions. This was his approach to the truth that would be perfected by Plato. Socrates would examine theories (logoi) using the dialectic method, which was similar to a conversational pattern with many questions. Socrates would challenge initial hypotheses and examine them for presumptions and assumptions. He regularly used two techniques:

1. What follows if.....
2. What conflicts with ...

He did this in an effort to establish the truth of the hypothesis. He looked for a coherent and consistent set of ideas; a system of thought. The pre-Socratic speculated, Socrates tested the ideas. Socrates looked to facts to test the theories. In this way he was somewhat similar to Sir Issac Newton and modern science. Socrates sought to deduce the consequences of a hypothesis in order to test it thereby.

The Sophists raised many questions in order to win debates and to gain power. Socrates did so to pursue truth. He did not achieve all of what he sought. Plato would go further and develop answers through the implementation of his theory of the Ideal Forms. Socrates genius was in this: he was the first to raise certain basic questions with a clear understanding of what he was doing.

[What is Epistemology?](#)



The Legacy of Plato

Were it not for Socrates, Plato would not have become a Philosopher and not only the western world but the entire world would have been a different place with a decidedly different history!

Scholars have studied Plato's many dialogues very carefully. Many of them agree that the dialogues were written over many years and that they appear to have a slightly different tone, which reflects Plato's intention in writing them. Indeed, scholars who find in them a progression of ideas set the dialogues in a temporal order. Plato works from those ideas and methodology he inherits from Socrates and then devises his own unique set of ideas and further develops the dialectical method of reasoning, which he learned from Socrates.

Plato does develop a single coherent worldview because of the need to develop in a critical fashion such a conceptual framework that would be capable of enunciating all the distinctions one must make in describing reality and yet capable of eliciting the meanings one must have.

Plato learned from the Sophists, the Ionian scientists and the Milesians but most of all from Socrates. Plato forged a complete philosophical system. He gathered the best of ideas from the Pythagoreans and the other great minds and put together a unified system of thought and ideas.

His theory of reality, his metaphysics was the basis for his physics and that was consistent with this theory of knowledge and of virtue. These ideas serve also as the foundations for his ethics and politics. He combined the thinking of Heraclitus who thought that all things that were real were constantly changing and the world of Parmenides who thought that all change was unreal.

For Plato the particular concrete world is what it is to the degree it participates in the universals which inform all that is real. To get at primary being, the essence of things one follows science and mathematics for they lead us away from the particular to the universal, the patterns underlying and constituting all that is real.

The rational move, reasoning is to go from the:

- Particulars to essences

- Concrete to abstract
- Imperfect to perfect

The soul may ascend to the level of the eternal by an intelligent apprehension of particulars. The soul may become free as it reflects for itself, resign passion for contemplation and fix its eyes on the principles, the ideals, and the eternal forms.

For Plato to know a thing is to understand its purpose: the essence of a thing is its function, this is its *good*. The essence of a thing is eternal, part of the eternal realm. It is what it is for all eternity. The essence of a thing is linked to the universal and the ideal. Each element in a human's nature has its function and its end

Knowledge is not possible through experience but through reason. The universals that are grasped by reason are innate and not learned. Rationalism is a non-empirical process. For Plato what exists is:

- God (the one) – energy of creation
- Mind (nous)- Ideas - the pattern of creation and all components
- Matter –world- the stuff of creation- in chaos until transformed into cosmos by Nous

Plato's Social Philosophy and Political Thought

The Republic



The *Republic* is one of the greatest works ever invented by a human being. At some colleges students spend an entire term studying it and all of its intricacies and all of its import. In this work Plato touches upon all the most important questions in Philosophy. He presents a single unified system of ideas in a work that is self referential in as much as it illustrates some of the very things concerning which he is attempting to educate his readers.

Plato preferred the rule of those who are best suited to rule rather than to have people ruled by kings, military commanders, wealthy people or tyrants. In particular he did not like democracy as a form of government. Democracy had killed Socrates. Democracy promoted and rested upon the cult of the average who gather as a mob, constitute a majority and conceive of themselves as experts. There is no impulse towards self-criticism and self improvement in democracy because the mob believes that each is correct and that they are the ones to determine everything by voting. No need to change because there is no absolute standard against which any one could measure. There is only the voting and the rule of the majority for whatever reasons or for no reasons at all. The cult of the majority degenerates to the level of the least ambitious and least suited.

Plato preferred that the whole of society be organized as an organic whole, with each part doing its part to provide for the proper functioning and prosperity of the whole. Those that know best how to do so would organize these social units. Those who are truly the best at doing something would get to do it. This was a meritocracy that Plato favored. In the Greek language of his day it was called “Aristocracy” meaning the rule of the best(aristos). Today that term means the rule of a class of people who inherit their positions. That idea is something towards which Plato was quite definitely opposed.

Humans were composed of three parts and they should also be kept functioning properly in relation to one another as an organic whole, with each part doing its proper work.

- Soul- unity of the whole
- Reason – think, contemplate
- Spirit- desires, appetites, drives, instincts

The Allegory of the Cave

Plato believed that there were four levels or approaches to knowledge and genuine understanding. They are illustrated in the *Republic* in the allegory of the cave and in the divided line.

- Level I: guided by images, stories guesses, opinions
- Level II: guided by practical common sense, trial and error approach, practical
- Level III: a theoretical, scientific approach seeking to understand why things are as they are
- Level IV: philosophical approach, by which theories are themselves evaluated. True understanding

Allegory of the Cave



People in the cave spend their time playing games and identifying the shadows on the wall. They think that the shadows on the wall are the real things. They are happy to win prizes in the cave for being so quick and accurate at identifying the shadows. They do not know that those are just shadows (I) caused by the light crossing over the statues (II) which are themselves representations of the things outside the cave (III) and all of those would not exist if not for the source of all things and all life, the sun.

Philosophical Applications



Are there many people that you know who are at the first two levels, living in a cave and thinking it is the only reality? Thinking that the shadows on the world are the reality and refusing even to turn around and look at what else may be the actual truth? Do you know of people who are happy to have a nice position in the cave and are looking for little beyond that? People who don't want their thinking to be disturbed even if it is wrong?

1. Plato believed that through careful abstract reasoning we arrive at the real truth. He thought mathematics was the key to unlock the truth about the physical universe. Do you agree with him that humans need to arrive at the true knowledge as separate from opinions, through careful analysis, critical thinking, abstraction, categorization, and inductive reasoning as to ascertain the essence of things?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: The Existence of God and the Problem of Evil

[3.1: Overview- Philosophy of Religion](#)

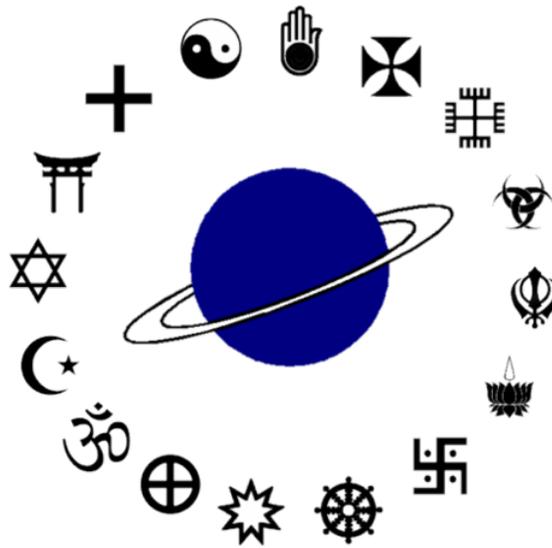
[3.2: Arguments for the Existence of God from Revelation and Reason](#)

[3.3: Arguments for the Existence of God from Experience and Pragmatism](#)

[3.4: The Problem of Evil](#)

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3.1: Overview- Philosophy of Religion



We are going to think philosophically about a number of questions and issues related to religion. The purpose here is neither to convert believers into non-believers nor the other way around. The objective is to demonstrate and encourage applying philosophical thinking to matters of great importance. Religion is certainly of great importance. Philosophy is based upon reason and religion is based upon faith. With many of the issues we are about to examine the philosopher will attempt to give reasons and to look for reasons in support of beliefs. Some of the issues raised in this module and in the entire course may be disturbing to the belief systems of some. In life it is possible to live and live well based upon beliefs. It is possible to respond to some of the questions raised by philosophical reflection by simply declaring, “Well, I believe that....” Now that response will probably be accepted by many people in many situations, in philosophy however, the “I believe, that’s why!” response is not acceptable. Philosophers need to have reasons for holding to a belief in particular after that belief has been called into question.

There are many ideas that people have concerning all things and religion in particular which may not be exactly true or not true at all. Be prepared for that possibility concerning issues related to god, religion, reality, knowledge, truth, mind, freedom and many other ideas that are common to our cultural heritage.

Concerning Religion there are many questions that Philosophers have been dealing with for some time. The very meaning of “Religion” is subject to philosophical reflection, speculation and criticism. After that the meaning and value of Religion are an important matters. For the religions of the West with their belief in the one god, the idea of god has come into a great deal of very careful thinking. In this module we shall examine those questions.

Theology - deals with religious beliefs in a rational manner and presumes faith

Philosophy of religion is rational thought about religious issues and concerns without a presumption of the existence of a deity or reliance on acts of faith.

What is Religion?

There are many definitions of religion. It is not that easy to pin down exactly what religion is and then to insure that the definition distinguishes religion from magic and from cults and sects. Many people offer definitions without much knowledge of the wide range of religious phenomena and the many different cultural manifestations of religion. It is a rather common misconception to think that religion has to do with god, or gods and supernatural beings or a supernatural or spiritual dimension or greater reality. None of that is absolutely necessary because there are religions that are without those elements.

In this millennium there are over 7 billion people on the planet earth. Most of them would declare that they are religious in some way. Rough estimates are made that place people in the various traditions.

Sizes shown are approximate estimates, and are here mainly for the purpose of ordering the groups, not providing a definitive number. This list is sociological/statistical in perspective.

- Christianity: 2.1 billion
- Islam: 1.5 billion
- Secular/Non-Religious/Atheist/Agnostic: 1.1 billion
- Hinduism: 900 million
- Chinese Traditional Religion: 394 million
- Buddhism: 376 million
- Primal-Indigenous: 300 million
- African Traditional & Diasporic 100 million
- Sikhism: 23 million
- Juche: 19 million
- Spiritism: 15 million
- Judaism: 14 million
- Baha'i: 7 million
- Janism: 4.2 million
- Shinto 4 million
- Cao Dao: 4 million
- Zoroastrianism: 2.6 million
- Tenrikyo: 2 million
- Neo-Paganism: 1 million
- Unitarianism-Universalism: 800 thousand
- Rastaferianism: 600 thousand
- Scientology: 500 thousand

This information is from [Adherents.com](https://adherents.com) : a growing collection of over 62,000 adherent statistics and religious geography citations -- references to published membership/adherent statistics and congregation statistics for over 4,200 religions, churches, denominations, religious bodies, faith groups, tribes, cultures, movements, ultimate concerns, etc.

The three religions that are proselytizing (seeking more members actively) religions are: Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. Islam is the fastest growing of the traditions and will most likely have the most adherents in the world by 2020.

Some of these religions have no belief in a god. Some have no belief in the survival of a soul. Some believe in more than one god. What do they have that makes them religion? Religion is the most comprehensive and intensive manner of valuing known to human beings.

The Big Story: Origins of Religion



Characteristics of Religion

These are the common characteristics or family traits of those members of the category or “family” of religion. Just as with family members not every member must have every trait but most have most of the traits. The more any human phenomena demonstrates these traits the more likely it is that it will be included into this category of social institutions known as religion.

Common Characteristics: (family traits)

- notion of a deity or absolute, that which is of ultimate concern and importance
- ideas on the nature of human beings
- the idea of divine providence, destiny, fate
- the idea and meaning of human history
- problem of evil explained
- description of the central problem of human life and suffering idea of an afterlife-life after death
- a concept of the world
- ideas of human community and ethics
- a moral code

Religions of the West

Religions of the West- Judaism-Christianity and Islam share in some common traits or characteristics that distinguish them from other religions in this world.

- belief in one god
- belief in linear history
- belief in a sacred scripture- the book

These common features bind the three traditions together. One god made the universes at the beginning of time and that one god will end the universe. Each human has a soul and at the death of the body the soul shall separate from the body and go one in another dimension. There is a judgment to be made concerning the moral worthiness of the soul at death for an eternal reward or lack thereof. Time is linear and there is but one period of existence for individuals and the entire universe. Other religions hold for multiple or no deities, cyclic time and reincarnation of souls, even multiple reincarnations.

Problem with the Attributes of deity (god)

Concerning the existence of a single supreme deity or god there are a variety of positions or beliefs and concepts and imaginings.

There exists many understandings of the term "God". It typically differs not only from religion to religion, but also from person to person who share the same religious beliefs. It is therefore hard to define "god" or list a complete array of characteristics (nature) of god that is applicable to all religions.

For the sake of simplicity, the concept of "god" is often described by philosophers of religion to be an "

- Omniscient
- Omnipotent
- Omnibenevolent
- All Merciful
- All Just
- All Loving
- Being" Any "god" that is referred to in most contexts of philosophy of religion must have the above four characteristics, including being a "Being".

In other words, if it is good thing, then the one god of the West was thought to have that feature and to have it to an infinite degree.

Above all, a simple "if" relationship exists between "god" and those four characteristics. That is to say. If X is a "god", X must possess all four characteristics. Yet, according to the above statement, the existence of those four characteristics together on Y might not be sufficient to lead to the conclusion that Y is a "god". However, the non-existence of one or more of the four characteristics on an object Z is sufficient to lead to the argument that Z is not a "god" that we have defined above.

Forms of theistic beliefs:

- Monotheism- a belief that there is but one god.
- Theism- one god separate from the creation
- Pantheism- one god existing in the creation-i.e., world=god
- Panentheism-one god , the world is part of god who is greater than creation
- Polytheism- is a belief that there are many gods.
- Agnosticism-is no clear or definitive knowledge of whether there is a god or not

Problems

Now these attributes certainly sound wonderful. However, do they make sense. How can a god that is all good and all knowing and all-powerful permit evil to occur? That is the Problem of Evil and it is covered in another section of this text. Here a brief consideration of some of the characteristics will suffice to indicate the direction in which critical thinking moves.

- All knowing and all loving and all kind and all merciful and yet there is evil and pain and suffering?
- All good and all knowing and all powerful and yet there is moral evil ?
- All loving and all kind and all merciful and yet there is a place of eternal punishment-hell

Well the story of the one deity of the Hebrews became inconsistent with a being that was all good and all loving. Consider these stories of the single deity of the Hebrews and the Atrocities associated with acts of that deity or supported by that deity.

Atrocities Attributed to the Hebrew God of Israel

[GE 3:1-7, 22-24](#) God allows Adam and Eve to be deceived by the Serpent (the craftiest of all of God's wild creatures). They eat of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil," thereby incurring death for themselves and all of mankind for ever after. God prevents them from regaining eternal life, by placing a guard around the "Tree of Eternal Life." (Note: God could have done the same for the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" in the first place and would thereby have prevented the Fall of man, the necessity for Salvation, the Crucifixion of Jesus, etc.)

[GE 4:2-8](#) God's arbitrary preference of Abel's offering to that of Cain's provokes Cain to commit the first biblically recorded murder and kill his brother Abel.

[GE 34:13-29](#) The Israelites kill Hamor, his son, and all the men of their village, taking as plunder their wealth, cattle, wives and children.

[GE 6:11-17, 7:11-24](#) God is unhappy with the wickedness of man and decides to do something about it. He kills every living thing on the face of the earth other than Noah's family and thereby makes himself the greatest mass murderer in history.

[GE 19:26](#) God personally sees to it that Lot's wife is turned to a pillar of salt (for having looked behind her while fleeing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah).

[GE 38:9](#) "... whenever he lay with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother. What he did was wicked ..., so the Lord put him to death."

[EX 2:12](#) Moses murders an Egyptian.

[EX 7:1, 14, 9:14-16, 10:1-2, 11:7](#) The purpose of the devastation that God brings to the Egyptians is as follows: to show that he is Lord; to show that there is none like him in all the earth; to show his great power; to cause his name to be declared throughout the earth; to give the Israelites something to talk about with their children; to show that he makes a distinction between Israel and Egypt.

[EX 9:22-25](#) A plague of hail from the Lord strikes down everything in the fields of Egypt both man and beast except in Goshen where the Israelites reside.

[EX 12:29](#) The Lord kills all the first-born in the land of Egypt.

[EX 17:13](#) With the Lord's approval, Joshua mows down Amalek and his people.

[EX 21:20-21](#) With the Lord's approval, a slave may be beaten to death with no punishment for the perpetrator as long as the slave doesn't die too quickly.

[EX 32:27](#) "Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.

[EX 32:27-29](#) With the Lord's approval, the Israelites slay 3000 men.

[LE 26:7-8](#) The Lord promises the Israelites that, if they are obedient, their enemies will "fall before your sword."

[LE 26:22](#) "I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children."

[LE 26:29, DT 28:53, JE 19:9, EZ 5:8-10](#) As a punishment, the Lord will cause people to eat the flesh of their own sons and daughters and fathers and friends.

LE 27:29 Human sacrifice is condoned. (Note: An example is given in JG 11:30-39)

NU 11:33 The Lord smites the people with a great plague.

NU 12:1-10 God makes Miriam a leper for seven days because she and Aaron had spoken against Moses.

NU 15:32-36 A Sabbath breaker (who had gathered sticks for a fire) is stoned to death at the Lord's command.

NU 16:27-33 The Lord causes the earth to open and swallow up the men and their households (including wives and children) because the men had been rebellious.

NU 16:35 A fire from the Lord consumes 250 men.

NU 16:49 A plague from the Lord kills 14,700 people.

NU 21:3 The Israelites utterly destroy the Canaanites.

NU 21:6 Fiery serpents, sent by the Lord, kill many Israelites.

NU 21:35 With the Lord's approval, the Israelites slay Og "... and his sons and all his people, until there was not one survivor left"

NU 25:4 (KJV) "And the Lord said unto Moses, take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun"

NU 25:8 "He went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly."

NU 25:9 24,000 people die in a plague from the Lord.

NU 31:9 The Israelites capture Midianite women and children.

NU 31:17-18 Moses, following the Lord's command, orders the Israelites to kill all the Midianite male children and "... every woman who has known man" (Note: How would it be determined which women had known men? One can only speculate.)

NU 31:31-40 32,000 virgins are taken by the Israelites as booty. Thirty-two are set aside (to be sacrificed?) as a tribute for the Lord.

DT 2:33-34 The Israelites utterly destroy the men, women, and children of Sihon.

DT 3:6 The Israelites utterly destroy the men, women, and children of Og.

DT 7:2 The Lord commands the Israelites to "utterly destroy" and show "no mercy" to those whom he gives them for defeat.

DT 20:13-14 "When the Lord delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the males As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves."

DT 20:16 "In the cities of the nations the Lord is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes."

DT 21:10-13 With the Lord's approval, the Israelites are allowed to take "beautiful women" from the enemy camp to be their captive wives. If, after sexual relations, the husband has "no delight" in his wife, he can simply let her go.

DT 28:53 "You will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters the Lord your God has given you."

JS 1:1-9, 18 Joshua receives the Lord's blessing for all the bloody endeavors to follow.

JS 6:21-27 With the Lord's approval, Joshua destroys the city of Jericho--men, women, and children--with the edge of the sword.

JS 7:19-26 Achan, his children and his cattle are stoned to death because Achan had taken a taboo thing.

JS 8:22-25 With the Lord's approval, Joshua utterly smites the people of Ai, killing 12,000 men and women, so that there were none who escaped.

JS 10:10-27 With the help of the Lord, Joshua utterly destroys the Gibeonites.

JS 10:28 With the Lord's approval, Joshua utterly destroys the people of Makkedah.

JS 10:30 With the Lord's approval, Joshua utterly destroys the Libnahites.

JS 10:32-33 With the Lord's approval, Joshua utterly destroys the people of Lachish.

[JS 10:34-35](#) With the Lord's approval, Joshua utterly destroys the Eglonites.

[JS 10:36-37](#) With the Lord's approval, Joshua utterly destroys the Hebronites.

[JS 10:38-39](#) With the Lord's approval, Joshua utterly destroys the Debirites.

[JS 10:40](#) (A summary statement.) "So Joshua defeated the whole land ...; he left none remaining, but destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded."

[JS 11:6](#) The Lord orders horses to be hamstringed. (Exceedingly cruel.)

[JS 11:8-15](#) "And the lord gave them into the hand of Israel, ...utterly destroying them; there was none left that breathed"

[JS 11:20](#) "For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be utterly destroyed, and should receive no mercy but be exterminated, as the Lord commanded Moses."

[JS 11:21-23](#) Joshua utterly destroys the Anakim.

[JG 1:4](#) With the Lord's support, Judah defeats 10,000 Canaanites at Bezek.

[JG 1:6](#) With the Lord's approval, Judah pursues Adoni-bezek, catches him, and cuts off his thumbs and big toes.

[JG 1:8](#) With the Lord's approval, Judah smites Jerusalem.

[JG 1:17](#) With the Lord's approval, Judah and Simeon utterly destroy the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath.

[JG 3:29](#) The Israelites kill about 10,000 Moabites.

[JG 3:31](#) (A restatement.) Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with an oxgoad.

[JG 4:21](#) Jael takes a tent stake and hammers it through the head of Sisera, fastening it to the ground.

[JG 7:19-25](#) The Gideons defeat the Midianites, slay their princes, cut off their heads, and bring the heads back to Gideon.

[JG 8:15-21](#) The Gideons slaughter the men of Penuel.

[JG 9:5](#) Abimelech murders his brothers.

[JG 9:45](#) Abimelech and his men kill all the people in the city.

[JG 9:53-54](#) "A woman dropped a stone on his head and cracked his skull. Hurriedly he called to his armor-bearer, 'Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can't say a woman killed me.' So his servant ran him through, and he died."

[JG 11:29-39](#) Jephthah sacrifices his beloved daughter, his only child, according to a vow he has made with the Lord.

[JG 14:19](#) The Spirit of the Lord comes upon a man and causes him to slay thirty men.

[JG 15:15](#) Samson slays 1000 men with the jawbone of an ass.

[JG 16:21](#) The Philistines gouge out Samson's eyes.

[JG 16:27-30](#) Samson, with the help of the Lord, pulls down the pillars of the Philistine house and causes his own death and that of 3000 other men and women.

[JG 18:27](#) The Danites slay the quiet and unsuspecting people of Laish.

[JG 19:22-29](#) A group of sexual depraved men beat on the door of an old man's house demanding that he turn over to them a male house guest. Instead, the old man offers his virgin daughter and his guest's concubine (or wife): "Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do with them what seems good to you; but against this man do not do so vile a thing." The man's concubine is ravished and dies. The man then cuts her body into twelve pieces and sends one piece to each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

[JG 20:43-48](#) The Israelites smite 25,000+ "men of valor" from amongst the Benjamites, "men and beasts and all that they found," and set their towns on fire.

[JG 21:10-12](#) "... Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword and; also the women and little ones.... every male and every woman that has lain with a male you shall utterly destroy." They do so and find four hundred young virgins whom they bring back for their own use.

[1SA 4:10](#) The Philistines slay 30,000 Israelite foot soldiers.

- 1SA 5:6-9 The Lord afflicts the Philistines with tumors in their "secret parts," presumably for having stolen the Ark.
- 1SA 6:19 God kills seventy men (or so) for looking into the Ark (at him?). (Note: The early Israelites apparently thought the Ark to be God's abode.)
- 1SA 7:7-11 Samuel and his men smite the Philistines.
- 1SA 11:11 With the Lord's blessing, Saul and his men cut down the Ammonites.
- 1SA 14:31 Jonathan and his men strike down the Philistines.
- 1SA 14:48 Saul smites the Amalekites.
- 1SA 15:3, 7-8 "This is what the Lord says: Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass' And Saul ... utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword."
- 1SA 15:33 "Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord"
- 1SA 18:7 The women sing as they make merry: "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands."
- 1SA 27:8-11 "David left neither man nor woman alive". (Note: This implies that children and infants were included in the slaughter.)
- 1SA 30:17 David smites the Amalekites.
- 2SA 2:23 Abner kills Asahel.
- 2SA 3:30 Joab and Abishai kill Abner.
- 2SA 4:7-8 Rechab and Baanah kill Ish-bosheth, behead him, and take his head to David.
- 2SA 4:12 David has Rechab and Baanah killed, their hands and feet cut off, and their bodies hanged by the pool at Hebron.
- 2SA 5:25 "And David did as the Lord commanded him, and smote the Philistines"
- 2SA 6:2-23 Because she rebuked him for having exposed himself, Michal (David's wife) was barren throughout her life.
- 2SA 8:1-18 (A listing of some of David's murderous conquests.)
- 2SA 8:4 David hamstringed all but a few of the horses.
- 2SA 8:5 David slew 22,000 Syrians.
- 2SA 8:6, 14 "The Lord gave victory to David wherever he went."
- 2SA 8:13 David slew 18,000 Edomites in the valley of salt and made the rest slaves.
- 2SA 10:18 David slew 47,000+ Syrians.
- 2SA 11:14-27 David has Uriah killed so that he can marry Uriah's wife, Bathsheba.
- 2SA 12:1, 19 The Lord strikes David's child dead for the sin that David has committed.
- 2SA 13:1-15 Amnon loves his sister Tamar, rapes her, then hates her.
- 2SA 13:28-29 Absalom has Amnon murdered.
- 2SA 18:6 -7 20,000 men are slaughtered at the battle in the forest of Ephraim.
- 2SA 18:15 Joab's men murder Absalom.
- 2SA 20:10-12 Joab's men murder Amasa and leave him "... wallowing in his own blood in the highway. And anyone who came by, seeing him, stopped."
- 2SA 24:15 The Lord sends a pestilence on Israel that kills 70,000 men.
- 1KI 2:24-25 Solomon has Adonijah murdered.
- 1KI 2:29-34 Solomon has Joab murdered.
- 1KI 2:46 Solomon has Shime-i murdered.

1KI 13:15-24 A man is killed by a lion for eating bread and drinking water in a place where the Lord had previously told him not to. This is in spite of the fact that the man had subsequently been lied to by a prophet who told the man that an angel of the Lord said that it would be alright to eat and drink there.

1KI 20:29-30 The Israelites smite 100,000 Syrian soldiers in one day. A wall falls on 27,000 remaining Syrians.

2KI 1:10-12 Fire from heaven comes down and consumes fifty men.

2KI 2:23-24 Forty-two children are mauled and killed, presumably according to the will of God, for having jeered at a man of God.

2KI 5:27 Elisha curses Gehazi and his descendants forever with leprosy.

2KI 6:18-19 The Lord answers Elisha's prayer and strikes the Syrians with blindness. Elisha tricks the blind Syrians and leads them to Samaria.

2KI 6:29 "So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give up your son so we may eat him,' but she had hidden him."

2KI 9:24 Jehu tricks and murders Joram.

2KI 9:27 Jehu has Ahaziah killed.

2KI 9:30-37 Jehu has Jezebel killed. Her body is trampled by horses. Dogs eat her flesh so that only her skull, feet, and the palms of her hands remain.

2KI 10:7 Jehu has Ahab's seventy sons beheaded, then sends the heads to their father.

2KI 10:14 Jehu has forty-two of Ahab's kin killed.

2KI 10:17 "And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained to Ahab in Samaria, till he had wiped them out, according to the word of the Lord"

2KI 10:19-27 Jehu uses trickery to massacre the Baal worshippers.

2KI 11:1 Athaliah destroys all the royal family.

2KI 14:5, 7 Amaziah kills his servants and then 10,000 Edomites.

2KI 15:3-5 Even though he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, the Lord smites Azariah with leprosy for not having removed the "high places."

2KI 15:16 Menahem ripped open all the women who were pregnant.

2KI 19:35 An angel of the Lord kills 185,000 men.

1CH 20:3 (KJV) "And he brought out the people that were in it, and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes."

2CH 13:17 500,000 Israelites are slaughtered.

2CH 21:4 Jehoram slays all his brothers.

PS 137:9 Happy will be the man who dashes your little ones against the stones.

PS 144:1 God is praised as the one who trains hands for war and fingers for battle.

IS 13:15 "Everyone who is captured will be thrust through; all who are caught will fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their ... wives will be ravished."

IS 13:18 "Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children."

IS 14:21-22 "Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers."

IS 49:26 The Lord will cause the oppressors of the Israelite's to eat their own flesh and to become drunk on their own blood as with wine.

JE 16:4 "They shall die grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls

of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth."

[LA 4:9-10](#) "Those slain by the sword are better off than those who die of famine; racked with hunger, they waste away for lack of food. ... pitiful women have cooked their own children, who became their food ..."

[EZ 6:12-13](#) The Lord says: "... they will fall by the sword, famine and plague. He that is far away will die of the plague, and he that is near will fall by the sword, and he that survives and is spared will die of famine. So will I spend my wrath upon them. And they will know I am the Lord, when the people lie slain among their idols around their altars, on every high hill and on all the mountaintops, under every spreading tree and every leafy oak"

[EZ 9:4-6](#) The Lord commands: "... slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women"

[EZ 20:26](#) In order that he might horrify them, the Lord allowed the Israelites to defile themselves through, amongst other things, the sacrifice of their first-born children.

[EZ 21:3-4](#) The Lord says that he will cut off both the righteous and the wicked that his sword shall go against all flesh.

[EZ 23:25, 47](#) God is going to slay the sons and daughters of those who were whores.

[EZ 23:34](#) "You shall ... pluck out your hair, and tear your breasts."

[HO 13:16](#) "They shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up."

[MI 3:2-3](#) "... who pluck off their skin ..., and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron."

[MT 3:12, 8:12, 10:21, 13:30, 42, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30, LK 13:28, JN 5:24](#) Some will spend eternity burning in Hell. There will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth.

[MT 10:21](#) "... the brother shall deliver up his brother to death, and the father his child, ... children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death."

[MT 10:35-36](#) "For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law a man's enemies will be the members of his own family."

[MT 11:21-24](#) Jesus curses [the inhabitants of] three cities who were not sufficiently impressed with his great works.

[AC 13:11](#) Paul purposefully blinds a man (though not permanently).

Further Readings

- [Is God Transgender](#)
- [Feminist Philosophy of Religion](#)
- [Philosophy of Religion](#)
- [Kant's Philosophy of Religion](#)
- [Epistemology of Religion](#)

Hell: An Excessive Punishment



All perfect and yet there is the creation of the universe? Why? How could the deity then be all perfect if there is a reason for creation the being is not perfect because it has needs or purposes that need to be fulfilled.

- A spiritual being cannot be physical being.
- A physical being cannot be a spiritual being.
- A perfect being can not be physical as it would be limited and finite and would be subject to change and to the laws of the physical universe and it would decay.
- A perfect being can not be physical as it would need to be in time and space and thus have a beginning and an end.

And one more thing, the deity is written of and spoken of as male: god, the father. How is god to be thought of a male? To be a male a being would need a sexual nature. God would need to have what makes a male a male: DNA, chromosomes and genes, the xy chromosome pair in the 23 paired position of human DNA, sex organs. To be male god would need to have But that seems ridiculous and totally pointless. In other words it make no sense, literally! How can a spiritual being have physical properties? What would the one god need those organs for? How could it be possible?

Philosophy is about ideas and about reasoning and looking at ideas and beliefs and determining if they make sense or not. So philosophers look at the collection of ideas about the one deity, the supreme being deity, the deity of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition.

There are problems with any single being having all the properties traditionally assigned to the deity of the Western religions.

If the deity is all-powerful would it not have the power to create beings that would know what good was without knowing or committing evil? If this is not possible then how is the being all-powerful? If the being must make evil to make good then how is the being all-good?

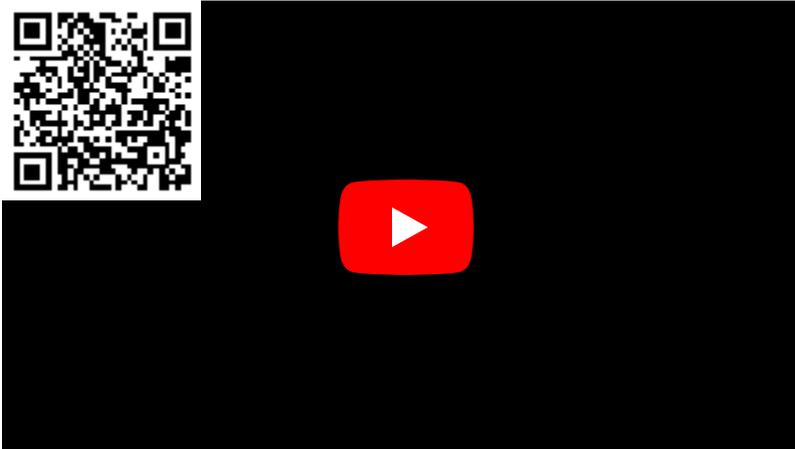
If the being is all-knowing and thus knows in advance that there will be a use of free will that produces evil and then goes and creates free will then the being has made evil and is not all-good. So, there are problems with the set of beliefs associated with the one deity of the Western religions.

The idea of god that we have appears to be a combination of ideas from the oldest time of the Judaic tradition combining with ideas of the Greeks for the spread of the idea of the Jewish god by the Christians to the Greeks and Romans. The god of the Jews is described as a powerful and mean spirited god . The god of the Jews would order entire towns, almost all living humans on the planet to be killed. The deity of Plato and Aristotle, Greek philosophers, came to be seen as a spiritual and all perfect being. So the ideas of the early Christians combined features of the two traditions with some ideas of the Zoroastrians from Middle Eastern lands (Persia). Christianity is then characterized as Hellenized Hebraism! This means that the ideas of the Greeks (Hellenes, saviors of Helen of Troy) are placed over and combined with the ideas of the Hebrews.

In any exploration into what many people regard as the characteristics or properties associated with god, some would reflect on their ideas and perhaps notice a thing or two about them. For one, some of the qualities of the deity in combination produce a

problem or two, as with evil. For another, ideas people have of the deity are very interesting when you consider the implications of those qualities.

Problems with the concept of the deity of the West



Now for those who believe in the god of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition they must believe in a single being with characteristics of being: supreme, all-powerful, all-good, all-perfect, all-knowing, eternal etc... Why must they? Well, because they have no choice either they believe in the god of those traditions or else they make up their own ideas and they are then actually moving out of those traditions and are giving good example of the post modern relativistic, subjectivist tradition of the twentieth century. The religions of the West have very clear ideas about the Deity they have at the center of their beliefs. These religions have doctrines and dogma that the faithful must accept. Now there are many people who think they are in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition but in actuality are not because they have redefined their religions to suit their personal preferences. Even so, the idea of a supreme being that most people have is beset with problems not the least of which is the problem of evil. This problem comes about as a result of combining ideas of a deity found in the Hebrew Tradition with the ideas of perfection found in the works of the Greeks (Plato and Aristotle). The concept of god in Western religions results in some perplexing ideas.

Here is one more problem with the concept of the deity beside that of Evil. Why would a perfect and supreme being create a universe? If it was for any reason then the being would be incomplete and not yet fulfilled and thus less than perfect. If it were for no reason other than fun, entertainment, play... then that raises another set of questions.

For those who alter their idea of the god to suit themselves and make the deity into something other than the classic idea of the Western religions, well they can avoid some of the problems but their god is not the god of Abraham and Moses as reported in the Bible.. They who have their own idea of god and insist that they have a right to do so would also be in violation of the first commandment that the god of the Western religions presented to Moses. The post modernists with their personal ideas of their own personal god have placed their god before the god of Abraham and Moses and Jesus and Mohammed. It is popular but certainly not orthodox. It is so popular that most who perform the substitution are unaware that they are holding ideas concerning the nature of god that would have had them condemned as heretics in prior centuries.

Another problem with the deity being all-perfect is that the being would need to possess all perfections and if freedom is a perfection or a good thing as opposed to its opposite being not god then the deity that is all perfect would also need to be free and yet it cannot be free as it is not free to be or do anything that is less than perfect or the very best possible. As it cannot be free it is not all-perfect.

Problem of Sex and the Deity

How is it that a deity can be thought of as a spiritual being and yet at the same time as having a sexual nature as a male or female (sexual identities known to species on planet Earth) when a sexual nature is a physical nature determined by physical entities such as chromosomes and organs? There are psychological and sociological explanations offered as to why deities are given sexual natures by humans. There is even now a position taken that the nature of the deity at the time of the construction of the tales at the start of the traditions in the West was not singular and the deity was at times referred to as male and other times female and even that the name given to the deity (YHWH) known as the the Tetragrammaton suggested a fluid sexual identity.

Philosophical Applications



Conception of God

What exactly should our conception of a deity be? Is it possible for a deity to have all the qualities associated with the god of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition: Supreme, All powerful, All good, Eternal, All Knowing, etc.....

What do you think of god?

Answer the above prompt in complete sentences and in the style of a philosopher.

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3.2: Arguments for the Existence of God from Revelation and Reason



Argument from Revelation

There is an argument to prove that god exists. It is based upon sacred scripture. It is based on the belief that god has revealed god's existence to humans through the creation or inspiration of the text, which is then thought to be a sacred text. Humans experience the text directly and through that experience many believe that they have contact with the deity. Argument from Revelation consists of:

Sacred Texts-

- Inspired by the deity/intermediary
- Dictated by the deity/intermediary
- Written by the deity/intermediary

Premises/Conclusion:

1. The scriptures say that God exists. (Bible, Koran, Vedas, etc.)
2. The scriptures are true because they were written by God or by inspired individuals.
3. Who inspired these individuals? (God did)
4. God is the source and guarantee of truth
5. **God Exists**

This argument or proof is not accepted by rational careful thinkers as it has problems or flaws in it. There are leaks in this "raft". There are different sorts of problems with this argument.

Problems with the Argument

Logical Problem

Fallacy: Classic circular argument

This argument assumes what it is trying to prove and thus is considered to be one of the poorest arguments of all those offered to prove the existence of God. Premise 2 and 4 actually contain the conclusion in it. But the argument is supposed to lead you to the conclusion and not assume the conclusion within the premises. You must accept that the book is from God in order to accept it as being truthful and accurate and then when you accept it as being truthful and accurate you read in it that there is a deity and so conclude that there is a God and that is what you needed to think in order to accept the book as being truthful and accurate in the first place. This circular reasoning would not convince a rational person who was not already a believer in a deity that there was a deity.

Psychological Problem

In addition today there are many people who refuse to believe that the texts are accurate descriptions of events that occurred long ago. People are aware of the psychological phenomenon whereby people who repeat tales are inclined to exaggerate or otherwise distort what actually occurred. Events might have been seen in retrospect as having been directed by a deity or as having some meaning in terms of a plan devised by a deity or as symbolic of the deity.

Textual Problem

Finally, it is now known that what have been considered to be sacred texts were voted upon by the leaders of the religious movements. Certain texts were excluded and others included by deliberate calculation of the practical results desired by those who had the power to declare the texts to be officially inspired or written by the deity.

The use of texts that are considered by some to be sacred are not likely to prove to the non-believer that they are sacred. The use of the texts to prove to a non-believer that there is a sacred source for the inspiration to the authors of the texts is not likely to be convincing when there are alternative explanations for what was created so long ago. Those alternative explanations having to do with human psychology and sociology are being accepted by steadily increasing number of people, including those who claim to be religious. Most simply cannot believe that the reports contained with the scriptures are accurate or true and fewer and fewer can accept the texts as being directed by the deity.

Truth Problem

What sacred text is the most sacred or the most true? A) What version of the sacred text are we to use? and B) the text reports events that cannot be true and cannot be verified and that can be falsified.

Variations in Sacred Texts

If the Argument from Revelation or Scripture is thought to be acceptable by some then there is the need to explain why one scripture is preferable to another and how the other scriptures that contradict the preferred scripture are to be disproved or disallowed.

1. God must exist because the scriptures say so. (Bible, Koran, Vedas, Avestas, etc.)
2. The scriptures are true because they were written by God or by inspired individuals.
3. Who inspired these individuals? (God did)

So which sacred scripture is more sacred or more holy or more true: Bible, New Testament, Koran, Vedas, Avestas?

Further Readings

- [Origins of the Koran](#)
- [Answering Islam](#)
- [Bible, Truth, and Knowledge](#)
- [Introduction to the Bible and Biblical Problems](#)
- [Bible Absurdities](#)
- [Fatal Bible Flaws](#)
- [Bible Inconsistencies](#)
- [Two Creations](#)

Variations in Texts of Western Religions

What version is the official version of the "holy book"? Why What versions of these sacred scriptures are to be taken as the official and the truthful versions? In all three traditions of the West: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, there are records to indicate that there were and are variations on the sacred texts. In all three traditions a time came when the community needed to determine what the official version or the Canon would be.

Proofs for the Existence of God: The Ontological Argument

Anselm's Ontological Argument

This is the *a priori* argument -- prior to considering the existence of the physical universe. This is reasoning without bringing in any consideration of the existence of the universe or any part of it. This is an argument considering the idea of god alone.

The argument is considered to be one of the most intriguing ever devised. It took over 400 years for Philosophers to realize what its actual flaws were. As an “*a priori*” argument, the ontological argument tries to “prove” the existence of God by establishing the necessity of God’s existence through an explanation of the concept of existence or necessary being .

Ontological Argument



Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, first set forth the ontological argument in the eleventh century. This argument is the primary locus for such philosophical problems as whether existence is a property and whether or not the notion of necessary existence is intelligible. It is also the only one of the traditional arguments that clearly leads to the necessary properties of God, such as Omnipotence, Omniscience, etc. Anselm’s argument may be conceived as a “*reductio ad absurdum*” argument. In such an argument, one begins with a supposition, which is the contrary to what one is attempting to prove. Coupling the supposition with various existing certain or self-evident assumption will yield a contradiction in the end. This contradiction is what is used to demonstrate that the contrary of the original supposition is true.

There will be several presentations of this argument so that the reader will be able to develop an understanding.

Form 1: Anselm's Argument

Premises/Conclusion:

Anselm - the supreme being - that being greater than which none can be conceived (gcb), the gcb must be conceived of as existing in reality and not just in the mind or else the gcb is not that being greater than which none can be conceived.

1. Suppose (S) that the greatest conceivable being (GCB) exists in the mind alone and not in reality(gcb1).
2. Then the greatest conceivable being would not be the greatest conceivable being because one could think of a being like (gcb1) but think of the gcb as existing in reality (gcb2) and not just in the mind.
3. So, gcb1 would not be the GCB but gcb2 would be.
4. **Thus to think of the GCB is to think of the gcb2, i.e. a being that exists in reality and not just in the mind.**

Form 2: God as Necessary Being

Premises/Conclusion

1. God is either a necessary being or a contingent being.
2. There is nothing contradictory about god being a necessary being
3. So, it is possible that god exists as a necessary being.
4. So if it is possible that God is a necessary being then God exists.
5. Because God is not a contingent being.
6. **God must exist as the necessary being.**

Anselm begins by defining the most central term in his argument - God. Without asserting that God exists, Anselm asks what is it that we mean when we refer to the idea of "God." When we speak of a God, Anselm implies, we are speaking of the most supreme being. That is, let "god" = "something than which nothing greater can be thought." Anselm's definition of God might sound confusing upon first hearing it, but he is simply restating our intuitive understanding of what is meant by the concept "God." Thus, for the purpose of this argument let "God" = "a being than which nothing greater can be conceived."

Within your understanding, then, you possess the concept of God. As a non-believer, you might argue that you have a concept of unicorn (after all, it is the shared concept that allows us to discuss such a thing) but the concept is simply an idea of a thing. After

all, we understand what a unicorn is but we do not believe that they exist. Anselm would agree.

1. Two key points have been made thus far: When we speak of God (whether we are asserting God is or God is not), we are contemplating an entity whom can be defined as "a being which nothing greater can be conceived.";
2. When we speak of God (either as believer or non-believer), we have an intra-mental understanding of that concept, i.e. the idea is within our understanding.
3. It is greater to exist in the mind and in reality, then to exist in the mind alone

Anselm continues by examining the difference between that which exists in the mind and that which exists both in the mind and outside of the mind as well. What is being asked here is: Is it greater to exist in the mind alone or in the mind and in reality (or outside of the mind)? Anselm asks you to consider the painter, e.g. define which is greater: the reality of a painting as it exists in the mind of an artist, or that same painting existing in the mind of that same artist and as a physical piece of art. Anselm contends that the painting, existing both within the mind of the artist and as a real piece of art, is greater than the mere intra-mental conception of the work. Let me offer a real-world example: If someone were to offer you a dollar, but you had to choose between the dollar that exists within their mind or the dollar that exists both in their mind and in reality, which dollar would you choose? Are you sure... At this point, we have a third key point established:

Have you figured out where Anselm is going with this argument?

1. If God is that than greater which cannot be conceived (established in #1 above);
2. And since it is greater to exist in the mind and in reality than in the mind alone (established in #3 above);
3. Then God must exist both in the mind (established in #2 above) and in reality;
4. **In short, God must be. God is not merely an intra-mental concept but an extra-mental reality as well.**

But why? Because if God is truly that than greater which cannot be conceived, it follows that God must exist both in the mind and in reality. If God did not exist in reality as well as our understanding, then we could conceive of a greater being, i.e. a being that does exist extra-mentally and intra-mentally. But, by definition, there can be no greater being. Thus, there must be a corresponding extra-mental reality to our intra-mental conception of God. God's existence outside of our understanding is logically necessary.

Sometimes, Anselm's argument is presented as a *Reductio Ad Absurdum* (RAA). In an RAA, you reduce to absurdity the antithesis of your view. Since the antithesis is absurd, your view must be correct. Anselm's argument would look something like this:

Premises/Conclusion:

1. Either [God exists] or [God does not exist].
2. Assume [God does not exist] (the antithesis of Anselm's position)
3. If [God does not exist] (but exists only as an intra-mental concept), then that being which nothing greater which can be conceived, is a being which a greater being can be conceived. This is a logical impossibility (remember criterion #3);
4. Therefore, [God does not exist] is incorrect;
5. **Therefore [God exists].**

Clarifications:

The argument is not that "If you believe that god exists then god exists". That would be too ridiculous to ask anyone to accept that if you believe that X exists and is real, then X exists and is real. The ontological argument does not ask a person to assume that there is a deity or even a GCB.

It asks anyone to simply think of the deity as the GREATEST CONCEIVABLE BEING and then it indicates that a being that exists in reality (outside of the mind) is greater than one that is just in the mind (imagination). So, the conclusion is that if you think of the GCB you must think that the GCB exists not just in your thinking (mind) but in reality (outside of your mind) as well.

It is greater to think of a being existing outside of the mind as well as in the mind so if you think of the GCB you must think that the GCB exists not just inside of the mind (imagination) but outside of the mind as well (in reality).

Look at it this way: Anselm invites people to think about a certain conception of the deity, i.e., that of the GCB. What Anselm did was to place into the concept itself the idea that the being must exist outside of the mind and in the realm of the real and not just inside the mind in the realm of imagination. So you think of the GCB and what are you doing when you do that? You must think that the GCB exists outside of the mind and in the realm of the real and not just inside the mind in the realm of imagination. Why must you think that? Because if you did not think that, then you would not be thinking of the GCB as defined by Anselm.

It is like this: Think of a triangle. If you do you must think of a three sided figure lying on a plane with three angles adding up to 180 degrees. Why? Because if you are not thinking of a three sided figure lying on a plane with three angles adding up to 180

degrees then you are not thinking of a triangle. So IF you are to think of a triangle you must think of a three sided figure lying on a plane with three angles adding up to 180 degrees.

If you are to think of a GCB you must think that the being must exist outside of the mind and in the realm of the real and not just inside the mind in the realm of imagination. Why? Because if you are not thinking that the being must exist outside of the mind and in the realm of the real and not just inside the mind in the realm of imagination then you are not thinking of the GCB. In all of this it is only thinking. Anselm proved what must be thought about the GCB given how the GCB was defined and not whether the GCB actually exists.

[Form 3: Modal Version of the Ontological](#)

Argument:

Premises/Conclusion:

1. To say that there is possibly a God is to say that there is a possible world in which God exists.
2. To say that God necessarily exists is to say that God exists in every possible world.
3. God is necessarily perfect (i.e. maximally excellent)
4. Since God is necessarily perfect, he is perfect in every possible world.
5. If God is perfect in every possible world, he must exist in every possible world, therefore God exists.
6. God is also maximally great. To be maximally great is to be perfect in every possible world.
7. Therefore: "it is possible that there is a God," means that there is a possible world which contains God, that God is maximally great, and the God exists in every possible world and is consequently necessary.
8. God's existence is at least possible.
9. **Therefore: as per item seven, God exists.**

[Form 4: Descartes Cartesian Argument for Existence of God](#)

Argument

Premises/Conclusion

1. If there is a God it is a perfect being.
2. A perfect being possesses all possible perfections;
3. Existence is a perfection;
4. **Therefore, God necessarily possesses the quality of existence. Simply, God exists.**

Problems with the Ontological Argument

The problem with the ontological argument is NOT

1. that some people refuse to think of the GCB or
2. that some people have a resistance to a belief in a deity
3. that some people just refuse to accept the deity

No, the problem with the Argument is that it has FLAWS. It has a LOGICAL MISTAKE in it. What is that error in the argument?

Conclusion of the argument is : Thus, to think of the GCB is to think of the gcb2, i.e. a being that exists in reality and not just in the mind

Immanuel Kant noticed that to think of the GCB is to think of the gcb2, i.e. a being that exists in reality and not just in the mind

But to think of the gcb2 as a being that exists in reality and not just in the mind, does not prove that the gcb2 does actually exist in reality ONLY that a person MUST THINK that the gcb2 does actually exist in reality

But for Kant and many after him , the notion of "Existence" is not a predicate: You cannot include it within the idea of the thing itself. You cannot think anything into existence by including existence as a property of that thing.

[Guanillo's Counter - argument to Anselm's Ontological Argument](#)

1. The Most Perfect Island

First: If by "God" we do mean "that than greater which can not be conceived," then the concept is meaningless for us. We can not understand, in any meaningful way, what exactly is meant by such words. The reality behind the term is completely transcendent to the human knower;

Second: Even if we grant that the concept of God as "that than greater which can not be conceived" exists in the understanding, there is no reason to believe that the concept necessitates the extra-mental reality of God. After all, I can imagine the most perfect island, glorious in every detail, but there is nothing about my understanding of the island that forces us to admit the island exists.

2. Existence is not a Predicate

Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804), offered what many believe to be a damning critique of Anselm's ontological argument.

Let us return to our discussion of unicorns and God. Anselm has argued that there exists a difference between the concept of "unicorn" as it exists intra-mentally and extra-mentally. If we claim that the "unicorn" is, we are somehow adding to the concept. We are endowing the concept with an additional predicate, i.e. the quality that it is. The point of Anselm's argument is that the predicate of existence can be demonstrated for the concept of "God."

Kant does not agree with Anselm's treatment of existence as a predicate. The concept of "unicorn" is not changed in any way if we claim that it is. Nor is the concept damaged if we claim that unicorns are not. According to Kant, "...we do not make the least addition to the thing when we further declare that this thing is." If existence is not a predicate, then Anselm's argument has not demonstrated any meaningful information.

Kant thought that, while the concept of a supreme being was useful, it was only an idea, which in and of itself could not help us in our determining the correctness of the concept. While it was a possibility, he felt that the "*a priori*" stance of the argument it would be necessary to buttress it with experience.

For Kant what Anselm did was to prove that humans MUST THINK THAT a deity exists in reality and not just in the mind as an idea as the GCB but that does not mean that the GCB actually does exist in reality. The idea of the GCB exists and the idea of the GCB as an actual being does exist but the reality or actuality of the GCB is not established based on the thoughts alone.

Example:

1. You go home and look at the top of your dresser. You could use some money and as you look there you imagine seeing ten ten dollar bills.
2. You go home and look at the top of your dresser. You could use some money and as you look there you see ten Monopoly dollar bills.
3. You go home and look at the top of your dresser. You could use some money and as you look there you see ten real dollar bills.

Which of the three is the greatest or best situation? #3 is. But just thinking about #3 does not actually add any money to your total amount. This is Kant's point.

Thinking about the GCB logically entails "thinking" that the GCB must exist in reality and not just in the imagination. But thinking about the GCB as existing in reality and not just in the imagination does not prove that the GCB actually does exist in reality and not just in the imagination. It is just an idea about what exists.

3. The Greatest Conceivable Evil Being

As an "*a priori*" argument, the Ontological Argument tries to "prove" the existence of God by establishing the necessity of God's existence through an explanation of the concept of existence or necessary being. As this criticism of the Ontological Argument shows, the same arguments used to prove an all-powerful god, could be used to prove an all-powerful devil. Since there could not exist two all-powerful beings (one's power must be subordinate to the other), this is an example of one of the weaknesses in this type of theorizing. Furthermore, the concept of necessary existence, by using Anselm's second argument, allows us to "define" other things into existence.

The argument could prove the existence of that being more EVIL than which no other can be conceived just as easily as it supposedly proves the existence of the being that is the greatest conceivable being.

Think of a being that is the most evil being that can be conceived. That being must be conceived of as existing in reality and not just in the mind or it wouldn't be the most evil being which can be conceived for a being that does not exist in reality is not evil at all.

4. Empiricist Critique

Aquinas, 1225-1274, once declared the official philosopher of the Catholic Church, built his objection to the ontological argument on epistemological grounds.

Epistemology is the study of knowledge. It is a branch of philosophy that seeks to answer such questions as: What is knowledge?; What is truth?; How does knowing occur? etc. Aquinas is known as an empiricist. Empiricists claim that knowledge comes from sense experience. Aquinas wrote: "Nothing is in the intellect which was not first in the senses."

Within Thomas' empiricism, we cannot reason or infer the existence of God from a studying of the definition of God. We can know God only indirectly, through our experiencing of God as Cause to that which we experience in the natural world. We cannot assail the heavens with our reason; we can only know God as the Necessary Cause of all that we observe.

Concluding Summary:

What it does prove:

1. Anselm proves that if you think of the GCB you must THINK that it exists.
2. Descartes proves that if you conceive of an ALL PERFECT being you must CONCEIVE (THINK) of that being as existing.
3. Kant points out that even though you must THINK that it exists does not mean that it does exist. Existence is not something we can know from the mere idea itself. It is not known as a predicate of a subject. Independent confirmation through experience is needed.
4. The argument does give some support to those who are already believers. It has variations that establish the possibility of the existence of such a being.
5. The argument will not convert the non-believer into a believer.

Outcome Assessment

This argument or proof does not establish the actual existence of a supernatural deity. It attempts to define a being into existence and that is not rationally legitimate. While the argument can not be used to convert a non-believer to a believer, the faults in the argument do not prove that there is no god. The Burden of Proof demands that the positive claim that there is a supernatural deity be established by reason and evidence and this argument does not meet that standard. The believer in god can use the argument to establish the mere logical possibility that there is a supernatural deity or at least that it is not irrational to believe in the possibility that there is such a being. The argument does not establish any degree of probability at all.

Suppose (S) that the greatest conceivable being (GCB) exists in the mind alone and not in reality (gcb1). Then the greatest conceivable being would not be the greatest conceivable being because one could think of a being like (gcb1) but think of the gcb as existing in reality (gcb2) and not just in the mind. So, gcb1 would not be the GCB but gcb2 would be. Thus to think of the GCB is to think of the gcb2, i.e. a being that exists in reality and not just in the mind.

Conclusion: The GCB (Deity) exists

Problem with argument:

1. ___ Premises are false
2. ___ Premises are irrelevant
3. ___ Premises Contain the Conclusion –Circular Reasoning
4. X Premises are inadequate to support the conclusion
5. ___ Alternative arguments exist with equal or greater support

This argument or proof has flaws in it and would not convince a rational person to accept its conclusion. This is not because someone who does not believe in a deity will simply refuse to accept based on emotions or past history but because it is not rationally compelling of acceptance of its conclusion.

Proofs for the Existence of God: The Cosmological Argument



The Cosmological Argument

This argument or proof proceeds from a consideration of the existence and order of the universe. This popular argument for the existence of God is most commonly known as the cosmological argument. Aristotle, much like a natural scientist, believed that we could learn about our world and the very essence of things within our world through observation. As a marine biologist might observe and catalog certain marine life in an attempt to gain insight into that specific thing's existence, so too did Aristotle observe the physical world around him in order to gain insight into his world. The very term cosmological is a reflection of Aristotle's relying upon sense data and observation. The word logos suggests a study of something while the noun cosmos means order or the way things are. Thus, a cosmological argument for the existence of God will study the order of things or examine why things are the way they are in order to demonstrate the existence of God.

The Universe



For Aristotle, the existence of the universe needs an explanation, as it could not have come from nothing. There needs to be a cause for the universe. Nothing comes from nothing so since there is something there must have been some other something that is its cause. Aristotle rules out an infinite progression of causes, so that led to the conclusion that there must be a First Cause. Likewise with Motion, there must have been a First Mover.

This argument was given support by modern science with the idea of the universe originating in a BIG BANG, a single event from a single point.

The Big Bang Cosmological Theory



St. Thomas Aquinas Cosmological Argument (*The Unmoved Mover*)

Thomas Aquinas offered five somewhat similar arguments using ideas of the first mover, first cause, the sustainer, the cause of excellence, the source of harmony

Here is a sample of the pattern:

Premises/Conclusion:

1. there exists a series of events
2. the series of events exists as caused and not as uncaused(necessary)
3. there must exist the necessary being that is the cause of all contingent being
4. **there must exist the necessary being that is the cause of the whole series of beings**

The Argument From Motion

Aquinas had *Five Proofs for the Existence of God*. Let us consider his First argument, the so-called *Argument from Motion*. Aquinas begins with an observation: Of the things we observe, all things have been placed in motion. No thing has placed itself in motion.

Working from the assumption that if a thing is in motion then it has been caused to be in motion by another thing, Aquinas also notes that an infinite chain of things-in-motion and things-causing-things-to-be-in-motion can not be correct. If an infinite chain or regression existed among things-in-motion and things-causing-things-to-be-in-motion then we could not account for the motion we observe. If we move backwards from the things we observe in motion to their cause, and then to that cause of motion within those things that caused motion, and so on, then we could continuing moving backwards *ad infinitum*. It would be like trying to count all of the points in a line segment, moving from point B to point A. We would never get to point A. Yet point A must exist as we know there is a line segment. Similarly, if the cause-and-effect chain did not have a starting point then we could not account for the motion we observe around us. Since there is motion, the cause and effect chain (accounting for motion) must have had a starting point. We now have a second point:

The cause and effect relationship among things-being-moved and things-moving must have a starting point. At one point in time, the relationship was set in motion. Thus, there must be a First Cause which set all other things in motion.

What else can we know about the First Cause? The first cause must have been uncaused. If it were caused by another thing, then we have not resolved the problem of the infinite regression. So, in order to account for the motion that we observe, it is necessary to posit a beginning to the cause and effect relationship underlying the observed motion. It is also necessary to claim that the First Cause has not been caused by some other thing. It is not set in motion by another entity.

The First Cause is also the Unmoved Mover. The Unmoved Mover is that being whom set all other entities in motion and is the cause of all other beings. For Aquinas, the Unmoved Mover is that which we call God.

For Aquinas the term motion meant not just motion as with billiard balls moving from point A to point B or a thing literally moving from one place to another. Another sense of the term motion is one that appreciates the Aristotelian sense of moving from a state of potentiality towards a state of actuality. When understood in this way, motion reflects the becoming inherent in the world around us. God as First Cause becomes that entity which designed and set in motion all things in their quest to become. In the least, it is a more poetic understanding of motion.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) was a theologian, Aristotelian scholar, and philosopher. Called the Doctor Angelicus (the Angelic Doctor,) Aquinas is considered one the greatest Christian philosophers to have ever lived.

Much of St. Thomas's thought is an attempt to understand Christian orthodoxy in terms of Aristotelian philosophy. His five proofs for the existence of God take "as givens" some of Aristotle's assertions concerning being and the principles of being (the study of being and its principles is known as metaphysics within philosophy). Before analyzing further the first of Aquinas' Five Ways, let us examine some of the Aristotelian underpinnings at work within St. Thomas' philosophy.

Aristotle and Aquinas also believed in the importance of the senses and sense data within the knowing process. Aquinas once wrote nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses. Those who place priority upon sense data within the knowing process are known as empiricists. Empirical data is that which can be sensed and typically tested. Unlike Anselm, who was a rationalist, Aquinas will not rely on non-empirical evidence (such as the definition of the term "God" or "perfection") to demonstrate God's existence. St. Thomas will observe the physical world around him and, moving from effect to cause, will try to explain why things are the way they are. He will assert God as the ultimate Cause of all that is. For Aquinas, the assertion of God as *prima causa* (first cause) is not so much a blind religious belief but a philosophical and theoretical necessity. God as first cause is at the very heart of St. Thomas' *Five Ways* and his philosophy in general.

One last notion that is central to St. Thomas' *Five Ways* is the concept of potentiality and actuality. Aristotle observed that things/substances strive from an incomplete state to a complete state. Things will grow and tend to become as they exist. The more complete a thing is, the better an instance of that thing it is. We have idioms and expressions within our language that reflect this idea. For example, we might say that so-and-so has a lot of potential. We might say that someone is at the peak of their game or that someone is the best at what they do. We might say it just does not get any better than this if we are having a very enjoyable time. Aristotle alludes to this commonly held intuition when he speaks of organisms moving from a state of potentiality to actuality. When Aquinas speaks of motion within the *First Way* (the cosmological argument) he is referencing the Aristotelian concepts of potentiality and actuality.

Argument from Contingency

English theologian and philosopher Samuel Clarke set forth a second variation of the Cosmological Argument, which is considered to be a superior version. It is called the "Argument from Contingency".

Premises/Conclusion:

1. Every being that exists is either contingent or necessary.
2. Not every being can be contingent.
3. Therefore, there exists a necessary being on which the contingent beings depend.
4. A necessary being, on which all contingent things depend, is what we mean by "God".
5. **Therefore, God exists.**

However, there are several weaknesses in the Cosmological Argument, which make it unable to "prove" the existence of God by itself. One is that if it is not possible for a person to conceive of an infinite process of causation, without a beginning, how is it possible for the same individual to conceive of a being that is infinite and without beginning? The idea that causation is not an infinite process is being introduced as a given, without any reasons to show why it could not exist.

Clarke (1675-1729) has offered a version of the Cosmological Argument, which many philosophers consider superior. The "Argument from Contingency" examines how every being must be either necessary or contingent. Since not every being can be contingent, it follows that there must be a necessary being upon which all things depend. This being is God. Even though this method of reasoning may be superior to the traditional Cosmological Argument, it is still not without its weaknesses. One of its weaknesses has been called the "Fallacy of Composition". The form of the mistake is this: Every member of a collection of dependent beings is accounted for by some explanation. Therefore, the collection of dependent beings is accounted for by one explanation. This argument will fail in trying to reason that there is only one first cause or one necessary cause, i.e. one God .

There are those who maintain that there is no sufficient reason to believe that there exists a self-existent being.

Counter Argument:

1. If there is a cause for everything then what caused the first cause (God).
2. If the first cause can be thought to be uncaused and a necessary being existing forever, then why not consider that the universe itself has always existed and shall always exist and go through a never ending cycle of expansion and contraction and then expansion (big bang) again and again!

3. Further, even if a person wanted to accept that there was such a being there is nothing at all in the cosmological argument to indicate that the being would have any of the properties of humans that are projected into the concept of the deity of any particular religion. The first mover or first cause is devoid of any other characteristic.

If there is to be a deity that is the exception from the requirement that all existing things need a cause then the same exception can be made for the sum of all energy that exists, considering that it manifests in different forms.

What the counter argument does is to indicate that the premises of the cosmological argument do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that there is a being that is responsible for the creation of the universe.

So the cosmological argument is neither a valid argument in requiring the truth of its conclusion nor is it a satisfactory argument to prove the existence of any being that would have awareness of the existence of the universe or any event within it.

When a person asks questions such as :

1. What is the cause of the the energy or the force or the agent behind the expansion and contraction of the energy?

These questions are considered as "loaded questions" because they load or contain assumptions about what exists or is true that have not yet been established. Why is it that the idea of a "force or agent" is even in the question? Why operate with the assumption that there is such or needs to be such?

We do not know that there is a force "behind" the expansion and contraction. Energy might just expand and contract and there is no force at all other than those generated by the energy-gravitational force, electro-magnetic, strong and weak forces.

In another form this is the "who made God?" question or the "who made the energy?" question. Such an approach to the issue of an explanation for the existence of the universe assumes that there must be an agency. When the idea of an eternal and necessary agency is introduced it was done to provide a form for describing a being that some people wanted as the ultimate explanation - a deity. The point of the counter arguments to the cosmological argument is that the idea of an eternal and necessary agency can as logically be expressed as energy rather than as a single being or entity. If the uncaused cause can be thought of a a single entity then the uncaused cause can be thought of a a single process-energy.

Here is another view of this argument and the rebuttal:

Premises/Conclusion:

1. there exists a series of events
2. the series of events exists as caused and not as uncaused (necessary)
3. there must exist the necessary being that is the cause of all contingent being
4. **There must exist the necessary being that is the cause of the whole series of beings**

Premises/Conclusion

1. RULE: Everything that exists must have a cause
2. the Universe (multiverse) exists
3. the universe (multiverse) must have a cause
4. **The cause of the universe (multiverse) is GOD**

Rebuttal:

1. But what is the cause of God?
2. God has no cause but is a necessary being. God is an exception to rule.
3. If God can be the exception then why not Energy?

Clarke's "Argument from Contingency"

Premises/Conclusion

1. Every being that exists is either contingent or necessary.
2. Not every being can be contingent.
3. Therefore, there exists a necessary being on which the contingent beings depend.
4. A necessary being, on which all contingent things depend, is what we mean by "God".
5. **Therefore, God exists.**

Rebuttal:

Why not have that a necessary being on which the contingent beings depend is ENERGY itself that changes its form through time?

Further Reading

- [Something from Nothing?](#)
- [David Hume's Critique of the Cosmological Argument](#)

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

Premises:

1. The universe either had a beginning or it did not.
2. The universe had a beginning.
 - a. Philosophical arguments for the impossibility of transvering an actual infinite series of events (see above).
 - b. The Big Bang Theory of the Universe postulates a beginning.
 - i. This is the most widely recognized theory of the universe.
 - c. The second law of thermodynamics (entropy).
3. The universe is running out of energy.
 - a. If it had an infinite past, it would have run out by now.
4. The beginning of the universe was either caused or uncaused.
 - a. The beginning of the universe was caused.
 - i. Contra Hume, every event has a cause.
 - ii. God is not an event.
 - iii. One might hold that some events, like quantum events, don't need causes.
 - iv. If so, then this premise can be replaced with "Everything that begins to exist has a cause."

Rebuttal to the Kalam Cosmological Argument



Rebuttal of Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God

Nothing can come from nothing is a fairly well accepted principle since Parmenides. In the West it is taken to be used to support the idea that the universe must have had a creator or a maker or source or origin. However, that is due to the prior storied of a creator being that sets the intellectual environment in which thinking takes place. Now in the East and now in the West there are alternative approaches to the explanation of the universe that we experience.

1. Nothing comes from nothing.
2. Something does exist.
3. Therefore, has never been nothing.
4. It is possible that the something that currently exists has always existed.

5. The something that exists is always changing.
6. Change is a feature of something.

The East has had such notions for millennium. In the West there are now alternative cosmologies to account for the cosmos -- M theory is one of them. A flaw in the cosmological argument is in giving special exclusive status to a deity that would need no creator or origin outside of itself - a necessary being -- without acknowledging that such status could be given to the basic stuff, physis, of the universe, its energy, that can take different forms. What the western thinkers omitted as a possibility was the alternative that there is energy that has always existed and undergoes changes that are time and it can expand and contract and generate multiple dimensions. The Hindus and Buddhists have this sort of idea and so to do the Taoists.

If people need to believe that there was an origination for the universe and that the origination involves an eternal entity then you can have several possibilities including these:

1. eternal entity = deity = creator of universe
2. eternal entity = energy = continual existence of energy in various forms undergoing continual change = universe

For a explanation of the universe or multiple universes that holds that they have always existed and go through what may be termed cycles see the following as a start from Wikipedia A cyclic model is any of several cosmological models in which the universe follows infinite, self-sustaining cycles.

Outcome Assessment

This argument or proof does not establish the actual existence of a supernatural deity. It attempts to argue for the existence of such a being by making exceptions to rules in the argument and that is not rationally legitimate. While the argument can not be used to convert a non-believer to a believer, the faults in the argument do not prove that there is no god. The Burden of Proof demands that the positive claim that there is a supernatural deity be established by reason and evidence and this argument does not meet that standard. The believer in God can use the argument to establish the mere logical possibility that there is a supernatural deity or at least that it is not irrational to believe in the possibility that there is such a being. The argument does not establish any degree of probability at all when there are alternative explanations for the existence of the known universe.

Premises/Conclusion:

1. RULE: Everything that exists must have a cause
2. the Universe (multiverse) exists
3. the universe (multiverse) must have a cause
4. **The cause of the universe (multiverse) is God**

Rebuttal:

1. BUT what is the cause of God?
2. God has no cause but is a necessary being. God is an exception to rule.
3. **The Deity exists.**

Problem with argument:

1. ___ Premises are false
2. ___ Premises are irrelevant
3. ___ Premises Contain the Conclusion –Circular Reasoning
4. ___ Premises are inadequate to support the conclusion
5. X Alternative arguments exist with equal or greater support

This argument or proof has flaws in it and would not convince a rational person to accept its conclusion. This is not because someone who does not believe in a deity will simply refuse to accept this proof based on emotions or past history but because it is not rationally compelling of acceptance of its conclusion.

Proofs for the Existence of God: The Teleological Argument

The Teleological Argument or proof for the existence of a deity is sometimes called the Design argument. Even if you have never heard of either argument, you are probably familiar with the central idea of the argument, i.e. there exists so much intricate detail, design, and purpose in the world that we must suppose a creator. All of the sophistication and incredible detail we observe in nature could not have occurred by chance.

When looking at the universe people might see more order or disorder as is their predilection and they might see it in varying proportions. When examining the universe and seeing complexity and order there are a variety of explanations for how it may have

come about. Some people want an explanation backed by evidence and without violations of reasoning and some do not want such explanations. Some want the easiest explanations with the least amount of thought. Some merely accept the explanations that they have received when growing up.

The term teleological comes from the Greek words *telos* and *logos*. *Telos* means the goal or end or purpose of a thing while *logos* means the study of the very nature of a thing. The suffix *ology* or the study of is also from the noun *logos*. To understand the *logos* of a thing means to understand the very why and how of that thing's nature - it is more than just a simple studying of a thing. The teleological argument is an attempt to prove the existence of God that begins with the observation of the purposiveness of nature. The teleological argument moves to the conclusion that there must exist a designer. The inference from design to designer is why the teleological argument is also known as the design argument.

The Teleological Argument



The Teleological Argument is the second traditional “*a posteriori*” argument for the existence of God. Perhaps the most famous variant of this argument is the William Paley’s “Watch” argument. Basically, this argument says that after seeing a watch, with all its intricate parts, which work together in a precise fashion to keep time, one must deduce that this piece of machinery has a creator, since it is far too complex to have simply come into being by some other means, such as evolution.

The basic premise, of all teleological arguments for the existence of God, is that the world exhibits an intelligent purpose based on experience from nature such as its order, unity, coherency, design and complexity. Hence, there must be an intelligent designer to account for the observed intelligent purpose and order that we can observe.

Paley's teleological argument is based on an analogy: Watchmaker is to watch as God is to universe. Just as a watch, with its intelligent design and complex function must have been created by an intelligent maker: a watchmaker, the universe, with all its complexity and greatness, must have been created by an intelligent and powerful creator. Therefore, a watchmaker is to watch as God is to universe.

The skeleton of the argument is as follows:

Premises/Conclusion:

1. Human artifacts are products of intelligent design; they have a purpose.
2. The universe resembles these human artifacts.
3. Therefore: It is probable that the universe is a product of intelligent design, and has a purpose.
4. However, the universe is vastly more complex and gigantic than a human artifact is.
5. **Therefore: There is probably a powerful and vastly intelligent designer who created the universe.**

Paley's Teleological Argument For The Existence Of God

Premises/Conclusion

1. Human artifacts are products of intelligent design.
2. The universe resembles human artifacts.
3. Therefore the universe is a product of intelligent design.
4. But the universe is complex and gigantic, in comparison to human artifacts.
5. **Therefore, there probably is a powerful and vastly intelligent designer who created the universe.**

Criticism or Rebuttal of Teleological Argument

- How much order is there?
- What other universes exist to compare this one to them?
- No conclusion to only 1 creator!
- No conclusion to a divine creator!
- No conclusion as to a very intelligent creator!

Alternative explanations exist involving natural processes! Possibility: Aliens? Possibility: Universe making contest amongst multiple deities!

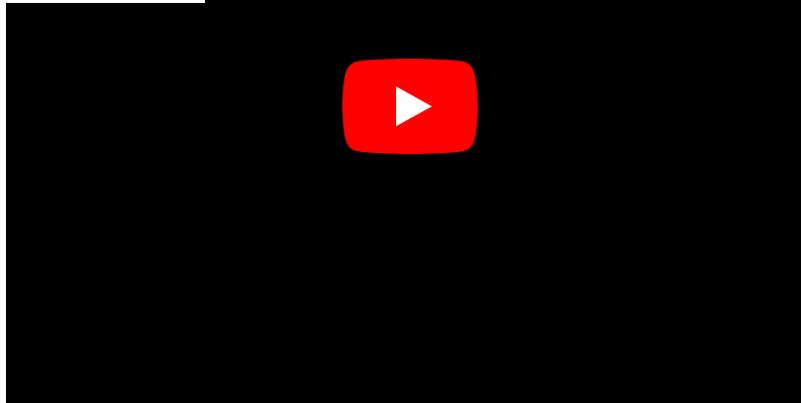
David Hume's Counter Argument

1. The universe does not exhibit that much order as there are many indications of disorder such as the collision of galaxies, black holes, nova and supernova, cosmic radiation, gamma radiation, meteor impacts, volcanoes, earthquakes
2. argument from parts to whole is not valid
3. analogy fails because there are no other universes to compare this one to
4. the argument does not prove the existence of only one (1) such god
5. the argument does not prove that the creator is infinite

David Hume, 1711-1776, argued against the Design Argument through an examination of the nature of analogy. Analogy compares two things, and, on the basis of their similarities, allows us to draw conclusions about the objects. The more closely each thing resembles the other, the more accurate the conclusion. Have you ever heard the expression you are comparing apples to oranges? We use the above-mentioned idiom when we want to express the notion that a comparison is not accurate due to that dissimilarity of things under scrutiny. A good analogy will not compare apples to oranges.

Is the universe similar to a created artifact? Are they similar enough to allow for a meaningful analogy. Hume argues that the two are so dissimilar as to disallow analogy. Further, we know so very little about the universe that we can not compare it to any created thing that is within our knowledge. If we want to employ a valid analogy between, say, the building of a house and the building of the universe we must be able to have an understanding of both terms. Since we can not know about the building of the universe a Design Analogy for the existence of God is nothing more than a guess.

David Hume's Objection to Teleological or Design Argument for Existence of God



The Intelligent Design Theory

In recent years a number of scientists have attempted to supply a variation on the teleological argument that is also a counter to the evolutionary theory. It is called Intelligent Design Theory. This theory disputes that the process of natural selection, the force Darwin suggested drove evolution, is enough to explain the complexity of and within living organisms. This theory holds that the complexity requires the work of an intelligent designer. The designer could be something like the Supreme Being or the Deity of the Scriptures or it could be that life resulted as a consequence of a meteorite from elsewhere in the cosmos, possibly involving

extraterrestrial intelligence, or as in new age philosophy that the universe is suffused with a mysterious but inanimate life force from which life results.

One of its weaknesses is that the argument for intelligent design is subject to a great many definitions: What is intelligent design? Opponents of this argument will point out that rather than looking to see if an object looks as if it were designed, we should look at it and determine if its origin could have been natural.

[The Theory of Intelligent Design with Morgan Freeman](#)

403 ERROR

The request could not be satisfied.



the fact that the universe is so well designed mean that it must have had a Designer?

pared to what? The universe is terribly complex, vastly interesting, awe-inspiring—but, as far as we can tell, it is the only one. Since we can all imagine a better-designed universe, even though none of us is divine (ask the folks in areas now suffering from floods or from droughts if they couldn't design a better water distribution system about now, or contemplate your own appendix or your poor pet's fleas or West-Nile-virus-bearing mosquitoes), it's a little hard to know if it's "well designed."

And, even if it is, wouldn't a God necessarily be even better designed—so who designed Him, and then who designed that Designer, ad infinitum?

Most people who bring this one up have in mind some variation of a creationist argument in response to Darwin or other evolutionary theorists. The one usually credited with popularizing or developing this version is William Paley, who described it in *Natural Theology* (1802). Daniel C. Dennett (1995) argues convincingly that Hume anticipated Paley, having Cleanthes, one of his (Hume's) three fictional characters in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779/modern reprint, Prometheus Books), lay out the argument.

In any case, the real problem is that design and a "Designer" with a purpose are not necessarily connected. The natural forces at work in the universe do change things, and at least in the case of organic matter, those changes are in a particular direction, or directions. But that does not imply purpose or an intentional destination. Organisms with inheritable characteristics that work better in whatever environment they are in are more likely to survive and reproduce—so "Nature," or evolutionary forces, do design organisms that are increasingly well adapted and thus are often increasingly complex. Given a few million generations over a few billion years, such design forces can create an astonishing variety of interesting products—but that in no way suggests an omnipotent, omniscient, purposeful Creator.

[The Complexity or Improbability Counter Argument](#)

The more the complexity of the universe or the improbability of its actual orderings then the less likely it is that it had or has an intelligent designer.

[Irreducible Complexity Argument](#)



The case made by the promoters of the intelligent design argument is actually providing evidence against the conclusion that there must be an intelligent designer. The more the complexity of the universe is advocated or presented by the promoters of the intelligent design argument as a supposed indication of intelligence at work, then the more it works against the conclusion that there must be an intelligent designer. Why? Because if there was an intelligent designer there would be no need for all the complexity and waste observed in the physical universe.

Outcome Assessment

This argument or proof does not establish the actual existence of a supernatural deity. It attempts to argue for the existence of such a being by making comparisons that are questionable and using evidence that is also questionable and for which there alternative explanations and that is not rationally legitimate. While the argument can not be used to convert a non-believer to a believer, the faults in the argument do not prove that there is no god. The Burden of Proof demands that the positive claim that there is a supernatural deity be established by reason and evidence and this argument does not meet that standard. The believer in god can use the argument to establish the mere logical possibility that there is a supernatural deity or at least that it is not irrational to believe in the possibility that there is such a being. The argument does not establish any degree of probability at all when there are alternative explanations for the existence of features of the known universe.

Premises/Conclusion:

1. Human artifacts are products of intelligent design.
2. The universe resembles human artifacts.
3. Therefore the universe is a product of intelligent design.
4. But the universe is complex and gigantic, in comparison to human artifacts.
5. **Therefore, there probably is a powerful and vastly intelligent designer who created the universe.**

Problem with argument:

1. Premises are false or questionable
2. Premises are irrelevant
3. Premises Contain the Conclusion –Circular Reasoning
4. Premises are inadequate to support the conclusion
5. Alternative arguments exist with equal or greater support

This argument or proof has flaws in it and would not convince a rational person to accept its conclusion. This is not because someone who does not believe in a deity will simply refuse to accept based on emotions or past history but because it is not rationally compelling of acceptance of its conclusion.

Philosophical Applications



Writing assignment: Use the text and outside resources to support your answers. Make sure you completely and thoroughly answer each part.

Arguments for the Existence of God: The arguments for the existence of god have weaknesses. Some have more problems than others. Some seem more attractive and some stronger than others.

1. What do you think the value of these arguments to be?
2. Why do humans care about these arguments or proofs?
3. Since they all have problems, are they necessary for the believer in god?
4. Select any one argument: Ontological, Cosmological, Teleological, Miracles, Experience
 - describe it
 - describe its weakness or flaw
 - point out what its attraction would be
 - what use a believer can make of it despite its problem.

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3.3: Arguments for the Existence of God from Experience and Pragmatism



Arguments for the Existence of God from Religious Experience

Arguments or proofs based upon experience come in two basic forms

1. Direct Experience
 - a. Encounter with the supernatural
 - b. Mystical experience- union with the deity/supernatural
2. Indirect Experience
 - a. Miracles

For many religious people there is in the center of their religious nature the feeling that there is something more than their individual consciousness could contact. There is a sense of something "more" or bigger than anything in the known universe. This issues into a hypothesis or idea of a supernatural reality or dimension of reality beyond that which normal sensation can encounter.

A Religious experience is an encounter of a human being with a supernatural being, be it a deity or an emissary or intermediary for the deity, nevertheless a spiritual entity. It is a numinal experience. Religious experiences are for the most part, individual and esoteric.

The mystical experience is a particular variety of religious experience in which the subject is transformed and reports the loss of individuality, the oneness of all reality, union with the deity, the unity of the subject of the experience with the object of the experience. It is an experience which posits the oneness of all reality and the unity of all. In particular, the Mystical Experience involves the unity of the subject with its object (the deity, the totality).

- The commonalities in such experience around the world is termed the *consensus mysticum*.
- It has been described by Rudolph Otto as involving an experience characterized as being *tremendum et fascinans*

William James has described such experiences as having the following characteristics:

- Ineffable noetic
- Anti-naturalistic transient
- Passive pantheistic
- optimistic

James held that such experiences are powerful and lead the subject of such an experience to a belief in a supernatural entity. James held:

- Mystical states are authoritative over the individual who has the experience
- Mystical states have no authority over individuals who have not had such an experience
- Mystical states break down the authority of ordinary consciousness and sense knowledge. Such states offer hypotheses which others may ignore
- Such religious experiences have consequences for those who encounter them. They issue into feelings and actions.

The questions are:

1. Is the subject of a religious experience justified inferring from the psychological experience to the existential or the ontological reality of the object of that experience: the supernatural being?
2. Is anyone else justified in reaching the conclusion that a supernatural being exists based upon the report of the individual who has made the claim to have had the religious experience?
3. Does the accumulation of reports from such witnesses to religious experiences justify the claim that a supernatural or spiritual being, a deity, a transcendent reality, exists?

Argument From Religious Experience

Problems

Premises/Conclusion

1. People report encounters with a deity or being sent from the deity
2. **There must exist a deity.**

Rebuttal or Counter Argument

The reports of such encounters are not verified as they have alternative naturalistic explanations that do not involve the existence of any supernatural agents. So many do ask: Are the reports true? Veridical?

Not all who learn of the reports of such religious experiences accept them as conclusive evidence for the existence of a supernatural reality or spiritual beings. Many have attempted to give alternative accounts of such experiences that do not involve acceptance of the existence of any supernatural entities or reality.

Naturalism is an approach to religious experiences which explains them as being the result of natural forces. It accounts for such phenomena in natural terms without recourse to anything that is beyond the physical realm. In general, all reality and all experiences can be accounted for (fully explained) in terms of physical processes.

There are different explanations for the origin and nature of religious experiences. What they have in common is the rejection of a supernatural source or object and the attempt to offer a full explanation in empirically verifiable terms.

Psychological explanations have been offered by several theoreticians, including Sigmund Freud. Sociological explanations have also been developed by several other scientists, such as Emil Durkheim. What they have in common is the refusal to accept religious experiences as being truthful, accurate, or believable in so far as the existence of any supernatural reality. One of the principle reasons for withholding acceptance of the reports is that the experiences can not be verified and what they report encountering can not be verified empirically.

Alternative Explanations

When people hear of those who claim to have seen god or an angel or have heard a voice or were instructed by god to kill their child, most people are inclined to think that the claim is not an accurate and truthful report. Most tend not to believe the person making the claim. Most people would be inclined to suspect one or more of the following factors are the more likely explanation of the claim other than that the claim is accurate and true.

- Persons are mistaken, e.g., optical illusion, misinterpretation, hallucination
- Persons are under the influence of mind altering substances
- Persons are suffering from brain malfunctioning, e.g., chemical imbalance in brain
- Persons are under the influence of group influence-social psychology
- Persons are self deceiving
- Persons operate with confirmation bias and belief perseverance.
- Persons are preconditioned for Misinformation Effect but self deceived
- Persons are manipulated by Compliance Techniques
- Persons operating with Projection
- Persons have a need for Closure
- Persons have a need for Agenticity : Anthropomorphism

Hallucinations



Questions

1. Are the reports concerning these religious experiences veridical (truthful and accurate)
2. What is the scientific analysis of the religious experiences?
3. What are the genetic and causal conditions of religious experiences?
 - a. in the human race ?
 - b. in the individual?
4. Is the religious experience veridical? Is it truthful? Is it a report which others can accept as being Correct? Truthful? Accurate?

Humans should accept religious experiences as being veridical unless there exists positive grounds for thinking otherwise, for thinking that the reports are not truthful, accurate or correct. Some claim that there are positive grounds for rejecting the reports of such experiences, i.e., against their being veridical experiences

- mystics are abnormal: they tend to be sexually repressed
- mystical experience is always mixed with other elements such as sexual emotion or imagery

In response to these observations some offer that perhaps the human being must be in an altered state of consciousness in order to have the experience of the greater (supernatural) reality which the ordinary consciousness can not contain or reach. Sexual abstinence may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for having such an encounter.

Outcome Assessment

This argument or proof does not establish the actual existence of a supernatural deity. It attempts to argue for the existence of such a being by offering evidence that is highly questionable and for which there are alternative and often more plausible explanations. While the argument can not be used to convert a non-believer to a believer, the faults in the argument do not prove that there is no god. The Burden of Proof demands that the positive claim that there is a supernatural deity be established by reason and evidence and this argument does not meet that standard. The believer in god can use this argument to establish the mere logical possibility that there is a supernatural deity or at least that it is not irrational to believe in the possibility that there is such a being but the argument does not establish any degree of probability at all when there are alternative explanations for the reports of experiences offered. The veracity of the reports has not been established.

Premises/Conclusion

1. People report encounters with a deity or being sent from the deity
2. **There must exist a deity.**

Problem with argument:

1. Premises are false or questionable
2. Premises are irrelevant
3. Premises Contain the Conclusion –Circular Reasoning
4. Premises are inadequate to support the conclusion
5. Alternative arguments exist with equal or greater support

This argument or proof has flaws in it and would not convince a rational person to accept its conclusion. This is not because someone who does not believe in a deity will simply refuse to accept based on emotions or past history but because it is not

rationally compelling of acceptance of its conclusion. God made me do it...

Argument for Existence of God from Miracles

Many but not all of the religions of the world have as part of their traditions claims of miracles. Miracles have different forms and play different roles within each religion. The religions of the West have many things in common that have a bearing on the way in which they view miracles. They share in being religions of the holy book or sacred text. They place importance on events which have been reported to have occurred in history. They rely on the existence of miracles. The events which are reported to have taken place in the time of Moses are key to the acceptance of the idea of the One God for the peoples of Israel and all who follow after them. The events during the times of Jesus, the Christ, are also the basis for the acceptance of Jesus as being the Son of God by the followers of Jesus. The spread of Islam is also an event regarded as miraculous and a proof of the legitimacy of the claims of Mohammed. So, miracles are important for the Western religions.

Miracles have served as the foundation for the historical proof of the existence of the God of the western religions. The leadership of the religions of the West do not want miracle taken lightly and do not want false claims of miracles. These religions will often be the first to investigate claims of miraculous events in order to disprove them! The concern is that if people come to accept the claim of a miracle and it later turns out to be disproved, then those who had come to believe in it might come not only to stop believing in that particular "miracle" that had been disproved but in all other such claims and thus might come to lose their faith altogether. The fear is that people would think something similar to this: "If I could be fooled into thinking this recent event was a miracle, then what about those people long ago who reported experiencing a miracle? Could it be possible that they too were deceived? Or mistaken?"

Current cinema offers several movies that have miracles as their theme. A few have a member of a church sent to investigate the legitimacy of a claim of a miracle. The movies are for entertainment and most of these films result in some sort of confirmation for the audience. In real life it does not work out that way. Claims of apparitions and cures are usually quickly dispelled by investigators.

Argument

Premises/Conclusion

1. There is an event that has taken place that violates the laws of nature.
2. If the laws of nature are violated it could only be by a power that could violate the laws of nature that could only be the power that would have created those laws-the law maker, the deity.
3. **Thus, the power that would have created those laws-the law maker, the deity must exist.**

The criticisms of this argument or proof attack the first premise. What evidence is there that there has ever been an event that has taken place that violates the laws of nature. What would be required to establish that such an event has, in fact, taken place. The questions are:

1. What exactly are Miracles ?
2. Do they prove the existence of a supernatural realm?
 - a. A deity?
 - b. God?
 - c. The supreme Being?
3. What does it take to prove that a miracle has taken place?
4. Could it ever be proven that a miracle had taken place?

Proving Some Event is a Miracle

- So event X is reported to have occurred.
- Event X has either a natural cause or supernatural cause.
- If event X can have either a natural cause or supernatural cause it cannot be a miracle. Why not?
- Because a miracle is defined to be an event that can only have a supernatural cause. Why?
- Because then it can be used to prove that there is a supernatural being aka God.
- Anyone who wants to claim X is a miracle needs to satisfy the two conditions presented above for an event to be accepted as a miracle.
- The Burden of Proof is on defending that X is a miracle and not the other way around.

Yes, people choose to believe that events are miracles even though they do not satisfy the conditions and even though there is evidence against the events being miracles and even though if the reports were true it would not necessarily mean that the event was the result of the Supreme Being bringing about the events.

In logic it is shown that you can never prove a general negative claim. Those that assert the affirmative have the burden of proof within the community of reasoning beings. This goes for claims that there are purple elephants with yellow stripes, that there are miracles and that there is a single Supreme Being. Miracles are very, very difficult to prove. So difficult that several philosophers have concluded that there have been none thus far.

To be a miracle an event would need to violate the laws of nature. For any report to be accepted the evidence would need to be pretty convincing and all alternative explanations would need to be ruled out (completely eliminated). That is a very difficult thing to do. The evidence would come from witnesses but the more unbelievable (violating the laws of nature) the event was the more we would doubt the witnesses. Given the lack of reliable witnesses and the inability to completely eliminate all other possible explanations (fraud, delusions, greed, optical illusions, advanced technology, alien activities, etc...) miracles are not accepted by most rational people.

Problems with Miracles - Definition

Exactly what constitutes a miracle is a matter for careful consideration, given the importance of the reports of such events, should they be correct and truthful.

Unusual or Extraordinary Event

Some consider any unusual event as a miracle or at least an unusual event with a positive outcome, e.g. winning Lotto. Negative events with less probability (being hit by lightning, three separate times) are not considered as miracles. This is a very weak use of the term "miracle". This cannot be the basis for a proof for the existence of God because unusual events occur all the time and have explanations using natural factors. Surviving an auto accident is not a miracle. This event happens often and has an explanation using the laws of nature. Such survivals do not violate the laws of nature.

If surviving an auto accident were to be considered a miracle because God brought it about then so would death be a miracle because if God determines who survives such an accident so too does God determine who dies. However, we do not hear people say: He died in the accident. It was a miracle!

Not Just Happy Events

There are many happy events. Winning the lotto, surviving a crash, or surviving a disease. They are not miracles in the sense that we need for an event in order to use it to prove that there is a supernatural being. There are particular problems with happy events being called a miracle.

Examples

- A person survives cancer. The chances were 1 in 50.
- A person survives a car crash. 5 other people were killed in the crash.

The survivals are happy events but if the survivals are miracles and indicate that a deity is behind them and caused them then the deity also caused the deaths of the 49 from disease and the 5 from the crash. Those deaths would be miracles as well. Most would not want to call them miracles.

To accept some event as being a miracle in order to use it to prove the existence of a supernatural being we must satisfy two conditions: 1) the event must violate the laws of nature and 2) there must be clear and indisputable evidence which compels us to accept that the event took place just as reported

Situation

Falling Down: It is highly unusual for someone to die from a fall of less than 4 feet, say off of a chair or step stool. It is highly unusual for someone not to die after falling over 10,00 feet. Both events have happened. People fall off of a chair and hit their heads and die and people fall out of planes and live. We call those who live after an unusual fall a miracle but not those who die after an unusual fall. If we call the event a miracle because it is so unusual and not at all what was expected why not call the event of someone's dying after falling off of a chair a miracle?

Examples

- "Lieutenant I. M. Chisov of the former Soviet Union was flying his Ilyushin 4 on a bitter cold day in January 1942, when it was attacked by 12 German Messerschmitts. Convinced that he had no chance of surviving if he staged with his badly battered plane, Chisov bailed out at 21,980 feet. With the fighters still buzzing around, Chisov cleverly decided to fall freely out of the

area. It was his plan not to open his chute until he was down to only 1000 ft above the ground. Unfortunately, he lost consciousness en route. As luck would have it, he crashed at the edge of a steep ravine covered with 3 ft of snow. Hitting at about 120 mi/h, he plowed along its slope until he came to rest at the bottom. Chisov awoke 20 min later, bruised and sore, but miraculously he had suffered only a concussion of the spine and a fractured pelvis. Three and one-half months later he was back at work as a flight instructor."

- Flight Sergeant Nicholas Steven Alkemade was on a bombing mission over Germany on 23 March 1944 when his Lancaster bomber flying at 18,000 feet his was in flames when he was forced to jump, without a parachute or be burned to death. He dove out of his destroyed aircraft hoping on a quick death. His speed accelerated to over 120 miles per hour and he impacted on a snow covered sloping forest. He was completely uninjured and later captured by the Germans who refused to believe his story.
- The longest survivable fall, 26 January 1972, was Vesna Vulovic a stewardess in a DC-9 which blew up at 33,330 feet. She was in the tail section of the aircraft and though injured survived the fall.

Situation

No explanation: Some consider events for which there are no explanations as miracles. It isn't clear whether this would mean no explanation at the present time or no explanation possible. This cannot be used as a proof for the existence of God because these events could receive a completely naturalistic explanation in the future after science has advanced.

It is possible that events could be explained by advanced science. It is even possible that events that appear "miraculous" because there is no explanation at present could be the result of aliens with advanced technology causing them to occur here on this planet.

Medical cases are not good cases for miracles because there are too many alternative explanations and they are almost always not violations of the laws of nature. Medical doctors and scientists do not know everything. Common place events today would have been thought to be miracles in the past (over 100 years ago). Therefore, simply because a medical diagnosis or prognosis proved to be inaccurate or incorrect, there is insufficient evidence from that to conclude that the event could only have been caused by the Single Supreme Being-God. Take for example heart resuscitation. Reviving a stopped heart is not a miracle. Bringing a person to full life appearance from what was thought to be death is not a miracle. Curing a person of influenza is not a miracle. Restoring a person's sight through surgery is not a miracle. These would have been thought to be miracles over 100 years ago but no longer. So, if someone who is very sick or thought to be dead turns out not to be dead or becomes well, those are no longer miracles.

A miracle cannot be simply an unexplained or rare event, those happen often and as time goes on we learn more and can explain more and come to know how often people are hit by lightning and win Lotto. To be a miracle an event must violate the Laws of Nature. People getting well do not violate the laws of nature. The best medical knowledge can only give percentages, as in, a person with ovarian cancer has a 40% survival rate with surgery and radiation treatment. Some survive and some do not. If someone survives it is not thought to be a miracle but that they have had a reversal of the disease process due to surgery or medication or radiation or mental focusing of the bodies regenerative powers or a combination of those factors. Why do some survive and others do not? Well there are different body chemistries, different mental attitudes etc... If you think the person who is cured is cured because it is a miracle brought about by God then why not consider those who die as dying as a result of a miracle as well. God wanted them dead and so they are. People who win Lotto may think it is a miracle or God's will. People who lose Lotto do not think of it as a miracle or God's will. The factors in play with Lotto are the same for winners as for losers. Likewise with physical ailments.

Some people think that a recovery from a physical ailment would not be evidence of a miracle because there is fate or destiny working. e.g.: "I would not think of that as a miracle because that person I guess that it was not the time for him to die and that's why he got saved, because if it is your time to die no one will be able to save you."

To think this way requires that you believe in fate or destiny. If so, what determines your fate or destiny? If it is a deity or deities then you are already a believer. But, what evidence is there that there is fate or destiny? What evidence or proof is there that there is a deity?

Can you give an example of a miracle that would be an event for which there are no alternative explanations but that it is the work of the Single Supreme Being (God) and that is because it is clearly a violation of the laws of nature that no other power could bring about?

The Requirements of a Definition of Miracles

- What is needed is a definition that is strong enough so that the events claimed to be Miracles would establish the existence of a supernatural and very powerful entity, i.e., God.

- What is needed is an event that could only be caused by God. This event can have no other possible explanation! So, what results is the strong definition of Miracles .

Miracles are events which violate the laws of nature itself. This is an event that could only be caused by the author of those laws. It cannot be an event which has no present naturalistic explanation, for in the future there might be one. It could not be caused by advanced technology possessed by advanced alien societies.

Problems with Verification

Not all who learn of the reports of such miracles accept them as conclusive evidence for the existence of a supernatural reality or spiritual beings. Many have attempted to give alternative accounts of such experiences that do not involve acceptance of the existence of any supernatural entities or reality.

Naturalism is an approach to religious experiences and miracles which explains them as being the result of natural forces. It accounts for such phenomena in natural terms without recourse to anything that is beyond the physical realm. In general, all reality and all experiences can be accounted for (fully explained) in terms of physical processes.

There are different explanations for the origin and nature of religious experiences and miracles. What they have in common is the rejection of a supernatural source or object and the attempt to offer a full explanation in empirically verifiable terms.

You cannot claim that "miracles exist unless someone proves that they do not exist." The burden of proof is always on the claim that X exists rather than on the claim that X does not exist. It is a fallacy to claim that X exists unless you prove that there is no X. What is improper is for a person to claim that "X exists" and when asked to prove it, the person who made the claim uses a defense of "X exists" then claim next that no one has proven that X does not exist.

What is the best way to proceed when there is a report of some appearance of a religious figure on a wall or pancake, etc... Should the process favor a more natural explanation until proven otherwise?

The best explanation would be the one that has the best fit with facts or the explanation that is best supported by claims that are themselves each well supported by other well supported claims. This is a process of explanation that rests heavily on the use of reason and the insistence on evidence to support claims about physical events or a physical state of affairs. So any appearance of any phenomena that is detectable by the senses should have an explanation concerning how the physical state of affairs has come about to produce that appearance to human senses. The burden of proof concerning physical claims is with those making the positive assertion.

The explanation must also avoid the pattern of thinking that if one cannot prove that X is *not* the cause then X *is* the cause. One can not appeal to the absence of evidence or proof as constituting the basis for any conclusions. If one cannot prove what caused phenomenon P then one must withhold accepting the conclusion that any particular cause C is the cause of P.

If there is a claim that phenomenon N (natural event-perceived by the senses) was caused by factor S (supernatural cause) then there needs to be evidence to support the claim.

So the explanation of an event such as the appearance of a figure resembling what someone thinks of as a figure from religious history would need to have evidence to support it. In the absence of physical evidence, then the preponderance of the evidence is support of explanations of phenomena of a similar type might be given "preferred" status until subsequent evidence supports another conclusion.

Using the resort of a supernatural explanation has so many gaps that it is less preferred in the absence of strong evidence in support of a naturalistic explanation or the holding of the expectation of a naturalistic explanation to be forthcoming. The supernatural explanation has no physical evidence (natural) to support it and no explanation of how it is that non-physical entities cause physical events in the natural realm.

There is also the very important question to be answered in this particular case of why it is that anyone alive thinks that they know just what Mary looked like. Why assume that the image is the image of any particular historical or or mythical entity? This is a case of a simulacrum.

If you cannot explain the event or phenomena by use of a natural explanation then it is a supernaturally caused event involving the spiritual or supernatural beings A B, C, etc...is both illogical and generated by and rests upon faith that is held to sustain hope. This is a habit of mind that is quite strong as it has consequences thought to be beneficial by the holder of the habit.

Premises/Conclusion

1. There is an event that has taken place that violates the laws of nature.

2. If the laws of nature are violated it could only be by a power that could violate the laws of nature that could only be the power that would have created those laws (the law maker/ the deity).
3. **Thus, the power that would have created those laws (the law maker, the deity) must exist.**

Criticisms/Rebuttals

The criticisms of this argument or proof attack the first premise. What evidence is there that there has ever been an event that has taken place that violates the laws of nature. What would be required to establish that such an event has, in fact, taken place?

Hume maintains that the preponderance of the evidence will always be that the laws of nature are being followed. Any claim that there has been a violation of those laws would need to be substantiated by clear and convincing evidence. Since there is so much evidence that the laws are not violated, any claim to the contrary would need to have a good deal of evidence to support it. Hume does not believe that such evidence exists, has ever existed, or could ever exist. Evidence in support of miracles would need to satisfy the following criteria:

1. sufficient number of witnesses
2. witnesses of good sense and education
3. witnesses of integrity and good reputation
4. public performance of the miracle event
5. These conditions have not been satisfied

Hume argues that miracles do not occur and that there is a logical obstacle to humans ever proving that events are miracles.

Hume on Miracles



Outcome Assessment

This argument or proof does not establish the actual existence of a supernatural deity. It attempts to argue for the existence of such a being by offering evidence that is highly questionable and for which there are alternative and often more plausible explanations. While the argument can not be used to convert a non-believer to a believer, the faults in the argument do not prove that there is no god. The Burden of Proof demands that the positive claim that there is a supernatural deity be established by reason and evidence and this argument does not meet that standard. The believer in god can use this argument to establish the mere logical possibility that there is a supernatural deity or at least that it is not irrational to believe in the possibility that there is such a being, but the argument does not establish any degree of probability at all when there are alternative explanations for the reports of experiences offered. The veracity of the reports has not been established.

Premises/Conclusion

1. There is an event that has taken place that violates the laws of nature.
2. If the laws of nature are violated it could only be by a power that could violate the laws of nature that could only be the power that would have created those laws-the law maker, the deity.
3. **Thus, the power that would have created those laws-the law maker, the deity must exist.**

Problem with argument:

1. X Premises are false or questionable

2. ____ Premises are irrelevant
3. ____ Premises Contain the Conclusion –Circular Reasoning
4. ____ Premises are inadequate to support the conclusion
5. ____ Alternative arguments exist with equal or greater support

This argument or proof has flaws in it and would not convince a rational person to accept its conclusion. This is not because someone who does not believe in a deity will simply refuse to accept based on emotions or past history but because it is not rationally compelling of acceptance of its conclusion.

Psychic Phenomena

If reports of certain types of psychic phenomena were accurate and truthful and believable they would establish the existence of a spiritual realm that would support claims of another dimension and spiritual beings and powers. God as a spirit would then be more believable. Are the reports of such phenomena veridical?

Psychic Phenomena-Death and Immortality

- Support for the post-mortem survival hypothesis
 - apparitions-spirits/ ghosts/ poltergeists
 - reincarnation memories
 - near death experiences-NDE's
 - death bed observations
 - sacred scripture

Arguments against the postmortem survival hypothesis

- the irrational nature of the explanation of consciousness
- lack of clear, unambiguous physical evidence

Existence of deities and spirits that enter into humans, possess them or channel through them

Alternative Explanations

- Persons think that they are telling the truth but they are mistaken, e.g., optical illusion, misinterpretation.
- Persons think that they are telling the truth but they are under the influence of mind altering substances
- Persons think that they are telling the truth but they are suffering from brain malfunctioning, e.g., chemical imbalance
- Persons think that they are telling the truth but they are under the influence of group influence-social psychology
- Persons are making a false report to get attention from believers
- Persons are making a false report to raise money from donations to their cause or movement.
- Persons are making a false report to please others and gain acceptance from believers.
- Persons are making a false report to get power, perhaps as a leader of a religious cult or sect.

The Questions Are:

1. Is the subject of a religious experience justified inferring from the psychological experience to the existential or the ontological reality of the object of that experience: the supernatural being?
2. Is anyone else justified in reaching the conclusion that a supernatural being exists based upon the report of the individual who has made the claim to have had the religious experience?
3. Does the accumulation of reports from such witnesses to religious experiences justify the claim that a supernatural or spiritual being, a deity, a transcendent reality, exists?

Problems with Religious Experiences

Not all who learn of the reports of such religious experiences accept them as conclusive evidence for the existence of a supernatural reality or spiritual beings. Many have attempted to give alternative accounts of such experiences that do not involve acceptance of the existence of any supernatural entities or reality.

Naturalism is an approach to religious experiences which explains them as being the result of natural forces. It accounts for such phenomena in natural terms without recourse to anything that is beyond the physical realm. In general, all reality and all experiences can be accounted for (fully explained) in terms of physical processes.

There are different explanations for the origin and nature of religious experiences. What they have in common is the rejection of a supernatural source or object and the attempt to offer a full explanation in empirically verifiable terms.

Psychological explanations have been offered by several theoreticians, including Sigmund Freud. Sociological explanations have also been developed by several other scientists, such as Emil Durkheim. What they have in common is the refusal to accept religious experiences as being truthful, accurate, or believable in so far as the existence of any supernatural reality. One of the principle reasons for withholding acceptance of the reports is that the experiences cannot be verified and what they report encountering can not be verified empirically.

See Alternative Explanations above

Truthfulness

1. Are the religious experiences veridical?
2. What is the scientific analysis of the religious experiences?
3. What are the genetic and causal conditions of religious experiences?
 - a. in the human race?
 - b. in the individual?
4. Is the religious experience veridical?
5. Is it truthful? Is it a report which others can accept as being Correct? Truthful? Accurate?

Humans should accept religious experiences as being veridical unless there exists positive grounds for thinking otherwise, for thinking that the reports are not truthful, accurate or correct. Some claim that there are positive grounds for rejecting the reports of such experiences, i.e., against their being veridical experiences

- mystics are abnormal: they tend to be sexually repressed
- mystical experience is always mixed with other elements such as sexual emotion or imagery

In response to these observations some offer that perhaps the human being must be in an altered state of consciousness in order to have the experience of the greater (supernatural) reality which the ordinary consciousness can not contain or reach. Sexual abstinence may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for having such an encounter. There are reports or descriptions of these religious experiences involve concepts and beliefs that are:

- inadequate to the facts
- highly confused
- mixed with error and nonsense
- subject to change in time

Perhaps these features are also true of scientific concepts and beliefs and that they have and do change in time. Perhaps religious experiences are not pure delusions or illusions. Perhaps religious experiences are only encountered by those who have an ability to experience them. Perhaps there are people, even many people, who are "deaf" to such experiences.

If the subject of a religious experience is to be believed there are certain requirements to be met. Any perception of an individual should be publicly confirmed. No private experience can establish the existence of God. You would first need to establish the existence of God by other means on order to confirm that what was experienced was both God and True.

- No indescribable experience can be publicly confirmed
- No mystical experience can be publicly confirmed.
- Mystics appear similar to people who are deluded, or mentally ill, not adjusted to reality.
- Their claims can not be accepted without evidence.
- But you can not have evidence without a prior belief in God.
- To confirm what any subject is experiencing there must be "checkable" statements.
- Similar to a blind person confirming what a sighted person sees.

With the religious experiences there are no such "checkable" statements, so there can be no confirmation. Hence, they cannot serve as a proof of the existence of supernatural entities because they are not veridical.

Mediums

Many people want strongly to believe in a spirit world and deities. They ask questions such as: What about mediums? Don't people like John Edward communicate with the dead? If they do that is evidence of the spirit world and of souls and of a deity as well. So do they do this?

[Long Island Medium on Ellen Degeneris](#)



If one has not had a religious experience how can one reach a conclusion as to whether or not such an experience exists as reported? Is it truthful? Is it accurate? Is there sufficient ground to conclude that there is a supernatural realm? That there is a deity? That there is a supreme being? How can non-believers accept the reports of people who claim to have had such experiences when there are so many alternative explanations for those reports which would provide strong reasons to reject the claim that the reports are truthful and accurate?

Outcome Assessment

This argument or proof does not establish the actual existence of a supernatural deity. It attempts to argue for the existence of such a being by offering evidence that is highly questionable and for which there are alternative and often more plausible explanations. While the argument cannot be used to convert a non-believer to a believer, the faults in the argument do not prove that there is no god. The Burden of Proof demands that the positive claim that there is a supernatural deity be established by reason and evidence and this argument does not meet that standard. The believer in god can use this argument to establish the mere logical possibility that there is a supernatural deity or at least that it is not irrational to believe in the possibility that there is such a being but the argument does not establish any degree of probability at all when there are alternative explanations for the reports of experiences offered. The veracity of the reports has not been established.

Premises/Conclusions

1. Persons claim to experience contact or communication with the dead.
2. **There is a realm of the dead or spiritual realm in which there are souls, spirits, and the deity**

Problem with argument:

1. Premises are false or questionable
2. Premises are irrelevant
3. Premises Contain the Conclusion –Circular Reasoning
4. Premises are inadequate to support the conclusion
5. Alternative arguments exist with equal or greater support

This argument or proof has flaws in it and would not convince a rational person to accept its conclusion. This is not because someone who does not believe in a deity will simply refuse to accept based on emotions or past history but because it is not rationally compelling or acceptance of its conclusion.

The Pragmatic Argument for the Existence of God

Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662, was both a mathematician and a philosopher. He had studied many of the traditional arguments for the existence of God but did not find the arguments persuasive. Living in a time when gambling was en vogue, Pascal attempted to formulate an argument, based on chance, that would impel the reader to believe in God. After reading Pascal's "Wager", Pascal wants you to believe that the "smart money" is on belief in God.

Pragmatic Argument for Existence of God



What are the Odds? Pascal's "Wager"

According to Pascal, we can conceive of our choice whether or not to believe in the existence of God as a wager. As in all bets, if we wager properly, then we stand to gain. If we wager improperly (or lose the bet), then we stand to suffer a loss.

The bet at hand concerns the existence of God. We can either bet on the existence of God or we can bet on the non-existence of God. But what would a gambler want to know before placing their money on the table? A gambler would probably want to know how much is at stake. Most bets are monetary. In this case, the gambler can think of their investment in terms of lifestyle choices. That is, those who do believe in God will act accordingly, e.g. no more late night parties, no more seeking of the good life, etc. Belief requires certain practices and orthopraxy - like when you want to watch football on Sunday morning but you have to attend Church. The next thing a gambler would want to know is the payoff/penalty. That is, how much will the gambler win potentially and how much will the gambler lose potentially. The wager is often presented as follows:

1. If you believe in God and God does exist then your payoff is immeasurable. You will enter heaven and know eternal happiness
2. If you believe in God and God does not exist then you have lost some pleasure but you have led a decent life. You have forfeited a high amount of pleasure but your existence was not miserable.
3. If you do not believe in God and God does exist then your penalty is immeasurable. You will suffer eternal displeasure.
4. If you do not believe in God and God does not exist then you will have a high measurable amount of pleasure. Your pleasure will end once your life ends.

Although #4 does pay well, it does not have as high a potential return as #1. Considering the consequences of #3 and the potential return of #1 Pascal concludes that the most reasonable wager is to place your money on the existence of God. Even if you are wrong, the potential loss is minimal (see #2).

Sometimes the return or payoff is represented as follows:

	GOD EXISTS	GOD DOES NOT EXIST
BELIEVE IN GOD	IMMEASURABLE PAYOFF	INCONSEQUENTIAL LOSS
DO NOT BELIEVE IN GOD	IMMEASURABLE LOSS	MEASURABLE PAYOFF

Pascal's Wager



Many arguments for the existence of God are deductive or inductive arguments. Some of these same arguments are based on valid laws of inference and specific claims of knowledge. While these arguments might try to infer God with very different arguments that are built upon very different assumptions and methodologies, these arguments do have one thing in common, i.e. they argue for the existence of God based on specific propositions or ideas. This has been the case with the ontological, cosmological and teleological arguments. Such arguments are known as epistemic arguments. Epistemic is from the Greek, episteme, or knowledge. Such arguments are well organized and appear to lead to their conclusions and so they are called valid indicating that if their premises were true their conclusions would be true as well. However valid they may appear their soundness and cogency are not at all well established as their premises have been severely criticized over the centuries. It has fairly well been demonstrated or proven that their premises are not obviously true nor can they be verified as true through empirical methods. So these arguments have been rejected by many as having unwarranted conclusions or as not being cogent or convincing.

Non-Epistemic proofs are arguments for the existence of God that are not knowledge-based arguments. If understood properly, the non-epistemic proof should invoke a personal response. The power of Pascal's "Wager" is not found in valid rules of inference but in probability and possible outcomes. The "Wager" appeals to the feelings in us - to our emotions, our fear of loss or punishment and our hopes for rewards. Should human beings accept such arguments? Should rational human beings act on less than rational arguments? Some say it is immoral to so act. Others disagree..

[Problem with Pascal's "Wager"](#)

We may believe what goes beyond our experience, only when it is inferred from that experience by the assumption that what we do not know is like what we know. We may believe the statement of another person, when there is reasonable ground for supposing that he knows the matter of which he speaks, and that he is speaking the truth so far as he knows it. It is wrong in all cases to believe on insufficient evidence; and where it is presumption to doubt and to investigate, there it is worse than presumption to believe.

[The Many Gods Problem](#)

If a skeptic were to accept Pascal's invitation to believe in what deity would that person place their psychological commitment to believe? There are different conceptions of the deity in different religions of the West and the East. If the deity does exist and it is the one and only and it does pay attention to what humans do and it will reward and punish then the would-be believer needs more than Pascal's argument to arrive at the proper conclusion as to exactly which conception of a deity to place trust and hope in in order to avoid the possibly vindictive deity who would punish both non-believers and those who believed in a "false" or inaccurate conception of the deity.

The assumption that believing in God has no different result than not believing in god, if there is no god. This is not always the case however. If a person chooses to believe in a deity and that belief leads a person to certain actions such as using prayer in the place of medication for illnesses for which there are known cures then there is a decided difference. A believer in the deity of the Christians or Islamic people might lead a person to a negative regard for others or even into physical acts of violence towards infidels.

It would appear that Pascal's approach would have appeal for those who do not want to use the intellect to its fullest extent and investigate all claims about what exists or does not exist. It would appeal to those who want to have some being to appeal to for favor or exemption from harms and ills or favor for support against those they would oppose.

Outcome Assessment

Premises/Conclusion

1. The possible reward for believing in a deity are greater than not believing in a deity
2. The possible punishment or penalties for not believing in a deity is greater than the possible penalties for believing.
3. It is less risky to believe in a deity than not believe.
4. Believe in a deity existing or
5. **There is a deity**

Problem with argument:

1. ___ Premises are false or questionable
2. X Premises are irrelevant
3. ___ Premises Contain the Conclusion –Circular Reasoning
4. X Premises are inadequate to support the conclusion
5. ___ Alternative arguments exist with equal or greater support

This argument or proof has flaws in it and would not convince a rational person to accept its conclusion. This is not because someone who does not believe in a deity will simply refuse to accept based on emotions or past history but because it is not rationally compelling of acceptance of its conclusion.

Philosophy Applications



For the Jews belief in a Supreme Being was supported by the miracles associated with Moses. For the Christians belief that Jesus is god is supported by the miracles associated with him. For the Islamic peoples the miracles associated with the rise and spread of Islam are supportive of their faith as well.

Think about it:

Are these events really miracles? Are there really miracles? Are there really events that break the very laws of nature and for which there could be no other possible explanation other than the Supreme Being, the author of the laws of nature, being responsible for those events?

To accept some event as being a miracle we must satisfy two conditions:

1. The event must violate the laws of nature
2. There must be clear and indisputable evidence which compels us to accept that the event took place just as reported

Why is it so difficult to satisfy both conditions at the same time? Use your answers from above to help you fully explore this issue. Make sure to support your opinions with evidence.

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3.4: The Problem of Evil



The Problem of Evil

The Problem of Evil poses a philosophical threat to the design argument because it implies that the design of the cosmos and the designer of the cosmos are flawed. We can know they are flawed due to the preponderance of evil within the cosmos.

The problem of evil is not that there is evil in the world. The problem of evil is not there there is so much evil in the world. The problem of evil is not that there is not a balance between good and evil in the world. Well then, what is the problem of evil ?

Simply put it is this: How can there be a deity that is all good and all knowing and all powerful at the same time that evil exists? How can there be a caring and benevolent God when there exists evil in the world? The Problem of Evil relates to what would appear to be a contradiction in the idea of the deity. The deity is a being that is all good and all powerful and yet creates or allows or permits evil to exist. It is something of a problem, something that needs to be explained or rectified. It is a problem with the "concept" of the deity in the Western religions, after Christianity overlays the Greek notions of the ideal onto the Hebrew deity: God. One answer to this question is to say that human moral agents, not the deity or God, are the cause of the evil. The deity is not responsible for the creation of the moral evil and but in some sense created a world in which it is better that there be moral evil than not to have moral evil or even the possibility of moral evil. This answer is insufficient to solve the problem because every manner of defending it has failed over time to explain how a deity that is all perfect and in particular *all knowing* and *all powerful* and *all good* would permit or allow or cause evil to exist. How would a deity that knows the future be all good if the deity creates/allows agents that cause evil and the deity created them knowing that they would create evil?

Some prefer to think of the problem as the Problem of Suffering rather than the Problem of Evil. How can you reconcile the existence of so much suffering with the existence of an omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent God; as deity that is reported to be all loving and all merciful?

Maybe God knows about the suffering and would stop it but, cannot stop it - that would imply God is not omnipotent. Maybe God is able to stop the suffering and would want to but does not know about it - that would imply God is not omniscient. Maybe God knows about the suffering and is able to stop it but does not wish to assuage the pain - that would imply God is not omnibenevolent. These options are explored by those in a tradition of thought known as Process Theology (see below). In the very least, David Hume argues, the existence of evil does not justify a belief in a caring Creator.

The Problem of Evil



The problem of evil is the result of the combination of a set of ideas. It is a problem with concepts and ideas.

Argument

Premises/Conclusion

1. the deity is ALL GOOD-The deity is ALL KNOWING (omniscient)
2. The deity is ALL POWERFUL (omnipotent)
3. Evil exists
 1. Natural evil exists
 2. Moral Evil exists
4. **A+B+C+D(1) OR D(2) = PROBLEM OF EVIL**

Possible Responses:

- Get rid of A or B or C or D
- Get rid of the idea of the deity altogether
- Somehow try to explain that there is a way to have A+B+C+D without a contradiction or inconsistency.
- If (3) succeeded there would be no Problem of Evil.
- There have been many people over two thousand years who think that there is no way that attempting (3) can succeed.
- so, there are four basic approaches to the problem and each will be examined in the following sections.
- Theodicy explain how the traditional idea of the deity could be consistent with the existence of evil (3)
- Transformation of Evil transform the idea of evil so that it is not evil-(1)change D
- Process Theology change the idea of the deity-(1)Change A or B or C
- Atheism there is no deity at all and thus no problem with evil and its relationship to the deity (2)

The problem results from the apparent inconsistency or contradiction in a number of traits associated with the Supreme Being: God.

To put this Argument into a Logical Form, consider this valid argument pattern

Premises/Conclusions

1. $P > Q$
2. Q
3. **P**

Example

1. If fire, then Oxygen
2. No Oxygen
3. **Then, no fire**

Now applied to the Problem of Evil

Premises/Conclusion

If there is a Deity, then NO EVIL

1. There is Evil

2. There is no Deity

- It does NOT mean that there is no GOD.
- That is but one possibility. It does mean that there is either no GOD at all or no GOD that at the same time is all good and all powerful and all knowing.

Argument Against There Being a Deity

Consider this:

1. God is all powerful
2. If omnipotent God exists, there can be no evil
3. God is all good
4. If omnibeneficent God exists, there can be no evil
5. Evil exists
6. If Evil exists, there can be no God
7. Therefore, it logically follows that

Either

1. God does not exist at all
 2. God is not all powerful- lacking in some power
- God is not all knowing
 - God is not all good -creator of evil or lacking in something that is good

The four approaches will be presented and criticized. Before doing so some general background points are in order.

Belief Systems and Critical Thinking

As people grow and mature and learn they acquire beliefs and entire belief systems. They do so through receiving and accepting as true stories about how things are in this world and in a realm beyond this one and through the beliefs implicit in ordinary language and its usages. Thus are acquired assumptions and presuppositions for the thought processes entered into through life. In the beginning those acquiring such beliefs want to be accepted and even valued by the various groups of which they are members or for which they desire to be members, so there is an emphasis on acceptance of the beliefs shared by members of those groups and not on review or criticism of them. There is little, if any, reflective thought or critical thinking taking place. Little is needed if the majority of group members are operating with the beliefs without questioning of them.

Once acquired the belief systems function as a basis for the acquisition of additional beliefs. As another idea is presented it is placed within the context of the previously acquired beliefs and if the new candidate for inclusion is consistent with or coherent with the prior beliefs and ideas it is accepted as also being true. This is the coherentist theory of truth. The problem with that approach to truth is that there needs to be some other method for the establishment of the fundamental beliefs or else the entire structure of beliefs while internally coherent might not be supported by any evidence external to the beliefs themselves.

As belief systems expand they can reach a point where beliefs and ideas have been accepted too hastily and when a culture or individual reach a point where reflective thought can be afforded inconsistencies and perhaps even outright contradictions may appear upon reflection. Upon the first realization of problems, the belief systems will not be abandoned altogether and will not even be thrown into serious doubt. Rather there will be attempts to preserve the belief system through the introduction of qualifiers and alternate interpretations designed to account for what are to be termed “apparent” discrepancies. This process will continue until the introduction of the qualifiers and alternative interpretations reaches a point where they generate the need for even further such qualifiers and the process then becomes so burdensome that the fundamental beliefs and ideas may then come under the most careful scrutiny and there is an acceptance of a need for an alternate set of beliefs that are more internally coherent and satisfying to demands of reason and the desire for external grounding.

This occurred in the time of Socrates when the many stories about the gods and goddesses were seen through the eyes of critical reasoning to be inconsistent and incoherent. For Socrates a basis for the grounding of morality and the social order was needed other than that provided by the stories of the Greek deities. In addition to sharing this realization with Socrates, Plato saw that the ideas and theories of the pre-Socratic's were inconsistent and there was needed an alternate view of what made anything real and how one could know anything.

Now for Socrates, Plato and Aristotle the idea of the Greek deities came to make little sense in the light of reason and so the idea of a more abstract entity emerges with them as more satisfying as an explanation of origins and order. Their ideas satisfy the dictates

of reason for which they abandoned the blind adherence to the stories of their ancestors. These are developments that mark the origins of philosophical thought in the West.

With other western religious belief systems there were also prompts to the development of a critical thought tradition. The early Hebrew deity is one that has apparent weaknesses and is not at all perfect in every way. It is jealous and vindictive and unjust. For the Christians the idea of the Hebrew deity was not going to be acceptable to those who had come under the influence of the Greek manner of thought. The Christians take the idea of the all perfect being, the source of all that is true, good and beautiful, from the Greeks and layer it over the idea of the single deity of the Hebrews. The ideas about the qualities of the early Hebrew god when combined ideas about the Greek ideal deity have made for many problems. The Western traditions treat the scriptures as being in some sense divinely inspired or authored and thus, for many in those traditions who are conservative and literalists, they carry the ideas of the early Hebrew deity along with them leading to complications as there arises the need to explain how an all good deity and an all merciful deity can be so cruel and vindictive as in some of the stories in the early books or chapters of the scriptures. The problem of evil does not exist for the old testament deity. That deity is not all good and not all knowing and not all powerful. The stories in the bible are filled with passages indicating that the deity of the Hebrews was not an "All Perfect Being".

The problem of evil comes about when the concept of the deity is changed into one in which the being has all good properties at the same time so that it is thought to be all good and all knowing and all powerful.

There are several ways to deal with the problem. Process Theology changes the concept of the deity that is all good, all knowing, and all powerful into a deity that is lacking in one or more of those properties. They do it when they reduce the deity to some finite creature-usually thinking of the deity as being similar to a human being - the concept of the deity that causes the problem of evil is a concept that is not one of a human being or any finite being.

It is not a problem caused by the *Bible* stories. In the first books of the *Bible* the deity of the Old Testament is not all good. The deity of the Hebrews commits, orders and directs atrocities. The deity of the Old Testament is not all knowing because it creates a being (Lucifer) not knowing that it will do evil. The deity of the Old Testament creates humans not knowing that they will do evil/disobey. The deity comes upon Adam and Eve to discover what they had disobeyed. The deity of the Old Testament is not all powerful because it does not stop or end the existence of Lucifer. The deity of the Old Testament is not responsible for evil because the cause of evil is placed with an evil agent (Lucifer/the devil/the dark prince), etc...

Using the *Bible* is not helpful to resolve this problem as there are too many inconsistent passages. To illustrate just take a basic question: "is evil from god? "

The Lord is All-Good (Omnibenevolent)

Deuteronomy 32:4, 4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

Psalms 19:7-8, 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psalms 145:9 9 The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

Micah 7:2, 2 The godly have been swept from the land; not one upright man remains. All men lie in wait to shed blood; each hunts his brother with a net.

James 1:13 13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone

God is Responsible for All Goodness and All Evil

Isaiah 45:7, 7 I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

Jeremiah 18:11, 11 "Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, 'This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.'

Lamentations 3:38 38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?

Ezekiel 20:25 25 I also gave them over to statutes that were not good and laws they could not live by;

Amos 3:6 6 When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?

So when anyone thinks of the deity as the "Being" of the Old Bible the problem of evil is "solved" by abandoning the concept that creates the problem in the first place. If one thinks of the deity as a parent not knowing what its children will do or not responsible for what its children do or as some being testing humans or not able to prevent evil then the problem is "solved" by abandoning the concept that creates the problem in the first place when the deity is changed from a being with infinitely good properties and powers into a mere human.

The problem of evil arises as an attempt to give an account that makes sense as to how an all perfect being could exist at the same time that there exists moral evil. Troubles with a simple belief prompt critical reflection and the desire to use reason to support the belief system. Consideration of the troublesome issues led to Augustine and Aquinas moving beyond the traditions of faith and into philosophical thought and a reliance on reason to interpret and defend key beliefs in the Christian tradition.

The Nature of Evil



"Evil" has a wider range of definitions than that for which human or supernatural agents are responsible. There are two main types of evil:

- Moral evil - This covers the willful acts of human beings (such as murder, rape, etc.)
- Natural evil - This refers to natural disasters (such as famines, floods, etc.)

Of these two types, we may further divide both of them into the following two classes:

- Physical evil - This means bodily pain or mental anguish (fear, illness, grief, war, etc.)
- Metaphysical evil - This refers to such things as imperfection and chance (criminals going unpunished, deformities, etc.)

The problem itself arises because of certain qualities which religious believers grant to God, and the consequences of these given certain observations about the world. To illustrate these consider three qualities that most religious believers would not want to deny to the deity: absolute goodness (omnibenevolence), absolute power (omnipotence) and absolute knowledge (omniscience). Now, add to this the observation that there is evil in the world. Setting aside for the moment the question of how a good God could create a world with evil in it, ask yourself why such a deity does not do something to help combat such evil. Many theologians and philosophers over the centuries have asked this question and we will now look at some of the answers they have given.

According to the history of this issue and contemporary concerns it is moral evil that is the crux of the problem more than natural evil. Natural evil may be conceived of as simply part of nature and not evil at all. However, there are those who think that it may be possible to accept that God accepts moral evil and such evil may have a purpose or explanation consistent with the existence of a supreme being but that there could be no good reason for God to have natural evil in the Universe. There is therefore the argument against the existence of God based on natural evil.

The Problem of Evil



Premises/Conclusion

1. If God exists, then there exists a being who is omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good.
2. If there existed a being who were omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good, then there would be no natural evil.
3. **But there is natural evil. God does not exist.**

Key Questions

Now we focus on the key questions;

Is it possible for there to be an All Powerful, All Knowing and All Good deity and for moral evil to exist at the same time?

1. Can the apparent inconsistency be resolved in any manner that preserves all the characteristics of an All Perfect or Supreme Being?
2. Is it necessary to change the idea of the Supreme Being to account for the simultaneous existence of moral evil and a supreme being?
3. Is it necessary to change the idea of the nature of evil to account for the simultaneous existence of moral evil and a supreme being?
4. Does the existence of moral evil lead to the conclusion that there is no deity at all? Does it lead to the conclusion that there is no All Perfect Being?

Problems

Greek Philosophy

In the opening of the dialogue by Plato, *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates recognize that things come in opposing pairs. If there was no pain we would not appreciate being well and pleasure. When applied to the problem of evil it would mean that if there is to be good there must be evil and so whatever is called good must come from the source of all creation and that in turn means that from that source comes evil as the necessary counterpart to good. This then means that the Single Supreme Being is not only the creator of good but also of evil. How then is the Supreme Being the deity, the creator of all to be considered as all good if the deity created evil as well as the good that there is?

Judeo-Christian Tradition

If evil is not directly the creation of the deity but comes about through the actions of a fallen angel, Lucifer, and the weakness of human beings who succumb to temptation to do moral evil then how is it not the result of what the deity has done? If all comes from the deity then would not evil as well as the good come from the deity? Now if evil comes from the deity or God then how bad could it be? If evil comes from God, then how could God punish those who do it? If evil comes from Lucifer and from human failings and from temptations, then how could the all loving and merciful God punish those whom God knew in advance were created by that God with those weaknesses and knowing in advance that they would fail? How could the all perfect being not stop Lucifer, take away the failings, and prevent the temptations? If the causes of evil doing are not stopped and if instead are quite to the contrary actually created by God, why would an all loving God punish those made imperfect by the deity and who God knew before they were created would give in to the evil that God creates, permits and knew in advance would overcome the creatures that God made as imperfect?

Bible Stories

Bible stories do not solve the problem of evil, they make it worse as they are stories from the Hebrews who did not think of the deity as being all perfect and all good. The idea of the deity in the early bible stories is not the idea or concept of the deity that produces the problem of evil. The deity of the Hebrews appears not able to place a check on Lucifer. The deity of the Hebrews might not have been thought of as being all powerful. Thus, the use of the Bible to address the problem of evil merely introduces troublesome historical elements into the entire matter. If there is a fallen angel responsible for the evil and then the deity is the creator of that angel then why is the deity not responsible for the evil done by the fallen angel if the deity knew before creating the angel everything that the angel would do? The Hebrew deity had not the all knowing characteristic of later thought. So for the Hebrews and their stories there is no problem of evil because they did not have the concept of the deity that produces the problem of evil. One approach to dealing with the problem and solving it in some sense is to change the idea of the deity (Process Theology) to something closer to the earlier ideas. Take away the all powerful or the all knowing or the all good character of the deity and there is no problem of evil as there was none until after the Christian era began.

Theodicy

Any attempt to make the existence of an all-knowing, all-powerful and all-good or omnibenevolent God consistent with the existence of evil is known as a Theodicy. It is an attempt to justify the ways of God to humans. It is an attempt to explain the coexistence of God and evil.

Now what operates in these attempts to rescue the idea of the existence of a deity from the charge that there cannot be a deity if there is moral evil is the very subtle altering of the idea of the deity from that of a supreme and all perfect being to something other than that. All criticisms of these apologists or defenders involve exposing the subtle attempt to convert the idea of the supreme being from one that so perfect as to generate the problem of evil in the first place to the idea of the deity as not quite being all perfect or all knowing or all powerful or all good. The problem of evil is the result of logical analysis; the inconsistency in the ideas of an all knowing, all powerful and all good being that is the creator of the universe with the existence of moral evil.

Historical Explanation

The early Hebrew deity is one that has apparent weaknesses and is not at all perfect in every way. It is jealous and vindictive and unjust. For the Christians the idea of the Hebrew deity was not going to be acceptable to those whom they hoped to convert: those who had come under the influence of the Greek manner of thought, those other than the Hebrews. The Christians take the idea of the all perfect being, the source of all that is true, good and beautiful, from the Greeks and layer it over the idea of the single deity of the Hebrews and the history of that idea as presented in the Hebrew scriptures. The ideas about the qualities of the early Hebrew god when combined ideas about the Greek ideal deity have made for many problems.

Theodicists

Augustine: *Humans are free and Humans have fallen because they are as children.*

St. Augustine proposed a solution to the problem by blaming it on the fall of humanity after the disobedience in the Garden of Eden. From this view, humankind is responsible for evil by being led astray by Satan. This not only absolves the deity, the God, of creating evil but also allows the deity to show the world its love by bringing a form or version of itself into physical form in the presence of the Christ into the world. The Supreme Being, God, is seen as involved in soul making. Humans are growing from bios to zoe: from undeveloped life to divine love and spiritual life. However, the existence of evil leads to the questioning of the existence of an all loving, all good and powerful deity. The large amount of evil is particularly difficult to explain.

Irenaeus: Developmental and Teleological view God is involved with soul-making.

Irenaeus (130-202 AD) thought that the existence of evil actually serves a purpose. From his point of view, evil provides the necessary problems through which we take part in what he calls "soul-making". From this point of view, evil is a means to an end in as much as if it did not exist, there would be no means of spiritual development. However, with this view God is the author of evil and although it has a purpose it challenges the nature of God as being all good.

Irenaeus' view has been put forward in modern times by such philosophers as John Hick (*Evil and the God of Love*, 1966) and Richard Swinburne. According to this view the pains and sufferings of the world are meant by God to act as a means of producing a truly good person.

However, this view has been severely criticized this view. Using human suffering as a means to good is criticized and condemned on the grounds that the suffering of one child can never be justified in terms of what good results. Again this defense of the deity brings into question the all-good aspect of the deity.

John Hick: Developmental and Teleological view: God is involved with soul-making.

Hick's answer involves interpreting the creation story in Genesis in a non-literal fashion. Rather than regarding the story as an account of what has already happened, he suggests that we consider it an account of what is currently taking place. The idea here is that we are an integral part of God's creation. In essence, we have not yet reached the final 'day' of creation. God is still, in a way, creating humanity (using us as tools and as that which is shaped). This earth is seen as a factory for making souls. This creation requires the possibility that we suffer in order to provide incentive for improvement.

Transworld Depravity

- This is the idea that humans sin in all possible worlds or else
- God is not all good or not all powerful
- God cannot create a world with moral Good and without moral EVIL

Therefore, every world that God creates must have not only the possibility of evil in it but actual evil as well.

Using Evil to Produce Good

Those who argue that the deity is using evil to bring about good and so somehow good produces good, have to contend with the following counter argument that establishes that there must be some evil that does not produce the good in any way: that there is a high probability that there exists purely gratuitous moral evil.

It is possible that there are and have been acts of evil that have not led to any good result whatsoever. Thus, the argument to defend God based on the claim that the deity is using evil for some good purpose is defeated. Based on the mere possibility of an act of evil, human suffering, that is completely gratuitous. It would be an act in which a human does an evil act and another human suffers as a result but the act is not witnessed by anyone and both the evil doer and the victim of the evil deed die without communicating it to anyone directly or indirectly. It is possible for such an act to occur and is so then there would be no possibility for it to teach any lesson to anyone. There would be no possibility for it to lead to a greater good.

This is an inductive argument because it is based upon possibility. It defeats the defense of the existence of an all perfect deity that is all good and all powerful and all knowing at the same time.

Theodicy: Free Will Defense and the Nature of God in the Presence of Moral Evil

The Argument

Premises/Conclusion

1. Evil is the result of human error-Human error results from free-will (the ability to do wrong)
2. If we didn't have free-will we would be robots
3. God prefers a world of free agents to a world of robots
4. Evil is therefore an unfortunate - although not unavoidable outcome - of free-will
5. For God to intervene would be to go take away our free-will
6. **Therefore, God is neither responsible for evil nor guilty of neglect for not intervening.**

Arguments and Counter-Arguments for the Free Will Defense

Consider these cases meant to illustrate that the deity is not removed from responsibility for evil even if humans have free will.

Free Will Defense 1: The deity is not responsible for the evil but people are responsible all by themselves and without the involvement of the deity because they have and use free will to choose evil.

If people do exactly what their deity created them to do then why would they be punished for doing what the creator created them to do? If the creator knows that the fetus will become a child and grow into a mass murderer and the deity proceeds to allow the conception and the birth and the growth of that human being and then allows that being to get the means together and commit the murders then why would the human being be punished for what the creator-deity made that human being to do? If it is the choice of the human to kill was it not the choice of the creator to make the being that will choose to do the evil?

Counter Example Situation 1

Let's say I run a sports and gun shop in a small town. Someone I know, Joe, comes running into the store and wants to buy an automatic weapon. Joe is very agitated and angry and he tells me that he hates all those women across the street in the bakery shop and he is going to teach them a lesson. I tell him that he should not hurt anyone. He says sell me the gun and I do. He tells me he is going to kill those women. I tell him it is wrong to do that and he should not do that. He asks me to sell him the ammunition for the weapon he just bought and I sell it to him. He says he will kill every last one of those women and I say he must not do it. I tell him

it is very bad. He asks me to show him how to shoot the weapon and I teach him. I warn him again not to use it to kill people. He goes out of the store and crosses the street and kills everyone of the women.

When the police question me, I tell them the whole story and I point out that it was not my fault because Joe had free will and I warned him and told him not to do it.

Well, most humans would hold me responsible just based on what it was reasonable to think that Joe would do given what Joe said before leaving my store. If I am responsible in part for the killings then what about God who gave Joe life and knew what Joe would do with that life? I only know pretty darn well what he would do with the weapon. God knows for sure and can stop anything. Or else, God does not know or God does not have all power.

Free Will Defense 2: The deity is not responsible for the evil but people are responsible all by themselves and without the involvement of the deity because they have and use free will to choose evil.

Counter Example Situation 2

I ask some human being, say Susan, to baby sit for a group of eight children aged 3 to 7. I ask Susan to watch them for 5 hours. They are playing in the very large ballroom of a mansion. In the ballroom are a large number of toys, electronic games and small rides for children. Some workers had been removing paint from the iron windows and left cans of paint at the far end of the ballroom where the windows are. There is also paint remover, thinners, flammable liquids and a blowtorch they have been using to get the old paint off of the window frames. I instruct Susan to keep the children at the end of the ballroom far away from the painters' materials. I return five hours later to find the mansion on fire, Susan out in front with three of the children. The other children were trapped inside and burned to death. I ask her what happened and she said she stepped out of the ballroom for a break and when she returned it was on fire. I ask her how she could do such a thing and she replies that she only stepped out for five minutes and she warned the children before she left not to touch the materials at the end of the ballroom near the windows. She told them that it was very dangerous. They touched those things anyway. She claims it was not her fault that she warned them, that she didn't know what would happen. Now if some human made those claims there are few rational adults who would not think that the person who was left to watch the children was responsible for the harm that came to them. That Susan should have known.

If this is what we would think about Susan, then what should we think about GOD, who is supposed to know everything about the past, present and future and is all powerful as well? Is God responsible for evil? If we would hold Susan responsible in part for the harm to the children then even more so we must hold the deity responsible for evil since the deity that is all knowing and all powerful could have and should have stopped it as Susan should have stayed with the children to prevent harm.

Counter Example Situation 3

Now think. If the deity made the humans knowing they would choose the evil; is the deity also responsible for that evil? Suppose a deity with all knowledge says to us if we go through door #3 we will produce a child that will murder more than 550 people. We heard what the deity told us and believe that the deity is all knowing and we still chose to go through door #3. The child then grows up and kills 550 people.

Would you and I be responsible for those deaths in any way? We might have gone through door #1 or door #2 or door #4 etc... But we chose #3 after knowing what would come if we did so. Well, if we would be responsible so too would the deity who knows in advance and then chooses to create or allow a child to be conceived that is the killer of 550 people.

Free Will Defense 3: The deity is supposed to be all perfect and all good, all knowing, and all powerful at the same time.

The deity permits evil as a consequence of creating creatures with free will. There is no way to have creatures with free will and not permit the possibility for a creature actually choosing evil. The deity knows in advance of a creature coming into existence, all that the creature will choose and do. This is not a denial of the creature's freedom but only foreknowledge of what the creature will do. If the deity were not to allow for free will then it would make puppets/robots of humans.

Counter Example Situation 3

A manufacturer of automobiles make two different models. The testing of one model prior to sale indicates that it has defects in the brake system likely to cause brake failure, accidents, injuries and deaths. The other model is tested and the results indicate no problems at all. The manufacturer decides to proceed with the production and sale of both models. The model with known faults does have numerous brake failures resulting in many injuries and deaths. The manufacturer is held liable for those injuries and deaths due to prior knowledge of the defect and the likelihood of brake failure resulting in injuries and deaths.

Now if instead of the manufacturer of automobiles the deity is the creator of humans. The deity knows in advance how each human will use free will the deity has given the human. The deity knows in advance which humans will use free will to choose evil. The

deity knows in advance which humans will use free will to choose evil. The deity chooses which humans will actually be born and survive and live to do those things he deity knows in advance that they will choose to do of their own free will.

There would be no denial of free will and no making of puppets out of humans if the deity choose that the humans who choose evil instead of good are not born in the first place. Such humans would be conceived but not born, experiencing a spontaneous abortion or miscarriage or were to die soon after birth and before the start of the evil doing. But evidence is that if there is a deity then the deity chooses not to act in this way and so the deity chooses the evil to occur through the actions of the humans that were created by the deity knowing in advance of their actual physical existence that they would choose evil. Thus, the deity is responsible for the evil acts and their consequences. Therefore the deity cannot be all good and all knowing and all powerful at the same time.

The free will defense does not really solve the problem of evil for the deity is seen as not being all good because the being is in part responsible for evil.

Free Will Defense 4: The deity is testing humans by giving them free will in order to determine if they will use that free will to do good or to do evil. Those who use free will to choose good will be rewarded and those who choose evil will be punished.

If God is giving a test, what kind of a being would that make God? If God is all-knowing would God know the results of all such tests before the tests were even administered? If God made humans and made them with free will and knows before they are born how they will use that free will and then goes ahead and makes them be born,

1. Where is the freedom of choice?
2. How is God not responsible for what his creatures do?
3. What is the point of any test when the results are known before the test is given?

Counter Example Situation 4

If I knew in advance everything my dog was going to do and then let my dog loose and it bit someone I would be responsible for that harm. Why isn't the deity responsible for what the deity knows its creations will do before they are even created? After all according to the belief system in the supreme being that is all perfect, the deity chooses who to create.

When you consider that the problem of evil arises for a deity that is all good and all knowing and all powerful at the same time then this idea of testing/punishing humans presents problems of inconsistency because one or more of the aspects of the deity appear to be incompatible with another. With the testing/punishing explanation and defense the deity is the author of the evil or not an all good or all merciful and all loving being. The testing/punishing explanation and defense would have the deity punishing creatures for failing a test when the outcome was known before the test took place.

Counter Example Situation 5

If an instructor gave an examination to a class and the instructor knew that the materials on the exam had not been covered in the course and that few, if any, students would be able to pass the examination, well what sort of an instructor would that be? Why is not the deity that is all knowing not in the same position as that instructor in terms of fairness and justice? This argument by analogy is offered to defeat the defense of the deity as being all good based on the idea that the deity is using evil to test humans (creatures with free will).

This defense (Evil is part of a Test) does not really solve the problem of evil for it challenges the characteristic of an all perfect being, being all good and all just.

Summation:

What each of the defenses of the Supreme being does is to subtly alter the idea of the Supreme Being by weakening or ignoring one or more of the characteristics of that being that led to or created the inconsistency or contradiction that is termed the "Problem of Evil". In each of these defenses the deity permits or creates evil or is unable or unwilling to reduce or remove evil.

Theodicy Defense or Gambit or Ploy	Weakens or ignores
Humans have Fallen and need to develop	The all powerful nature or the all good nature of the supreme being
Soul Building-	The all powerful nature or the all good nature of the supreme being
Avoiding Robots	The all powerful nature or the all good nature of the supreme being
Testing Humans	The all knowing nature or the all good nature of the supreme being
Using evil for some good purpose	The all good nature of the supreme being

The defenses do not succeed against the criticisms and do not solve the problem of evil. The traditional nature of the supreme being is preserved and seen as consistent with the existence of moral evil because in one form or another it relies upon the altering of the idea of the supreme being by either reducing or denying one of its characteristics that is responsible for the problem in the first place.

Transforming the Idea of Evil

Evil is only a part of the overall good and does not exist in itself. If the deity is all perfect then any universe created by that deity could not be anything less than perfect. This universe that does exist must therefore be the best possible. If this is so and there is what appears to be evil in this universe then that evil is not really evil at all but some necessary part or feature of the best of all possible worlds. Humans do not have the viewpoint of the deity. Humans cannot see the universe as seen by the deity. Humans focus on some aspect of the whole and give it a name "evil" and then think that evil has some existence or force on its own. When the entire creation is seen by the deity it appears to be beautiful and what humans call evil is seen by the deity as necessary feature of the overall beautiful creation.

Humans cannot get past the human perspective that is finite. Humans are viewing the canvas of a beautiful oil painting. They view the work of art by standing very close and focusing on the dark smudges (dabs of gray and brown and black paint) which they call evil. However, if the viewer would step back the viewer of the painting would see the beauty of the work and the dabs of paint previously thought to be ugly or evil would be seen as all part of the beautiful work of art. The problem is that humans cannot step back and view the painting from the view of the deity. So, for humans here is the appearance of the feature that they call evil. From the viewpoint of the deity that which humans call evil is not evil at all but a part of the overall creation.

Best of all Possible Worlds-The Divine View (Leibniz)

The evil that appears to humans as part of the best of all possible worlds is not so evil from the divine view or "God's eye" view. Evil is not evil from God's view, the infinite view .

Leibniz Argument

Premises/Conclusion

1. If God were all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good, then this world would be the best possible world.
2. But surely this world is not the best possible world.
3. **Thus, God is not all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good.**

Leibniz believed that the evidence that the conclusion of this argument was false was simply overwhelming. So, Leibniz needed to look carefully at the two premises in this argument in an attempt to falsify at least one of them. He was by his faith committed to accepting the first premise as true and so he wanted to reject the second. Leibniz held that the second premise was false and that this world is the best of all possible worlds.

Leibniz held that humans cannot possibly know how changing certain events in this world would make it any better than it is and has been. Thus, humans cannot support the claim that this world is not as good as it can be and in fact the best possible of all worlds. Humans have not an infinite perspective and amount of knowledge-God's view that would enable them to conclude that this world is not the best possible. If they could have such knowledge they would see how all that is and has been makes for the best possible world that could exist and thus whatever evil does exist is in some sense necessary for the production of the most wonderful, most beautiful world possible.

Counter Argument and Objections

Some intelligent persons have desired that this supplement should be made [to the Theodicy], and I have the more readily yielded to their wishes as in this way I have an opportunity to again remove certain difficulties and to make some observations which were not sufficiently emphasized in the work itself.

Objection 1

1. Whoever does not choose the best is lacking in power, or in knowledge, or in goodness.
2. God did not choose the best in creating this world.
3. Therefore God has been lacking in power, or in knowledge, or in goodness.

Answer. I deny the minor, that is, the second premise of this syllogism: and our opponent proves it by this.

Prosyllogism Whoever makes things in which there is evil, which could have been made without any evil, or the making of which could have been omitted, does not choose the best. God has made a world in which there is evil; a world, I say, which could have

been made without any evil, or the making of which could have been omitted altogether. Therefore, God has not chosen the best.

Answer. I grant the minor of this prosyllogism; for it must be confessed that there is evil in the world which God has made, and that it was possible to make a world without evil, or even not to create a world at all, for its creation depended on the free will of God; but I deny the major, that is, the first of the two premises of the prosyllogism, and I might content myself with simply demanding its proof; but in order to make the matter clearer, I have wished to justify this denial by showing that the best plan is not always that which seeks to avoid evil, since it may happen that the evil be accompanied by a greater good. For example, a general of the army will prefer a great victory with a slight wound to a condition without wound and without victory. We have proved this more fully in the large work by making it clear, by instances taken from mathematics and elsewhere, that an imperfection in the part may be required for a greater perfection in the whole. In this I have followed the opinion of St. Augustine, who has said a hundred times, that God permitted evil in order to bring about good, that is, a greater good; and that of Thomas Aquinas' (in libr. II sent. Dist. 32, qu. I, art. 1), that the permitting of evil tends to the good of the universe. I have shown that the ancients called Adam's fall *felix culpa*, a happy sin, because it had been retrieved with immense advantage by the incarnation of the Son of God, who has given to the universe something nobler than anything that ever would have been among creatures except for this. And in order to a clear understanding, I have added, following many good authors, that it was in accordance with order and the general good that God gave to certain creatures the opportunity of exercising their liberty, even when he foresaw that they would turn to evil, but which he could so well rectify; because it was not right that, in order to hinder sin, God should always act in an extraordinary manner.

To overthrow this objection, therefore, it is sufficient to show that a world with evil might be better than a world without evil; but I have gone even farther in the work, and have even proved that this universe must be in reality better than every other possible universe.

Objection 2

If there is more evil than good in intelligent creatures, then there is more evil than good in the whole work of God. Now, there is more evil than good in intelligent creatures. Therefore there is more evil than good in the whole work of God.

Answer. I deny the major and the minor of this conditional syllogism. As to the major, I do not admit it at all, because this pretended deduction from a part to the whole, from intelligent creatures to all creatures, supposes tacitly and without proof that creatures destitute of reason cannot enter into comparison nor into account with those which possess it. But why may it not be that the surplus of good in the non-intelligent creatures which fill the world, compensates for, and even incomparably surpasses, the surplus of evil in the rational creatures? It is true that the value of the latter is greater; but, in compensation, the other are beyond comparison the more numerous, and it may be that the proportion of number and of quantity surpasses that of value and of quality.

As to the minor, that is no more to be admitted; that is, it is not at all to be admitted that there is more evil than good in the intelligent creatures. There is no need even of granting that there is more evil than good in the human race, because it is possible, and in fact very probable, that the glory and the perfection of the blessed are incomparably greater than the misery and the imperfection of the damned, and that here the excellence of the total good in the smaller number exceeds the total evil in the greater number. The blessed approach the Divinity, by means of the Divine Mediator, as near as may suit these creatures, and make such progress in good as is impossible for the damned to make in evil, approach as nearly as they may to the nature of demons. God is infinite, and the devil is limited; good may and does advance *ad infinitum*, while evil has its bounds. It is therefore possible, and is credible, that in the comparison of the blessed and the damned, the contrary of that which I have said might happen in the comparison of intelligent and non-intelligent creatures, takes place; namely, it is possible that in the comparison of the happy and the unhappy, the proportion of degree exceeds that of number, and that in the comparison of intelligent and non-intelligent creatures, the proportion of number is greater than that of value. I have the right to suppose that a thing is possible so long as its impossibility is not proved; and indeed that which I have here advanced is more than a supposition.

But in the second place, if I should admit that there is more evil than good in the human race, I have still good grounds for not admitting that there is more evil than good in all intelligent creatures. For there is an inconceivable number of genii, and perhaps of other rational creatures. And an opponent could not prove that in all the City of God, composed as well of genii as of rational animals without number and of an infinity of kinds, evil exceeds good. And although in order to answer an objection, there is no need of proving that a thing is, when its mere possibility suffices; yet, in this work, I have not omitted to show that it is a consequence of the supreme perfection of the Sovereign of the universe, that the kingdom of God be the most perfect of all possible states or governments, and that consequently the little evil there is, is required for the consummation of the immense good which is there found. . . .

Objection 3

Premises/Conclusion

1. He who cannot fail to choose the best, is not free.
2. God cannot fail to choose the best. Hence,
3. **God is not free.**

Answer. I deny the major of this argument; it is rather true liberty and the most perfect, to be able to use one's free will for the best, and to always exercise this power without ever being turned from it either by external force or by internal passions, the first of which causes slavery of the body, the second, slavery of the soul. There is nothing less servile than to be always led toward the good, and always by one's own inclination, without any constraint and without any displeasure. And to object therefore that God had need of external things, is only a sophism. He created them freely; but having proposed to himself an end, which is to exercise his goodness, wisdom determined him to choose those means best fitted to attain this end. To call this a need is to take that term in an unusual sense which frees it from all imperfection, just as when we speak of the wrath of God.

Seneca has somewhere said that God commanded but once, but that he obeys always, because he obeys the laws which he willed to prescribe to himself; *semel jussit semper parat*. But he had better have said that God always commands and that he is always obeyed; for in willing, he always follows the inclination of his own nature, and all other things always follow his will. And as this will is always the same, it cannot be said that he obeys only that will which he formerly had. Nevertheless, although his will is always infallible and always tends toward the best, the evil, or the lesser good, which he rejects, does not cease to be possible in itself; otherwise the necessity of the good would be geometrical (so to speak), or metaphysical and altogether absolute; the contingency of things would be destroyed, and there would be no choice. But this sort of necessity, which does not destroy the possibility of the contrary, has this name only by analogy; it becomes effective, not by the pure essence of things, but by that which is outside of them above them, namely, by the will of God. This necessity is called moral, because to the sage, necessity and what ought to be are equivalent things; and when it always has its effect, as it really has in the perfect sage, that is, in God, it may be said that it is a happy necessity. The nearer creatures approach to it, the nearer they approach to perfect happiness. Also this kind of necessity is not that which we try to avoid and which destroys morality, rewards and praise. For that which it brings, does not happen whatever we may do or will, but because we will it well. And a will to which it is natural to choose well, merits praise so much the more; also it carries its reward with it, which is sovereign happiness. And as this constitution of the divine nature gives entire satisfaction to him who possesses it, it is also the best and the most desirable for the creatures who are all dependent on God. If the will of God did not have for a rule the principle of the best, it would either tend toward evil, which would be the worst; or it would be in some way indifferent to good and to evil, and would be guided by chance: but a will which would allow itself always to act by chance, would not be worth more for the government of the universe than the fortuitous concourse of atoms, without there being any divinity therein. And even if God should abandon himself to chance only in some cases and in a certain way (as he would do, if he did not always work towards the best and if he were capable of preferring a lesser good to a greater, that is, an evil to a good, since that which prevents a greater good is an evil), he would be imperfect, as well as the object of his choice; he would not merit entire confidence; he would act without reason in such a case, and the government of the universe would be like certain games, equally divided between reason and chance. All this proves that this objection which is made against the choice of the best, perverts the notions of the free and of the necessary, and represents to us even the best as evil; to do which is either malicious or ridiculous.

So, with Leibniz, the moral evil that humans do in some way is part of the good or is necessary for the good and so is not quite evil in an absolute sense but only evil in a relative sense as humans cannot understand how it would be good as it is necessitated by the "good" and contributes to the "good". Somehow from the perspective of the all good and perfect deity the moral evil is part of the beautiful and good creation that is the "best of all possible worlds".

Well there are many who prefer to think of evil as an independent being or separate existence or force. The stories in the myths of many of the world religions present it as such and it is difficult for those from the cultures having those religions to think of evil as something other than an agent or thing in itself. Nevertheless the approach taken by Leibniz and others to the Problem of Evil handles it by dissolving the evil and reconfigures the problem as a human creation, not the actions that would be commonly called "evil" but the idea of "evil" itself. In this view, the ideas of both "good" and "evil" are human creations and they appear generate a conflict in the idea of the all perfect and all good deity with the existence of moral evil. When the nature of the deity and its creation are properly understood that conflict dissolves.

After Leibniz some other philosophers and religious commentators have gone further. For some of them it is an indisputable fact that humans create the idea of the deity after their own characteristics and then further project into the idea of the deity all of the

qualities considered as being positive or good and make them into perfections. One of many results is the problem of the inconsistency of the properties of the deity (all-good and all-powerful and all-knowing) with the existence of moral evil. Now in order to resolve or dissolve the conflict one would need to realize that the creation of the concepts of "good" and "evil" by humans does not necessitate the actual existence of paired entity or forces as the stories would have it. Instead when considering the resultant inconsistencies in the projections and stories the resolution of some of them would be to simply hold that there could be such an all perfect deity at the same time as there is moral evil because the moral evil is not really the opposition to the good as a force or entity but is instead a direction away from the "good", however the "good" would be configured or conceived.

In the story book way of explanation it would be that humans cannot understand how the moral evil as part of the grand totality is really part of the "good" and contributes to it. Such inclusions into the "good" and contributions to the "good" are held to be beyond human comprehension and understood only by the deity that has the infinite and complete perspective, viewpoints and capacity to understand. So some hold that moral evil is not evil when understood from the perspective of the deity which is a perspective that is not possible for humans. This position places the issue into the realm of mystery and beyond the realm of reason. This is not acceptable to philosophical inquiry. People, including philosophers, want to understand.

Where to turn next? There are those who do not accept that evil is not a thing itself. They cannot accept that evil is not to be thought of a evil but as another form of the good. If the deity cannot be all perfect and moral evil exist at the same time and if the idea of evil is not to be removed by transforming it into a form of the good then what else is to be done to solve this Problem of Evil? There are an increasing number of people who are looking once again at the very idea of the deity and think that perhaps the idea is the source of the problem. They would make adjustments in that idea. In the next section Process Theology and Process Philosophy will be examined.

Process Theology

There is an approach to the problem of evil which changes the concept of the deity. This approach has found more people willing to consider it and some to accept it in a post modern world. The concept of the deity is not in conformity to the dogmas of the established religions of the West. There are theologians in the religious traditions of the West who are willing to consider and some even accept that the traditional notion of the deity as a supreme being and an all perfect being may not be the conception that is most consistent with the demands of reasoning.

Although the idea can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (lived around 500 BC), the idea again became popular in the nineteenth century with the advent of the theory of evolution. The idea influence both philosophers and theologians. One group of such theologians is in a tradition of thought known as Process Philosophy. Associated with this approach are philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. Process philosophy and Open Theism--From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

Fundamentals of Process Theology



Process theology is a school of thought influenced by the metaphysical process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1861 & 1947).Open theism, a theological movement that began in the 1990's, is similar, but not identical, to Process theology.

In both views, God is not omnipotent in the classical sense of a coercive being. Reality is not made up of material substances that endure through time, but serially-ordered events, which are experiential in nature. The universe is characterized by process and change carried out by the agents of free will. Self-determination characterizes everything in the universe, not just human beings.

God and creatures co-create. God cannot force anything to happen, but rather only influence the exercise of this universal free will by offering possibilities.

Concepts of Process Theology:

God is not omnipotent in the sense of being coercive. The divine has a power of persuasion rather than force. Process theologians have often seen the classical doctrine of omnipotence as involving coercion (arguably mistakenly), and themselves claim something more restricted than the classical doctrine.

Reality is not made up of material substances that endure through time, but serially-ordered events, which are experiential in nature. The universe is characterized by process and change carried out by the agents of free will. Self-determination characterizes everything in the universe, not just human beings. God cannot force anything to happen, but rather only influence the exercise of this universal free will by offering possibilities.

God contains the universe but is not identical with it (panentheism) Because God contains a changing universe, God is changeable (that is to say, God is affected by the actions that take place in the universe) over the course of time. However, the abstract elements of God (goodness, wisdom, etc.) Remain eternally solid.

People do not experience a subjective (or personal) immortality, but they do have an objective immortality in that their experiences live on forever in God, who contains all that was. Di-polar theism, or the idea that our idea of a perfect God cannot be limited to a particular set of characteristics, because perfection can be embodied in opposite characteristics; For instance, for God to be perfect, he cannot have absolute control over all beings, because then he would not be as good as a being who moved by persuasion, rather than brute force. Thus, for God to be perfect, he must be both powerful and leave other beings some power to resist his persuasion.

Problems with Traditional Theism

As they see it there are a number of problems with traditional theism

- God's determination of the future (or knowledge of it) conflicts with human freedom
- Infinite goodness is incompatible with evil
- Problems with a spiritual being as the cause of anything material
- Science and the Theory of Evolution has proven the account in Genesis wrong
- Creation of the entire universe from nothingness (ex nihilo) is incoherent because it is thought to be metaphysically
- Impossible to get something from nothing
- "beginning of time" is a self-contradictory notion
- God's consciousness cannot change if it is of all infinity at once - but consciousness must change
- Why would a deity want its creations to do anything if doing so does not bring about any change in an eternal deity?

The principle problem is that as the traditional concept of God is considered as incoherent or beset with problems, the traditional conception of deity has led to atheism: first the dualistic nature of the concept of God led to a materialistic science and secondly, there was no longer room for God or divine causation.

Dualism is the view that humans are composed of matter or physical substance (body) and spiritual substance (soul). But where is the soul to be located in the dualist view? Is the soul in the body, or is the body in the soul? How do two such dissimilar substances relate to one another or interact? Materialism is the view that only matter exists - no non-physical substances exist. Thus, if the non-physical or spiritual mind cannot influence the body (as there is no mind located in the physical body), then neither could a spiritual entity or deity (God) influence the material world. There is also no way to explain how the physical universe or world could be in a spiritual being or entity such as a deity or God.

With materialism our knowledge is limited to what is empirically verifiable, what we can detect with our senses, perhaps aided by physical devices and mathematical analyses. The non-physical or spiritual realm is not available to physical detection and so all claims about spiritual beings are beyond verification because they cannot be empirically detected or proven. We cannot sense the deity (God) and so for materialism there is no such being.

So the metaphysical traditions of dualism and monism-materialism each present significant problems for the traditional conception of a deity. With Process Metaphysics there is a different view of what is real. There are no "substances" or static independent realities. Instead, there are "actual entities" seen as a dynamic collection of events. With this view because all is in causal motion, there is also creativity. There are in addition to the actual entities "eternal objects" –patterns of events which permeate all reality. Some philosophers called these the "universals". Within the process view nature itself is comprised of creative, experiential events.

So how is the deity viewed by Process Theology? The deity is thought of as the everlasting eternal entity. The “god” is a dynamic collection of events, the pattern of which permeates all of reality. How does such a deity enable the Process Theologians to respond to the Problem of Evil? Well to begin with the eternal process can only “create” a world with multiple finite freedom and any world with multiple finite freedom must contain the possibility of evil. While no particular evil is necessary, the possibility of there being some evil is necessary. The deity can influence all events, but only as persuasion. Unfortunately, in this view humans suffer more, because there are more possibilities open to them.

The traditional concept of the deity is further altered in that when considering the idea of a God’s Omniscience in the Process view the deity (god) does not know the future. Since all events exercise some self-determination, the future is not knowable (in principle). However, once something is, then God can know it. How does this change our concept of God? The Process idea of the deity is not one of an all perfect being that is all knowing and all powerful and detached from the physical universe existing in an eternal spiritual realm. Instead the deity is seen as existing both within and beyond the physical universe. This is Panentheism. The deity of process philosophy is viewed a partly in the creation and partly beyond or outside of its creation. There is a relation of the creator to the creation. It is one of cooperation. The deity attempts to entice the creations to work with the deity but the creations (humans) cannot be forced to do so. The deity acts on the creations through the attraction of its values. The deity can influence the conscious creations but does not directly act upon them and does not force cooperation or compliance.

Atheism

There is no Problem of Evil if there is no deity, let alone an all perfect deity. For those who hold that every attempt at proving that there is a deity of any kind have failed because they are not psychologically convincing or logically compelling there is no Problem of Evil. For such thinkers the only conclusion that can be reached in light of the absence of evidence and logical compulsion would be atheism - to believe that there are no deities of any kind.

Atheists and the Problem of Evil



In the end what can be made of all the proofs and arguments for and against the existence of God. It appears that each and every one of them has strong points and weak points as well. It appears as if no one argument is definitive. No one argument is powerful enough to convince everyone to accept it.

- This is the idea that humans sin in all possible worlds or else
- God is not all good or not all powerful
- God cannot create a world with moral Good and without moral EVIL

Therefore, every world that God creates must have not only the possibility of evil in it but actual evil as well.

Philosophy Applications



EVIL

Was it correct for God to punish Adam and Eve and all humans thereafter for an action taken by Eve and Adam? After all God knew in advance that the devil (serpent) was going to tempt them. God knew that Eve would take the fruit from the forbidden tree and eat of it. God knew this. God made the serpent, the humans, the tree and all other things. God knew all that would happen. Why would God punish all humans for what God knew in advance God's creatures would do?

Since GOD made Lucifer and knew what Lucifer would do and since God does not stop Lucifer, why isn't God responsible for the evil? Why is it acceptable for God to punish others for what God could stop?

Do people need to believe in a god? Why or why not?

Do people need religion? Why or why not?

Should we want God to exist? Why or why not? My question is whether we should want God to exist, not whether God exists or not. This question is not often considered, but I believe that it is a question all of us should ask, regardless of whether we are theists, atheists or agnostics.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Metaphysics

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4.1: Materialism and Idealism



Metaphysics Overview

Metaphysics deals with what is real. What do all things that are real, in some way or in any way, have in common that makes them real and otherwise not?

Have you ever heard or said any of the following:

- Are you for real?
- Really!
- No kidding!
- For real?
- Is it really true?
- Get real!
- Are they real?

Well, just what is meant by "real"? If all things that are real constitute "reality", then what is "reality"? What does it mean to be real? Is there a reality? How would we know it? This is the stuff of metaphysics. When someone dies and a survivor wonders whether or not souls are real they are entering into metaphysical thinking as soon as they begin to think about what exactly it means to be real.

Physical objects are real. Or at least most people think that they are real. Ideas are real. Relationships (taller than, older than) are real. They are all real but, they are not real in the same way. What do they have in common that makes them real? You check out something to determine whether or not it is real. A testing process is used. The testing involves the use of the senses, physical objects and measuring devices. But are all things that are real detectable by means of such physical devices? This is a metaphysical question.

Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that could be of significance to humans as they must deal with claims about things and state of affairs about which they wonder: "Are they real or not?" At the beginning of the 21st century philosophers are exploring alternatives to the post-modernist view that would restore some notion of there being a reality. It is too soon to discern which traditions in philosophy may reassert themselves and in what form, to displace the discredited postmodern rejection of the idea of a single reality.

At the beginning of the 20th century there was a movement in philosophy called linguistic analysis that held that most, if not all, of the most basic problems confronting philosophers and humans were the result of language problems and once they were solved with a method of clarification the human problems would be solved as well. This has not proven to be the case. Some but not all of the problem with the idea that there are "multiple realities" may very well be a problem with language and the sloppiness with which people use it.

Let's consider the idea of "multiple realities". At first glance many will agree that there are multiple realities. But when asked exactly what is meant by that claim there are different ideas. There is a need to clarify the meaning of the term "reality". As with many words there is more than one meaning and to switch from one to another in a conversation or an argument is to invite problems. In philosophy this problem is known as equivocation.

Multiple Realities and Multiple Meanings



Meaning 1

Let's start with what is perhaps the oldest and most important meaning of the word "reality."

Reality 1 = the sum total of all that is real.

This is the total sum of all things that exist and are experienced no matter what or where they are. These would be real things as opposed to imaginary or illusory.

Now there is a universe and it is composed of galaxies and they are composed of solar systems and they have planets and moons and then there are asteroids and comets and throughout it all there is dark matter and energy and dark holes and the forces of the universe: gravity, electro-magnetic, strong and weak. This universe occupies and constitutes space. It has three dimensions of length, breadth, and depth. Add the dimension of time and the entire space-time continuum is *reality 1*. Thus *reality 1* is the total of all real things that are space-time continuum.

Now if there should be more dimensions than the four of the known space-time continuum, well then *reality 1* would consist of the sum of all those dimensions. String theory holds for many more dimensions than the four of space-time. If there should be other universes with their own galaxies and solar systems, etc...then *reality 1* would be the total of all those universes and dimensions. *Reality 1* is singular. There is only one *reality 1*. Whatever is real and exists makes for *reality 1*.

Meaning 2

The word reality is sometimes used not in the sense of meaning 1 or reality 1 but in another way.

Reality 2 = a person's experience of reality 1

With this usage each person has a unique and individual experience of all that is real and those experiences constitute the *reality 2* of that person. No two people, not even identical twins, have the self-same set of experiences and so no two people have the same *reality 2*. Thus there are as many *realities 2* as there are conscious beings to experience what exists. Thus there are multiple *realities 2*.

It is obvious that the experiences of different people are different and the more different people are so are their experiences and so is their *reality 2*. So in the sense of *reality 2* there are multiple *realities 2*. Rich people have a different *reality 2* than poor people. Tall people have a different *reality 2* than short people. Males have a different *reality 2* than females and so on.

Meaning 3

There is still another meaning for the word "reality" that is operative in discussions about reality.

Reality 3 = a person's belief about reality 1

As different people have different beliefs about what is real then they have a different *reality 3*. So each person holding a set of beliefs about *reality 1* has a *reality 3*. Different beliefs will produce different *realities 3*. So with *Meaning 2* and *Meaning 3* there are multiple "realities"

If in metaphysics the issue is "What is real?" then the meaning of the word "real" and the resulting "reality" would be the sense of the word using the meaning of reality 1.

Now with post-modernism there came the notion that since humans do not know with objective knowledge and with absolute certainty what reality 1 is then all thinking about *reality 1* is merely about *reality 3*. Thus, different groups of people have different beliefs about *reality 1* and thus there being no set of beliefs that are certain to be true and complete knowledge of *reality 1* then there is no *reality 1* that humans know and all talking about *reality 1* is merely talking about *reality 3* and thus there can be and are multiple *realities 3* and that is all that humans can do.

Post-modernism presents the claims:

- There is no absolute certainty about *reality 1*.
- There can be no certain knowledge of *reality 1*.
- There can be no objective knowledge of *reality 1*.
- All thinking about *reality 1* is done within groups by individuals and amounts to no more than *reality 3*.
- So, there are only multiple *realities 3*.

Questions to Ponder

1. Is this actually the case that there is no *reality 1* and there are only *realities 3*?
2. Is there no way to get beyond the relativity of thinking about reality?

Some think that there is. Let us consider as an example of something that is real and would be a part of *reality 1*, the planet earth. More precisely, let's consider the shape of the planet earth.

To begin with we start out with there being only one such planet on which we who are writing and reading or listening to these words are living. If each of us has his or her own planet earth then there is no explanation as to why we are each on the other's planets. So we agree that there is one planet Earth.

The planet earth is physical and occupies space-time. As there is only one planet earth it has only one shape. The shape of the planet earth is of a multi-dimensional object. It could be something like a cube, saucer, cylinder, spherical shape, or some other three dimensional shape. However, the main point here is that, whatever is its shape, it has only one shape

If it has only one shape and there are people who think it is a cube and others who think it is a saucer and others who think it is a spherical shape, then they cannot all be correct at the same time. No matter what the shape of the earth is some of those people must be wrong about the shape because the planet earth cannot have more than one shape at the same time. So in *reality 1* the planet earth has one and only one shape.

Different people have different experiences of the planet earth and thus different *realities 2*. People also have different beliefs about the shape of the planet and thus different *realities 3*. Some people think that the shape is flat (Flat Earth society members). Some think that the shape is an oblate spheroid. So they have different *realities 3*.

Are they equally correct? No, they could both be wrong. This could happen if the one and only planet earth turned out to have a pyramid shape or some other shape beside a spheroid or flat saucer like entity. But the people who think it is flat and those who think it is an oblate spheroid cannot both be correct at the same time.

So what is the *reality 1* about the planet earth? We think that it is an oblate spheroid given the overwhelming amount of evidence that supports that and the evidence that refutes the claim that the planet earth has a flat shape.

It would be foolish (defying logic and basic reason) to claim that there are multiple realities using *reality 1* meaning. It would be obvious to claim that there are multiple realities about the shape of the earth using *reality 3* meaning.

So where are we with all this talk about reality and multiple realities? Well the American pragmatist Charles Sanders Pierce wished to distinguish himself from the other pragmatists because of a few points of fundamental difference with them. Most held that there was no *reality 1* and Pierce held that there was such a *reality 1* and that humans would develop better and better understandings of just what *reality 1* is but never capture it totally and completely. He wished that his own form of pragmatism that held out for such a thing to be known as "pragmatism" but that did not catch on. So we have the postmodernism of Pierce and then the postmodern relativism of the others including pragmatists who want to claim that there is no *reality 1*.

It seems that Pierce was more accurate than those others who would go on to promulgate many ideas about the lack of certainty and the impossibility of objective knowledge and truth. The shape of the planet earth is something that humans come to know. Their thinking about it is checked against the way that things are. There is a method for checking on the empirical claims of human beings and that method is self-correcting. Science develops over time a better and better understanding of the nature of things and of *reality 1*.

We should not accept that there are multiple *realities 1* but only that there are multiple realities in the sense of *meaning 2 (reality 2)* and *meaning 3 (reality 3)*. We would do better to stop using those meanings and to speak more clearly and when we want to claim that there are multiple realities in the sense of *meaning 2 (reality 2)* and *meaning 3 (reality 3)* we should make these claims:

- b) There are different experiences of what is real.
- c) There are different beliefs about what is real.

and not say that there are different realities when all we mean by that is either b) or c).

Academic Metaphysics

The term metaphysics originally referred to the writings of Aristotle that came after his writings on physics, in the arrangement made by Andronicus of Rhodes about three centuries after Aristotle's death.

Traditionally, metaphysics refers to the branch of philosophy that attempts to understand the fundamental nature of all reality, whether visible or invisible. It seeks a description so basic, so essentially simple, so all-inclusive that it applies to everything, whether divine, human or anything else. It attempts to tell what anything must be like in order to be at all.

To call one a metaphysician, in this traditional philosophical sense, indicates nothing more than his or her interest in attempting to discover what underlies everything. Old materialists, who said that there is nothing but matter in motion, and current naturalists, who say that everything is made of lifeless, non-experiencing energy, are just as much to be classified as metaphysicians as are idealists, who maintain that there is nothing but ideas, or mind, or spirit.

Perhaps the best definition of materialism is that of Charles Hartshorne (*Insights and Oversights of Great Thinkers*, p.17): "the denial that the most pervasive processes of nature involve any such psychical functions as sensing, feeling, remembering, desiring, or thinking." Idealists assert what materialists here deny. Dualists say that mind and matter are equally real, while neutral monists claim that there is a neutral reality that can appear as either mind or matter. Philosophers generally are content to divide reality into two halves, mind and matter (extended and unextended reality) and do not emphasize such distinctions within the mind half as spirit and soul.

Popular Metaphysics

A commonly employed secondary, popular, usage of metaphysics includes a wide range of controversial phenomena believed by many people to exist beyond the physical.

Popular metaphysics relates to two traditionally contrasted, if not completely separable, areas,

1. *mysticism*, referring to experiences of unity with the ultimate, commonly interpreted as the god who is love, and
2. *occultism*, referring to the extension of knowing (extrasensory perception, including telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, retro cognition, and mediumship) and doing (psychokinesis) beyond the usually recognized fields of human activity.

The academic study of the occult (literally hidden) has been known as psychical research and, more recently, parapsychology. Both New Age and New Thought emphasize mysticism and its practical, pragmatic application in daily living, but New Thought discourages involvement in occultism.

Pure and Applied Metaphysics

Cutting across the division of the academic and the popular, there is another way of dividing metaphysics: theoretical and applied. This distinction is like the division between science and technology; one describes; the other applies the description to practical problems, putting knowledge to work. Gathering knowledge (or alleged knowledge, critics of metaphysics would say) in metaphysics traditionally is by rational thought; in a more popular understanding, knowledge gathering may be either mystical or occult; in either case the pure (?) knowledge is to be distinguished from the practical application of it.

Subdivisions of Metaphysics

- **Ontology:** What is being? What exists? What is real?
- **Metaphysical Questions:** Does god exist? Soul? Mind? Body? Space? Time? Eternity? Potential? Future? Past?
- **Cosmology:** what is the origin of reality? Matter? Space? Time?
- **Axiology:** what are values? Do they exist? Are they ordered?

Topics in Metaphysics

- Minds and bodies
- Souls and immortality
- Freedom and determinism
- Fate
- Space and time
- Time and eternity
- Causation
- God: being, causation, nature, eternal, nature, existence of evil
- Ideas or categories
- Relations properties: are these real?

Materialism

Materialism is a tradition of thought in which all things that exist are made up of matter in some way. To update this theory it might be restated that all existence is made up of energy in some form. Matter is a form of energy. All things that exist are made of energy, atoms, molecules, forces and other entities that consist of energy. There are no non-physical or non-material existents.

Margaret Cavendish-Materialism



To explain human behavior there is evolutionary biology and sociobiology, which attempt to explain all behavior in physical terms. Humans are conditioned to respond to stimuli. They have basic physical drives and they have the evolutionary drive to continue their species. This explains mating behavior and even the actions of some humans to save the lives of other humans, even at their own expense. It is all about continuing the genetic inheritance, the chromosomal patterns.

Idealism

This is the view that the only reality is the ideal world. This would be the *world of ideas*. It is the view that there is no external reality composed of matter and energy. There are only ideas existing within minds.

Idealism is the metaphysical view that associates reality to ideas in the mind rather than to material objects. It lays emphasis on the mental or spiritual components of experience, and renounces the notion of material existence. Idealists regard the mind and spirit as the most essential, permanent aspects of one's being.

Idealism of Plato

A well-known exponent of this view was Plato, a philosopher in ancient Greece (428-347 BC). Plato believed that the physical world around us is not real; it is constantly changing and thus you can never say what it really is. There is a world of ideas which is a world of unchanging and absolute truth. This is reality for Plato. Does such a world exist independent of human minds? Plato thought it did, and whenever we grasp an idea, or see something with our mind's eye, we are using our mind to conceive of something in the ideal world. There are a number of proofs of this ideal world. The concepts of geometry, such as the concept of a circle, which is a line equidistant from a point, is something which does not exist in the physical world. All physical circles, such as wheels, drawings, etc. Are not perfectly round. Yet our mind has the concept of a perfect circle. Since this concept could not come

from the physical world, it must come from an ideal world. Another proof is that from moral perfection. We can conceive of a morally perfect person, even though the people we know around us are not morally perfect. So where does someone get this idea of moral perfection? Since it could not have been obtained from the world around us, it must have come from an ideal world.

Idealism of Bishop George Berkeley

George Berkeley was an Anglican bishop from Ireland who challenged the irrationality of the notion that matter exists autonomously outside the mind as Locke and other contemporaneous empiricists speculated. Berkeley's immaterialist ontology maintained material substance cannot be real beyond the confines of the mind because inanimate objects do not have the ability to operate as causal agents. It is nonsensical and foolish to designate the causal qualities of humans, or spirits, to inert matter. Only life forces, such as spirits or souls, are able to function causally through perception and are the only substances that really exist. Knowledge springs from perceptions, and because material objects are not causal agents, they unquestionably do not arouse perceptual activity. Berkeley says that only an infinite being may produce and direct causally the perceptions that humans (spirits) have of physical matter. "but whatever power I may have over my own thoughts, I find the ideas actually perceived by sense have not a like dependence on my will. When in broad daylight I open my eyes, 'tis not in my power to choose whether I see or no, or to determine what particular objects shall represent themselves to my view; and so likewise to the hearing and other senses, the ideas imprinted on them are not creatures of my will. There is therefore some other will or spirit that produces them."

Does The Physical World Exist? Bishop George Berkeley



Berkeley asserted that man's ideas are emitted from the divine, and thus all humans are merely ideas in the mind of God. When he thinks of us, we are begotten and our existence activated. Yet, God still remains ineffable as he is beyond our comprehension. It is ultimately God who causes us to sense the physicality of objects by means of his direct volition. First, he will conceive the idea that we humans sense or perceive an object and then we actually do as he thought. Hence, the effect of God's mind on the mind of humans is required for sensation to occur. Berkeley explicates that all physical objects are perceived via sensation. Material objects are merely ideas obtained through perceptual activity and their attributes are sensible rather than being physical properties. Sensation is therefore impossible without the presence of ideas or else anything sensed would be unperceived or unthought. In conclusion, Berkeley asserts that all physical things in this world are ideas of the divine.

Christian Scientist's Idealism

Christian Scientists generally believe that God is a disembodied spirit who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. They set all *being* in his mind. He is and encompasses all aspects of existence as he is referred to as "God is all-in-all." Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, states that due to God's spiritual nature, humanity (the product of his creation) must also appropriately be spiritual and not material. The concept of additional spiritual deities is excluded because of his "all-in-all" totality. The true universe in its entirety, according to divine metaphysics, or Christian Science, is comprised of ideas that are completely spiritual and fashioned by divine thought, just as Berkeley espouses in his immaterialist views. Therefore, Christian Scientists specify that we as humans are in truth spirits produced by divinity, and in consequence are all incarnations of God. If we ignorantly deny the truth of God's spiritual existence, it is then that we will mistakenly envision the world in the form of material, as it will be an illusion. All ideas hostile to god's infiniteness, permanence, and goodness, such as conceptions of death, hell, and evil, are flawed and wicked hallucinations and are not real. God envelops all that is real, and therefore, everything he is (eternal, omnibeneficent, etc.) is justifiably real. Everything else is just mortal error.

Forms of idealism

- **Skeptic idealism**- starts with the thought that there is no proof that there are material objects outside of thought.
- **Problematic idealism**- is the belief held by Descartes where we can only hold one empirical truth, which is that I exist.
- **Dogmatic**- starts with the assumption that there are no material objects outside of thought and the belief that space is an inseparable condition to all objects and that this space is cannot exist in itself. Thus it also says that all things in this space also cannot exist and are merely images. This is Berkeley's position.

Since all that we think we perceive through our senses that gives us evidence of a universe beyond our own mind is evidence which exists in our mind there is a problem with verifying anything outside of the realm of thought.

We could all be merely sets of thoughts in the universal set that is God. God thinks of everything and God's thought are those things. God thinks of us; of us sitting at our computers, in a room with other people at the same time that God thinks of those rooms and people and computers and that is all that we are: thoughts in God's mind.

Philosophy Applications

In a minimum 2 paragraphs for each question, answer it completely and use evidence to support your opinions from the reading.

1. What is reality? How do we know?

Note: This does not mean a view of what is real or a perspective or an individual experience of whatever is real. This question is asking about what is reality itself.

Think about: What makes something real? What does anything that exists in any way need in order to be real as opposed to an illusion, fantasy, fake? What would you do to determine whether or not something was real?

2. Can there be more than one reality at the same time?

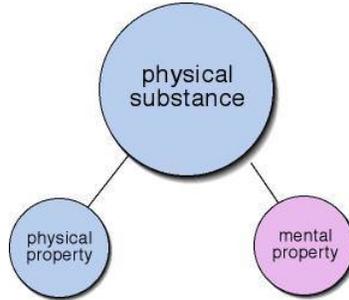
Note: This means what is real and not a person's view of what is real. This question is asking if there can be more than one total reality. It is not asking about whether or not people can have different experiences or views of the same reality. This question is asking whether there can be more than one entire reality (universe) at the same time. Granted that people have different experiences and different views what are they of.

Think about: Is there a single reality that people have different views of? or, are there as many realities as there are different views? Is it possible that there is one reality and some people have correct views of it and other people have wrong or incorrect views of it? Or are there many realities and each group of people can have their own reality? What becomes of the reality of other groups? Are they no longer real?

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4.2: Substance Dualism and Existentialism

Substance Dualism



In this tradition of dualism both matter and spirit exist and are separate substances: one physical and extended in time and space and the other not so extended.

There are some dualists who claim that there is one reality which is composed of two different substances: physical and spiritual. These two substances are quite different from one another. There are some dualists who claim that there is one reality that has two aspects to every real thing: the physical and mental.

Plato and Dualism

Plato thought that the soul could and would exist apart from the body and would exist after the death of the body. He offered a "proof" for this position and was the first to do so in writing that we have any evidence of doing so. He offered several different proofs or arguments none of which are convincing today. They are held to be specious arguments or terribly flawed and unconvincing. He held that humans were composed of bodies and souls but the soul was more important and immortal. His arguments used premises which we question today. For example, Plato thought that he could conclude that the soul could exist independent of the body because it acted independently from the body when it engaged in pure thought. This is no longer accepted as true since it is equally evident today that without a physical brain thought appears unlikely to occur. Plato thought that the only way to explain how people come to know things is that they are remembering the knowledge implanted in their souls when the souls were in the realm of pure thought and eternal forms before entering into the body after which they forgot as they became confused by physical emotions and feelings and limited experiences through the senses. This is no longer accepted as the best explanation of how people come to have knowledge. None the less, Plato is credited with being the first human to attempt to set out any sort of a proof that humans had souls and that they survived the death of the body and that they were immortal. He offered these arguments in the dialogue he wrote titled the *Phaedo*.

Descartes and Dualism

Descartes also believed that the soul existed prior to and separate from the body (see *Meditation II*, of *Meditations on First Philosophy*) and so was immortal. In his view all of reality consisted of two very different substances: matter or the physical and spirit or the non-physical. The physical was what would be extended in time and space and the non-physical would not be so characterized. For Descartes the soul of a human exists prior to and separate from the body. His proof consisted of argumentation that has been seriously criticized and rejected. He thought that if he could in some form demonstrate that humans can prove that they exist without first proving that they have physical bodies then that would prove that they did not need a physical body in order to exist. He thought that his famous claim that "*I think therefore I am*" established not just that he existed but that he existed without a body as a "thinking thing". A "thinking thing" is a thing that thinks and by that would be included: imagining, conceiving, hoping, dreaming, desiring, fearing, conjecturing, reasoning, remembering and more. For him a "thinking thing" needed no physical parts to do what it does. Modern science has established that there is no evidence of humans that are without a physical body and its brain. There is no evidence that thought is possible without a brain. There is much evidence that what has been associated with Descartes' "thinking thing" is now explained solely in terms of the brain and how the brain is physically structured and the functioning of the brain.

Now most people born in the west in the 20th Century have acquired the belief in dualism through their culture. It is part of the belief system of the Judaeo-Christian-Islam traditions. It appears to most people as quite obvious. It carries with it however, several major problems. One of them is the division created between the material realm which includes human bodies and brains and the

non-material realm or the spiritual realm which would include minds and souls or spirits. In philosophy of mind dualism would be the general position that minds and bodies are distinct substances and so the mind is not physical and not part of the body.

Cartesian Dualism



Existentialism



Existentialism, a philosophical movement or tendency, emphasizing individual existence, freedom, and choice that influenced many diverse writers in the 19th and 20th centuries

The existentialists separated from the debate between the materialists and the idealists. Instead they focused on what humans could know for certain. We know that we exist and that we are aware of that existence. We are aware that there are things that exist that do not appear to be aware and do not have freedom. So there are those things that have that awareness and those that do not.

As the existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, categorized real things in two varieties only:

1. Being-for-itself is conscious and free
2. Being-in-itself is non-conscious.

So for the existentialists there are two types of real things, two types of things that exist: *being-for-itself* and *being-in-itself*.

Jean-Paul Sartre Existentialism



There is no proof of souls or spirits or ghosts or deities and thus their existence is nothing other than what people make a decision to believe. People decide whether or not to believe that such entities are real or not and they decide on the criteria for making such decisions. What is given immediately to consciousness is consciousness and through it the awareness of what is not conscious and not free.

Some existentialists hold that such beliefs are and must be beyond reason so that humans must make a leap of faith into the beliefs of the reality of such nonphysical entities. For certain what humans can know is their own existence and the existence of things not like humans because they have no consciousness and are not free.

Henri on Existentialism



Philosophy Applications



Descartes believed that only humans had souls because, among other things, animals can't reason the way that we do. Some followers of Descartes took this to mean that animals have no mental states at all, not even pain.

1. Does our mental superiority give us the right to use animals as we please? Why or why not?

If mental states are brain states, then by scanning your brain, we should be able to know what you are thinking. Suppose we had a brain scanner that could reliably tell whether someone was lying.

2. Should we make everyone wear one of those devices when they take the witness stand? Why or why not?

Suppose you fell in love with someone who seemed to be the most intelligent, witty, and caring person you've ever met. Now suppose that "person" turns out to be an android.

3. Would you conclude that he or she doesn't have a mind/soul? Why or why not?
4. Would you still love him or her? Why or why not?

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4.3: Pragmatism and Post-Modernism

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition that began in the United States around 1870.^[1] Its origins are often attributed to the philosophers William James, John Dewey, and Charles Sanders Pierce. Pierce later described it in his pragmatic maxim: "Consider the practical effects of the objects of your conception. Then, your conception of those effects is the whole of your conception of the object."

Who Founded Pragmatism?



Pragmatism considers thought an instrument or tool for prediction, problem solving and action, and rejects the idea that the function of thought is to describe, represent, or mirror reality. Pragmatists contend that most philosophical topics—such as the nature of knowledge, language, concepts, meaning, belief, and science—are all best viewed in terms of their practical uses and successes. The philosophy of pragmatism "emphasizes the practical application of ideas by acting on them to actually test them in human experiences". Pragmatism focuses on a "changing universe rather than an unchanging one as the Idealists, Realists and Thomists had claimed".

The pragmatists applied their theory of meaning and truth to language about reality to find that such language does not necessarily describe reality as it is or may be but that the word itself has whatever meaning is assigned to it by the group of speakers. Thus different groups can have different realities and that are equally accurate and truthful if the language satisfies the expectations of the group concerning the use of that language. The idea of reality is seen as a construct, which performs certain functions. There is not an external something to which the language refers and against which the language can be evaluated for its accuracy. Talk about reality is performing social functions.

There is no one thing that is reality!

Pragmatism



Post Modernism

The pragmatists applied their theory of meaning and truth to language about reality to find that such language does not necessarily describe reality as it is or may be but that the word itself has whatever meaning is assigned to it by the group of speakers. Thus different groups can have different realities and that are equally accurate and truthful if the language satisfies the expectations of the group concerning the use of that language. The idea of reality is seen as a construct, which performs certain functions. There is not an external something to which the language refers and against which the language can be evaluated for its accuracy. Talk about reality is performing social functions.

This idea served the postmodern movement to declare that there is no one reality and that there can be multiple simultaneous realities. The distinguishing characteristic of postmodernist theorizing is its rejection of traditional philosophy and metaphysics. The western philosophical tradition itself is, of course, a record of debate rather than consensus. The postmodernists, however, claim to have rejected not one thesis or another but rather the entire philosophical tradition from Plato through George Santayana. Deconstructionists, pragmatists and new historians certainly make assertions and criticize opposing views, just as traditional thinkers did. Unlike traditional philosophers, however, postmodernists make no attempt to tell the truth about reality. They realize, what in their view their predecessors failed to grasp, that human reason is an inadequate instrument for achieving truth. They have therefore renounced metaphysics and philosophy in favor of what Carl Rapp calls "post-rational criticism."

Critique of Postmodern Philosophy



For the post modernists there can be no single reality or privileged view of reality or even concept of what reality is for there is no single objective or truthful way in which to verify any claims about a singular phenomenon to be called "reality." Thus in postmodernism there is a reality for each group of speakers that chooses to use the word and accept that usage of it.

In post-modernist thinking, there being multiple groups of speakers and multiple ideas about what constitutes the real, the result is multiple realities existing at the same time. Could this be the case? Is there one reality and different views of it or are there multiple realities coexisting with one another? Is there one reality with multiple views of it, some being correct and some being incorrect? Or, are all views of what is real equally correct?

Is the earth flat or is it spherical, an oblate spheroid? There are those who claim it is flat. They claim that the reality is quite different from those who claim that the earth has a spherical shape. For more information on the flat earth see this website: [The Flat Earth Wiki](#) or the [FEW](#)

Is the earth both flat and spherical at the same time? Are there multiple simultaneous realities?

Consider

There is a large object or entity in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. It is very large indeed. It has been there for some time and a very large and very expensive new building has been built around it rather than attempt to move it again. It was brought to the museum from the northwest of the United States. It has been labeled as a meteorite, the Willamette meteorite, from the Willamette Valley of Oregon. It weighs 15 tons and scientists claim that it fell to earth about 10,000 years ago. There is a group of native people from a tribe (Clackamas) in the state of Oregon. They are part of the confederated tribes of the Grand Ronde of Oregon. The native peoples claim that it is not a rock but a messenger, the sky person, Tomanowos, from the Sky God who came to earth as a messenger and guide and who speaks to their people. They want the messenger returned to their people. The museum acquired it from a woman, Mrs. William Dodge, who donated it to the museum. She bought it from an iron mining company that had it on land owned by the company. Both parties went to court. A settlement was reached out of court. The original peoples will get to visit the rock-messenger each year and perform rituals there in the museum. Now is the object an inanimate rock or an animated messenger? Is it both or neither? What is the reality? For the postmodernists it is both at once. They would allow that it really is a messenger and it really is a rock at the same time, because there is no one objective reality or truth.

Most, if not all of you, will probably refer to the entity in the American Museum of Natural History as a meteorite. This might indicate that because you were brought up in a culture that accepts scientific method and materialism that is how you look at it. You think of it as a meteorite that some people think contains a spirit. But this may not be correct. The original peoples see it as a spirit not a meteorite. They think of it as a spirit that some people choose to think of as a rock. But to them it is a spirit and not a rock. It is alive and not dead.

Now which is it?

1. Rock/meteorite and dead
2. Spirit and alive

You cannot choose to think of it as a rock that people think of as a spirit because when you do all you are claiming is:

That it is a rock that some people may perceive differently. Is that what you think or is it a spirit that some people choose to think of or perceive as a rock? Or is it both or neither? Which is correct and why?

There is a body of a human that died over 9,000 years ago that was found in a riverbed in Oregon. The scientists who uncovered it think that it can teach us a great deal concerning how humans crossed over the land bridge that once existed across the bearing straits. Now the original peoples have sued to recover the bones of one of their ancestors so that they can have a proper ritualistic burial. They claim it is one of them. The anthropologists claim that these peoples have only existed as a distinguishable group for 800 years and that the bones are thousands of years older. The original peoples claim that they have always been in North America. Their belief is that they sprung from the land as plants do. They did not emigrate from any other place. The bones are of the ancestor. Which is the reality? Which claims are true? For the postmodernists all claims can be true at once within the group by and for which they are given a meaning.

For the postmodernists the only manner in which conflicting claims are to be settled is through the use of power. The federal government, Secretary of the Interior, has determined that the bones are to be turned over to the tribe that has claimed them (2000). Is this because their claims are true, their reality is reality? Or, is it because it is politically correct or popular to do so?

Further Reading

[CH4 Metaphysics Notes](#)

Critical Race Theory and Feminism

Women, feminists, claim that their reality is different from that of males. So, there is a developing feminist metaphysics. Thus we come to have multiple realities.

There is in literature of the law and legal studies something known as “critical race theory” through which it is argued that members of a minority who serve on a jury should vote in a manner to remove a member of their minority group who is the defendant from the operation of the judicial system which is a source of oppression and injustice for minorities. The question of whether or not the evidence supports the charge against the defendant is not the matter of importance and whether or not it is true that the defendant did the acts alleged is not a matter that can be determined objectively (which is always impossible). Thus the correct action is to acquit the defendant. What is the reality? Did the accused do the deed? For one group the reality could be the accused did the action. For another group the accused did not do it. Which is the reality? For the postmodernist, both at once! How to resolve the conflicts in views of reality between groups? Power! Power!

The idea of reality is seen by postmodernists as a tool for social organization and preservation wherein those who do not agree with the criteria by which reality is determined or realized by the group are regarded as threatening to the political and economic order and are to be by one means or another removed as a threat. This means that those who have the power to run the educational systems and the governmental structures are in a position to further support the criteria by which the members of society come to understand the reality of the group. They are also in a position to ridicule, criticize and dismiss all those who are critical of their view of what is "real". The scientists of European cultures will label the shamans of the original peoples of the Americas as being quacks, fools, misdirected, uneducated and use other terms meant to discredit their views and the very fundamental ideas the original peoples have concerning what makes something real.

Those who are acculturated within a group will have the criteria for what makes the "real" as part of their heritage and will think accordingly. So, whoever has the most power will declare what reality is and impose that view upon those with less power who might otherwise disagree.

Is it really the case that there is more than one reality? Is it the case that there are many realities? Or is it the case that there is but one reality, not known by humans with great certainty, but viewed differently by humans? Are there multiple realities or are there multiple belief systems or multiple perspectives on and experiences of the one reality?

Perhaps this may assist you in understanding the issue here. Consider this scenario.

Souls or no Souls

Suppose you are on a boat in the ocean with someone you love most dearly. Suppose your loved one become extremely ill and is about to die during the trip and the captain gives you a choice as to which country or island the boat would stop at and place the body there for care or perhaps to die. There are two countries nearby: A and B.

In country A the people believe that there are souls that survive the death of the body and go on in some form living in another place or dimension forever. In country B the people there do not believe in an afterlife. There is no survival of death for human beings.

Now do you believe that bringing your loved one to country A or B would make any difference as to whether or not there are souls and your loved one would survive the death of the body? Do you think that whether or not anyone has a soul depends on what people around them believe? Do you think that people in one country have souls but people in another country do not have souls?

If you accept multiple realities it would make a difference where a person was when they die as to whether or not they have a soul. If you do not think that it makes a difference you do not really accept multiple realities as being possible. Further, you should reflect on your thinking and drop the idea of there being multiple realities and instead think that there is but one reality that we may not know all about with clarity and certainty, but only one. There are different perceptions of and experiences of and views of the one reality but there is only one reality. We may not know what the reality is but it cannot be both that there are souls and that there are no souls at the same time.

Conclusion

For now perhaps thinking about this matter can be simplified a bit by considering that what we are thinking and talking about are claims about what is real and the basic claim about reality itself. How do we know of the claims we make about what is true are correct or not? Consider the different types of claim that people make.

Claims about the shape of the earth or any other physical claim can be determined in theory and most in practice to be true or not by using scientific method. There is but one physical universe. More about this in the chapter on epistemology.

Claims in mathematics and its branches (e.g., arithmetic, geometry, algebra, topology). Can also be determined to be true or false by using the rules of the mathematical systems. Most, not all, claims about logical propositions can also be determined to be true or false by using the rules or laws of logic. Claims about the meaning of words can also be determined to be true or false by using a dictionary.

Claims about what is beautiful or what is morally correct cannot be determined to be true or false using any absolute and universal or objective schema or set of criteria because such ideas are social constructs and vary from one society and culture to another. But these claims are not claims about what exists and is real but rather they are claims about what people think about their own experiences and behaviors. More about this in the chapter on epistemology and claims about truth and in the chapters on ethics and aesthetics for claims about what is morally good or beautiful.

So claims about what is real fall under claims that are called cognitive claims and persons making those claims are asserting that what they claim is true. Claims about what is real can be resolved using a method for falsifying or verifying claims about physical reality. How can we know if the claims are true? That is the subject of the next chapter.

Philosophical Applications



Is it possible that there is no such thing as reality and that word is just a device for the group in power to suppress minorities?

Answer the following using your research, class readings, class notes and your own reflections.

A. Describe at least four issues that are fundamental to metaphysics, e.g., reality, being, space, time, god, soul, causation, values, truth...

This means you must describe what the metaphysical issues are related to the ideas you selected. These issues relate to the question of the reality of or the existence of those beings or entities you select to describe. E.g., is time real? How is time real? Are souls real? From what traditions of thought? What are the problems related to establishing the existence of souls?

You do NOT need to solve problems or discuss the issues in detail, you only need to describe them.

B.

1. Which theory of reality do you hold? For you, what is real and why do you think so?
2. What do you think of the theory that there can be simultaneous multiple realities?
3. Do you believe that what one person believes may not agree with another person's belief and so what may be real to one person may not be real to the second person?
4. Do you think that each group and each person is entitled to their own reality?
5. What is to be done when there is a conflict between two different "realities"?

Provide some coherent reasoning to support each of your answers establishing at least that your position is plausible.

NOTE: This means what is real and not a person's view of what is real. This question is asking if there can be more than one total reality. It is not asking about whether or not people can have different experiences or views of the same reality. This question is asking whether there can be more than one entire reality (universe) at the same time. Granted that people have different experiences and different.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Epistemology

[5.1: Three Theories of Knowledge](#)

[5.2: How Do We Know What We Know?](#)

[5.3: Truth and Scientific Truth](#)

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5.1: Three Theories of Knowledge

Language Overview

Before we look into the various theories about how we know what we know when we make propositional claims and how to determine if claims are true or not it would be helpful to make a number of important points or distinctions about language and how we use it. Not all uses of language involve a claim that can be described as claims of knowledge. There are a variety of forms of expressions or sentences in any language. Not all sentences are functioning for the speaker in the same way.

Language Claims



Here are five of the different uses for language:

Expressive (this use includes sentences that are neither true nor false). They express the feelings of the speaker/writer.

- holy cow!
- ouch
- hooray!

Directive (this use includes sentences that are neither true nor false). This use offers instructions or requests information.

- please close the door
- what time is it?
- how much does that cost?

Performative (this use includes sentences that are neither true nor false). This use actually performs some operation. It presents no information and makes no requests.

- I bid five dollars
- I promise that i will do that
- I now pronounce you ...

Evaluative (thus use includes sentences that are neither true nor false). This use expresses how people think about some object, activity, person, condition, or situation.

- That is a good car
- She is a good person
- Chocolate is the best flavor for ice cream.

As the standard for making such evaluations is not such as to be derived from a source that is recognized as existing apart from humans and uninfluenced by culture there is no commonly agreed upon method for determining if such evaluations are true or not true. Sentences expressing evaluations are not taken as making claims about what is known so much as making claims about how the evaluator thinks.

Cognitive (this use includes sentences that are either true or false, or potentially true or false). It is the cognitive use of language that concerns us with the issue of knowledge.

- There are three sides to a triangle. The sum of their angles is 180 degrees.
- There is a computer in front of you right now.
- $23 + 11 = 34$
- A bachelor is an unmarried male.
- If a is more than b , and b is more than c , then a is more than c .
- There are 1.8376×10^{73} grains of sand on planet earth.

This is the use involved with propositional knowledge. It is the cognitive use that makes claims that should be capable of being determined to be either true or false. Cognitive use of language expressing that which is claimed as knowledge exists in a variety of forms: logical, semantic, systemic, and empirical. We will examine them in a subsequent section. What they have in common is that claims are made that can be determined to be true or false in some manner or other.

Rationalism

Rationalism is a reliance on reason {lat. *ratio*} as the only reliable source of human knowledge. In the most general application, rationalism offers a naturalistic alternative to appeals to religious accounts of human nature and conduct. A psychological characterization of rationalism would describe it as an overly deductive way of thinking and to the molding of reality to fit one's theoretical understanding. More specifically, rationalism is the epistemological theory that significant knowledge of the world can best be achieved by *a priori* means; it therefore stands in contrast to empiricism.

The first philosophers who are today referred to as having been rationalists include Descartes (1596-1650), Leibniz (1646-1716), and Spinoza (1632-1677). These thinkers thought they were defending a form of rational thought in the form of a science, against the older school of thought known as scholasticism. The defense of science offered by Descartes included a form of dualism that carried over elements of tradition of the scholastic's in a form of thinking that is technical, deductive, and abstract. In Spinoza's *Ethics*, the method is again deductive and modeled on the geometric system of Euclid's *Elements*. Rationalism is a method of thinking that is marked by a deductive and abstract way of reasoning.

Baruch Spinoza



In ordinary usage, Rationalism is a basic sense of respect for reason or refers to the idea that reason should play a large role in human life (in contrast, say, to mysticism). So with rationalism it is possible to have knowledge without having sensory experiences. There is knowledge of logic and its laws or rules that are based upon reasoning and not sensory experience. There is a knowledge that is innate or born inside of us, that is to say that there are forms of knowledge that exists within our minds from the time we are born.

For Descartes knowledge involves certainty and certainty exists in the form of clear and distinct ideas, which are ideas that are indubitable (not capable of being doubted). These would be innate ideas that all rational beings are born with such as; knowledge of self, God, and the world. But all knowledge is the result of acts of reasoning.

Rene Descartes



Leibniz distinguished the truths of reasoning which were necessary truths as in the rule of contradictions, and excluded middle (statements are either true or false) from the truths of fact which are not necessary but are contingent upon experience and sufficient reason needed to accept what the senses report. The work of Leibniz anticipated modern logic and analytic philosophy, but his philosophy also looks back to the scholastic tradition, in which conclusions are produced by applying reason to first principles or prior definitions rather than to empirical evidence.

Empiricism

Reliance on experience as the source of ideas and knowledge. More specifically, empiricism is the epistemological theory that genuine information about the world must be acquired by *a priori* means, so that nothing can be thought without first being sensed. Prominent modern empiricists include Bacon, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Mill. In the twentieth century, empiricism principles were extended and applied by the pragmatists and the logical positivists.

Empiricism is a theory that states that knowledge comes only or primarily from sensory experience. It is one of several views of epistemology, the study of human knowledge, along with rationalism and skepticism. Empiricism emphasizes the role of empirical evidence in the formation of ideas, over the idea of innate ideas or traditional empiricists may argue however that traditions (or customs) arise due to relations of previous sense experiences.

Empiricism in the philosophy of science emphasizes evidence, especially as discovered in experiments. It is a fundamental part of the scientific method that all hypotheses and theories must be tested against observations of the natural world rather than resting solely on *a priori* reasoning, intuition, or revelation.

Empiricism, often used by natural scientists, says that "knowledge is based on experience" and that "knowledge is tentative and probabilistic, subject to continued revision and falsification.

Empiricists

John Locke

For Locke the mind is a blank slate at birth (*tabula rasa*) and all knowledge results from experiences that enter the mind from the experiences of the body. Knowledge of ideas is possible because ideas are representations of things experienced. But if representations are copies of our experiences, just how accurate are they?

Locke distinguished the primary and secondary qualities of an object of an experience and opened a door to a major problem in determining just how accurate sense knowledge could ever be. Locke distinguished the properties that were in or with the object and those that existed within the mind of the subject of the experience. The object has a texture but the idea of "smoothness" is in the subject. The object had a degree of heat but "hot" and "cold" are ideas in the knower.

[John Locke on Epistemology](#)



David Hume

Hume was a skeptic. He agreed with Locke that we are born with a blank slate, *tabula rasa* and that all our knowledge comes through the senses (empiricism), but he did not think that we could know all that much for certain. (skepticism). He held that perceptions are or make impressions which are our thought, that we have no ideas without sense impressions, that reasoning (*a priori*) does not lead to knowledge, that sense impressions are not proof of an external independent reality.

Empiricism (David Hume)



Problems with Empiricism

The empiricists could not overcome problems with accounting for forms of knowledge that did not relate to the senses, e.g., in mathematics and in logic. And they could not account for how it could be that humans can have knowledge for which there is no direct experience, for example of the universe as a whole or of subatomic events or quanta of energy, entities for which there can be no direct experience.

The Epistemological Theory of Immanuel Kant

For Kant there is:

- Unity of consciousness
- Unity of being
- Unifying act of the mind

To account for this and our relation to being, Kant postulates that there must exist rules for thoughts, which he calls categories that are innate and necessary for understanding. Without such rules operating there is no way to account for our knowledge of such ideas as:

- substance
- space
- time

- unity
- plurality
- cause and effect
- possibility
- necessity
- reality

Knowledge has both form and content.

1. form or structure of knowledge of reality-
 - a. reason
 - b. categories
 - c. part of the way in which the mind operates
2. content of the knowledge of reality
 - a. provided through the senses

So, ideas constitute our experience but, there is a fundamental distinction to be made of two types of knowledge

1. Knowledge of the thing as it appears through our senses as filtered by the brain-phenomena
 - a. This is possible and what we generally call knowledge of the world
2. Knowledge of the thing as it is in itself noumena
 - a. a thing as it is in itself

This is not possible for humans can never get beyond or away from the categories of the understanding which shape and influence all that the human experiences because humans can never think without using the mind-brain and thus involving its structure and manner of operating.

For Kant humans will never know things as they are in themselves because humans can never think without their brains and the brains are so structured as to provide for arrangements and ordering and connecting elements for human thought to occur. It is as if the humans must always see things through colored glasses because they cannot remove them. Therefore the universe will always appear through the tinting of those glasses. Humans will never know how the universe actually looks. Humans may get close, but can not experience the thing itself directly. How do we acquire ideas?

Kant combines ideas of the rationalists and the empiricists.

Rationalism	Empiricism
innate	empirical
<i>a priori</i>	from experience

How is knowledge organized in the mind? The mind introduces new principles of order into experience and arranges, stores and tests arrangements and then tests the efficacy of those ideas and arrangements.

Transcendental idealism

all propositions are *a priori* empirical

analytic syntheti

1. Analytic *a priori*: e.g. Math, definitions
2. Analytic empirical: don't exist
3. Synthetic *a priori*: categories, rules, principles
 - a. part of perception
 - b. part of thought
4. Synthetic empirical: all physical claims - this includes all of the sciences.

[Kant's Theory of Epistemology](#)



Kant's contributions of the distinction of types of knowledge and of the role played by the order of the brain remain a dominating influence over thinking about epistemological issues to this day.

Immanuel Kant is considered to be one of the world's greatest philosophers. In his account of epistemological theory of knowledge, called transcendental idealism, he claimed that "the mind of the knower makes an active contribution to experience of objects before us". He meant that whatever we already know through our experience makes it easier for us to acquire new means of knowledge.

Accordingly, Kant specified two sources of our knowledge, which are the mind's receptive capacity (sensibility), and the mind's conceptual capacity (understanding). He thought that it would be impossible for people to have any experience of objects, which are not placed in space and time. These conditions of sensibility are due to our consciousness, which must "apprehend objects as occupying a region of space and persisting for some duration of time".

However, sensibility by itself doesn't make judging objects possible. According to empirical derivation, it also takes understanding, which provides the concepts, the rules for determining what is "common or universal in different representations". He said, "without sensibility no object would be given to us; and without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind". He meant that in order to think about some object it takes understanding, which assigns concepts, based on the object's sensation input, to identify what is common and general about it.

Nevertheless, empirical derivation discussed above is not sufficient to explain all of the concepts that arise in the human life, such as causation, substance, self, identity, space, time, etc. It's due to the fact that these concepts are products of our experience, which is constituted by ideas. Therefore, "Kant postulates that there must exist rules for thoughts, which he calls categories that are innate and necessary for understanding" all of the concepts. In addition to mind's conceptual contribution to experience only that special set of concepts organized into these fundamental categories of thought make empirical concepts and judgments possible.

Although these concepts cannot be experienced directly, they are present when particular judgments of objects take place. Plus, "since objects can only be experienced spatio-temporally, the only application of concepts that yields knowledge is to the empirical...world." Kant rejects any kind of knowledge that goes beyond the bounds of sensation because there can be no objects for the understanding to judge, rightly or wrongly. While Kant is a transcendental idealist he believes the nature of objects as they are in themselves is unknowable to us.

However, the knowledge of appearance is...possible. Therefore, knowledge of the things can never get beyond the categories of understanding, which shape and influence all that the human experiences. Accordingly, human will never know how the universe actually looks because they aren't able to think without any arrangement and order of elements. Kant's theory of knowledge combines rationalism and the empiricism in his account to distinct types of knowledge and the principles of mind's order.

Skepticism



Skepticism is the belief that some or all human knowledge is impossible. Since even our best methods for learning about the world sometimes fall short of perfect certainty, skeptics argue, it is better to suspend belief than to rely on the dubitable products of reason. Classical skeptics include Pyrrho and Sextus Empiricus. In the modern era, Montaigne, Mayle, and Hume all advocated some form of skeptical philosophy. Fallibilism is a more moderate response to the lack of certainty.

The Problem of Skepticism



A degree of skepticism is quite healthy as a counterpoint to being too credulous and being taken in by poor reasoning and illusions or deliberate attempts to mislead and deceive. Skepticism holds that it is not possible to have knowledge is self-defeating and not productive. There should be a skeptical inquiry that is used before humans reach conclusions and decide which beliefs they will hold. There is a sort of positive skepticism that urges caution and all deliberate care and critique before drawing conclusions or setting beliefs but does not reject the possibility of either achieving knowledge or gaining closer proximity to knowledge and truth.

Philosophical Applications



1. How much and what type of evidence or support is needed to warrant a claim to know something?

NOTE: Different types of knowledge would require different types of support. What would be needed and how much to prove a claim to know something?

2. Is truth relative, or a matter of opinion?

Read the following quote and answer the question.

“How often has it happened to me that in the night I dreamt that I found myself in this particular place...while in reality I was lying in bed.”

3. Can you be certain that you're not dreaming right now? If so, how?

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5.2: How Do We Know What We Know?

Types of Knowledge

Although philosophers may differ on how many different types of knowledge there are, they agree with Propositional Knowledge, the claim to have knowledge of different things. What they may have in common, what makes them knowledge, then becomes the issue.

Here is one schema for different types of propositional knowledge.

- Logical
- Semantic
- Systemic
- Empirical

What are these about? Why make these distinctions?

Consider that you probably would claim to know the following things.

1. There are three sides to a triangle. The sum of their angles is 180 degrees.
2. There is a computer in front of you right now.
3. $23 + 11 = 34$
4. A bachelor is an unmarried male.
5. If a is more than b, and b is more than c, then a is more than c.

These sentences all make claims that can be determined to be either true or false. They are sentences that express propositions. They are claims about which you can come to a judgment as to whether or not they are true. You probably know that they are true. Now how is it that you come to know these things? Obviously, you come by this knowledge in different ways. This relates to the idea of the different types of knowledge.

Logical Way of Knowing

There is a knowledge that is the result of the understanding of the relationship of ideas to one another. There are the rules or laws of logic that permit claims to knowledge that are further statements of ideas consistent with the rules and the ideas already accepted.

Here is another example where you do not need to know what I am talking about because you know the relationships involved.

1. All gazintz are gazatz
2. All gazatz are garingers
3. Therefore, all gazintz are garingers.

You can claim to know that: if a and b are true, then c is true as well. This you know by logic.

Semantic Way of Knowing

There is knowledge that is the result of learning the meaning of words. Knowledge of words is knowledge of definitions. Such definitions are set in dictionaries. So bachelors are unmarried males. You know this. People acknowledge this. Are newborn baby boys bachelors? Do people say to the new mother in the hospital nursery: "Oh what a beautiful bachelor you have there Ms. Jones!"?

Systemic Way of Knowing

There is knowledge of mathematics and geometry, which is the result of learning a system of words, or symbols and how they relate to one another and the rules of operating in that system and then any claims made that are consistent with those definitions and rules is called knowledge.

Empirical Way of Knowing

There is a knowledge that comes through our senses. This knowledge is empirical knowledge. Science is the best example of a method for ascertaining the accuracy of such knowledge. Scientific knowledge is a result of the practice of the method: observation, abduction of a hypothesis, careful observation, refinement of hypothesis, deduction of test for hypothesis, testing and experimentation, confirmation or falsification of the hypothesis.

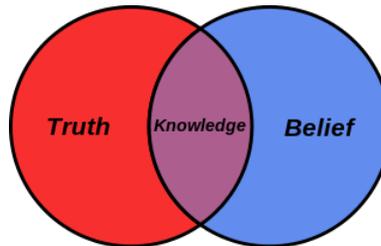
What do these four types of knowledge have in common? One of the most popular theories of knowledge of the 20th Century holds that knowledge does imply a belief.

Belief does not imply knowledge. Wherever people claim to know that something is true they believe that it is so. When people claim to believe that something is so they don't always claim to know that it is so.

What kind of a belief is knowledge.?

To begin with it must be true. You cannot know something that is false.

It must be true and you must claim to know it and it be true not by accident or coincidence but because there is evidence to support and enough to warrant or justify the claim to know.



- So, knowledge = justified true belief
- Evidence is needed for justification

Edmund Gettier's Justified True Belief



Warranted true belief may not be knowledge if true by accident.

Example

On January 1, 2001 the claim is made: I know that the Giants are going to win the Super Bowl in 2001. It turns out that several weeks later they did win. Can I claim that I knew it on January 1st or was it just a lucky guess or a well-informed guess? How does a person gain the warrant or the justification for the belief? Well, depending on the type of belief that it is there are different kinds of warrants.

Modes of Warranty

- Logical warrants are found in the rules of logic. Follow them and the claim is warranted.
- Semantic warrants are found in the dictionaries. Use them, be consistent with them and the claim is warranted.
- Systemic warrants are found within the system (math or geometry) follow the rules be consistent with the definitions and rules and the claim is warranted.
- Empirical warrants are found with evidence. How is the evidence to be gathered, examined and evaluated?

There are four types of beliefs when considering truth and warrants:

1. Warranted true beliefs: this type is called knowledge
2. Warranted false beliefs: this type cannot exist at all.
3. Unwarranted true beliefs: these are lucky guesses or coincidences and not knowledge.

4. Unwarranted false beliefs: these are just wild unsupported claims or wishes that are not true .

Why knowledge is justified true belief

Justification warranty comes in degrees. How much evidence is needed in order to determine whether or not someone knows something or not? How much evidence is needed in order to determine whether or not someone has sufficient warrant to make a claim to know something or not? How much is needed depends on what is riding on the outcome of the claim. For simple matters of little consequence humans appear to accept fairly small amounts of evidence. For important matters much more evidence is needed.

Example:

How old is someone? If someone claims to know how old John Smith or Mary Doe is we probably accept the claim on their word if it is just gossip. However, if there were a \$10 bet on it we would ask for evidence. We might go to the person and ask them to confirm the claim. If it were \$100 we might want a driver's license. If it were \$1000 we might want a birth certificate. For \$10, 000 we might want to go to the official registry and check the official documents ourselves.

The highest consequences on claims to know: human life. At a criminal trial, a capital homicide case, what is the standard of proof? It is evidence that is convincing beyond a reasonable doubt. Not beyond all doubts. But beyond reasonable doubts, meaning beyond all doubting or questioning of the evidence that we have reason to doubt or question.

Scientists have their reputation riding on their claims to know things. The standard for the warrant in science is that their claims be supported by evidence that other scientists can examine, experiments that others can repeat and get the same result and equations that others can examine to check against errors.

So, claims to know may be accepted depending on amounts of support that may vary in the type and amount depending on the type of claim that it is. However, to know something that which you claim to know must be true and truth does not have degrees: because a statement P is either true or it isn't.

Read

- [What is Knowledge?](#)
- [The Gettier Problem](#)
- [What is Justification?](#)
- [The Structure of Knowledge and Justification](#)
- [Sources of Knowledge and Justification](#)
- [Limits of Knowledge and Justification](#)

Philosophical Application



Suppose your friend claims to have answered a philosophical question. In listening to her answer, you are struck by how rational she is. She has followed the laws of thought (she doesn't contradict herself), she has made the fewest assumptions possible while giving a complete explanation (Ockham's Razor), and she is able to give complete answers to any of your questions (the principle of sufficient reason).

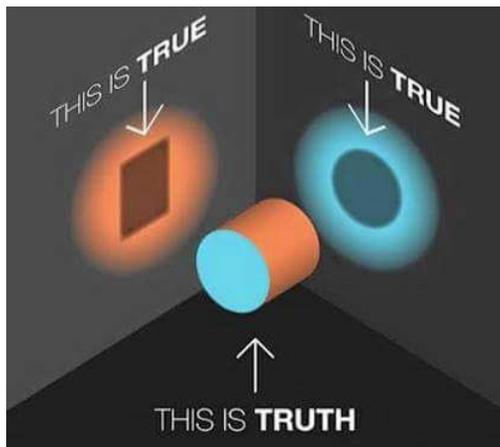
Is this enough to convince you that her answer is correct, or is it always possible to doubt the use of reasoning itself? Explain.

What more would you need to believe her and why?

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5.3: Truth and Scientific Truth

Truth Overview



There are several different theories of what truth is. It turns out that as with most questions in philosophy, the question “what is truth?” Does not have a simple answer.

The conformity of a proposition to the way things are. Precise analysis of the nature of truth is the subject of the correspondence, coherence, pragmatic, redundancy, and semantic theories of truth.

Theories of Truth

Correspondence Theory of Truth

This is the theory most people are brought up to believe but it has too many problems with it to be the complete answer. A claim is made about the universe. We go and check out the claim with observations and physical measuring devices. This is understood by many people in the simplest way. A claim is made about the physical universe and people want to go and check it out. Is that so for all claims?

The theory is based on the belief that a proposition is true when it conforms with some fact or state of affairs. While this theory properly emphasizes the notion that propositions are true when they correspond to reality, its proponents often have difficulty explaining what facts are and how propositions are related to them.

- There exists an independent realm of facts: reality
- Truth is the correspondence of belief with fact
- Belief corresponds to facts = truth
- Belief does not correspond to facts = false

Correspondence Theory of Truth



Problem:

Verification involves subjective experiences as to both observations and require interpretations.

Example 1:

Claims are made about things that are very large; such as galaxies and the entire universe, as to its shape and size and duration that are beyond the ability of any human to have a direct experience of it.

Example 2:

Claims are made about things that are very small such as sub atomic particles and small quanta of energy, bosons, gluons, neutrinos, charm particles and the like which no human can have a direct experience of.

Example 3:

A simple claim: There is a container of milk in the refrigerator.

To determine whether or not this is true all one needs to do is to go to the refrigerator and check. Would the claim be true if:

- A. There is a bottle of milk there?
- B. There is a wax container of milk there.
- C. There is a wax container of powdered milk there?
- D. There is a wax container of parmalat there?

Some answer yes it would be true in all 4 cases. Some think it is only true in case B. It all depends on what you mean by "container." For some, it means a wax container. For others, it may mean any object that holds any sort of contents.

Example 4

Is the following claim true or not?

Bill Clinton: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman," i.e. Monica Lewinski.

It all depends on what you mean by "sex". For some, it means any act involving the sexual organs being stimulated to the point of organs. For others, it might mean only the penetration of the penis into a vagina and only for beings of the same species.

[Coherence Theory of Truth](#)

This explains how scientists can make claims about the very large and small objects using a system of claims already accepted to be true.

The theory is the belief that a proposition is true to the extent that it agrees with other true propositions. In contrast with the correspondence theory's emphasis on an independent reality, this view supposes that reliable beliefs constitute an inter-related system, each element of which entails every other.

[From Correspondence to Coherence](#)



- Truth is a property of a related group of consistent statements
 - Truth is a property of a related group of consistent statements
1. What if other judgments (statements) are false? Consistent error is possible?
 2. Coherence theory in the last analysis seems to involve a correspondence for the first judgments must be verified directly. How?

Pragmatic Theory of Truth

This theory is the belief that a proposition is true when acting upon it yields satisfactory practical results. As formulated by William James, the pragmatic theory promises (in the long term) a convergence of human opinions upon a stable body of scientific propositions that have been shown in experience to be successful principles for human action.

Examines how beliefs work in practice, the practical difference. Truth of a belief is determined by evaluating how well the belief satisfies the whole of human nature over a long period of time: How well does it work? What are its consequences?

Pragmatic Theory of Truth-A Problem to be Solved



Problems:

1. What is justified for one community to believe may not be true!!!!
2. How to explain errors? Falsehoods?
3. It makes truth relative.
 - a. No absolute truth.
 - b. No objective truth.
 - c. Many truths at once!
4. Self-refuting basic claims:

The pragmatic theory makes the claims that :

- a. There is no objective knowledge
- b. There is no absolute knowledge
- c. There is no objective truth
- d. There is no absolute truth

If these claims are true then they would refute themselves. If all claims are true only within a community that accepts them as true then the claims above (a to d) are only true within the communities that accept them as being true by whatever criteria they use and think has been satisfied. So within the community of pragmatists the claims would be true but for others they would not be true and thus there is affirmed a series of contradictions.

Pragmatists would by their principles and theories accept that claims above (a to d) are true and not true at the same time! Pragmatists overlook a number of things. There are different types of claims and it is only the empirical, aesthetic, and ethical claims that appear to be troublesome. The empirical claims can be resolved as to their accuracy. This is so because there is a difference between truth and justified belief which pragmatism overlooks.

C.S. Pierce's solution was to postulate an ideal community of inquirers who would come to agreement concerning what is known and what is true in the infinite long run of time. C. S. Pierce held that there was but one reality. Truth is what an ideal community would believe in the long run of time. This is particularly true for empirical claims.

However there are many post modernist pragmatists who have abandoned the idea of an objective truth and objective knowledge.

Rorty thus is emphasizing the nature of all human knowledge as "made" rather than "found." Rorty is mostly content to point out the fallacy of trying to pursue objective reality. He makes truth something that is psychological. What difference do the beliefs make if they are true? Truth is whatever has met a society's criteria for justification. For pragmatists like Richard Rorty, there is no objective truth at all. All claims need only satisfy the group's expectations for verification. Science is just one of many groups with its own rules and criteria. As there are multiple groups with different criteria there can be multiple truths.

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Logical Empiricism

For the logical empiricist movement the truth of a proposition rests on how well it is verified. For them what makes a proposition true or false would be how well it checks out through a process of verification.

The answer is that we test the validity of an empirical hypothesis by seeing whether it actually fulfills the function which it is designed to fulfill. And we have seen that the function of an empirical hypothesis is to enable us to anticipate experience. Accordingly, if an observation to which a given proposition is relevant conforms to our expectations, the truth of that proposition is confirmed. There is no certainty in this operation. If the experiment comes off according to expectations then credibility has been enhanced. There is no question that it will be repeated. If it does not, then questions about the experiment may be raised; if it is successful again, greater probability of being true is attached to the statement.

Thus the best that is offered is that at the present time a proposition would have a certain amount of support and of verification.

Does Truth Matter?

If objectivity is rejected, every groups claims would be equal. So the claims of the following ideologies would be true: racism, sexism, Nazism, etc... According to this post modern theory of truth all claims are ideologies. Must all claims be accepted as true at once?

With empirical claims how can it be that there would not be some basis for truth that would rule out inconsistent and contradictory claims from all being true at once? How could it be true that the earth would be flat and spherical at the same time?

Even with claims about non-physical entities, how could it be that there are more than one truth as when:

- Group A thinks it is true that people have souls
- Group B thinks that there are no souls

How can the claims to truth for both group A and group B be true at the same time?

Does Truth Matter?- Carl Sagan



Truth, Conflicts, and Power

Must we tolerate and respect all groups even those with conflicting claims? How is it to be resolved when there are conflicts? For the pragmatists, all the criteria for resolution are criteria that groups have developed. It will then always come down to which group has the most power. For pragmatists and postmodern thinkers: power is knowledge

There is a cynicism with pragmatists such as Rorty and other post modernists who would deny that there is "truth" as objective. They claim that truth is only and whatever those in power have persuaded people to believe. They accept that truth is whatever experts happen to agree upon but not that it relates to anything that is "objective". They make truth something based on the consent or agreement of the folks who wish to claim that truth. Such cynics make truth depend on nothing "objective" and deny that there is anything that is "objective". The resolution of conflicting claims concerning what is true lies not in any reference to an objective reality or to an objective truth but to whatever criteria the group holds for the resolution of claims. If two groups have two different sets of criteria then the group with the most power will determine what truth is by its criteria and impose it upon the others who will go on thinking that their original ideas were true anyway. There will be two truths at once over the same situation. This will apply to claims as to what is real as well as to what is true.

One group may use the scientific method and hold to the criteria of science and another group may use consultation with a shaman and the shaman's mystical experiences as the basis for truth and the results of each approach are thought to be the truth by each group and for the pragmatists both are correct at the same time. A large rock in the American museum of natural history can be a meteorite for the group using science and a messenger from the sky god for the original peoples at the same time.

It can be true for one group that (Jews, blacks, and women) are inferior to (Christians, whites, or men) and for another group the opposite can be true at the same time according to this theory. One of the values that pragmatists attempt to promote is tolerance and in the name of tolerance and for the sake of tolerance people are asked to respect the right of others to hold their own views. Yet if a person holds the view that tolerance is wrong then they can be right and tolerance can be both good and bad at the same time. This theory results in applications of political power to resolve conflicts and has not lead to a more tolerant set of societies in this world.

Philosophy and the Truth



Redundancy Theory of Truth

Belief that it is always logically superfluous to claim that a proposition is true, since this claim adds nothing further to a simple affirmation of the proposition itself. "It is true that I am bald." means the same thing as "I am bald."

Why Truth Matters?

Truth has fallen victim to a proliferation of behaviors that diminish the importance of truth in popular culture. Among the behaviors are the increase in use of what is known as "truthiness" and "bullshit" as well as denialism and postmodern ideas of relativism, denying that there is or can be truth.

On Bullshit

In his essay *On Bullshit* (originally written in 1986, and published as a monograph in 2005), philosopher Harry Frankfurt of Princeton University characterizes bullshit as a form of falsehood distinct from lying. The liar, Frankfurt holds, knows and cares about the truth, but deliberately sets out to mislead instead of telling the truth. The "bullshitter", on the other hand, does not care about the truth and is only seeking to impress.

Is it impossible for someone to lie unless he thinks he knows the truth. Producing bullshit requires no such conviction. A person who lies is thereby responding to the truth, and he is to that extent respectful of it. When an honest man speaks, he says only what he believes to be true; and for the liar, it is correspondingly indispensable that he considers his statements to be false. For the bullshitter, however, all these bets are off: he is neither on the side of the true nor on the side of the false. His eye is not on the facts at all, as the eyes of the honest man and of the liar are, except insofar as they may be pertinent to his interest in getting away with what he says. He does not care whether the things he says describe reality correctly. He just picks them out, or makes them up, to suit his purpose.

Denialism

In Science, denialism has been defined as the rejection of basic concepts that are undisputed and well-supported parts of the scientific consensus on a topic in favor of ideas that are both radical and controversial. It has been proposed that the various forms of denialism have the common feature of the rejection of overwhelming evidence and the generation of a controversy through attempts to deny that a consensus exists. A common example is young earth creationism and its dispute with the evolutionary theory.

The terms Holocaust denialism and AIDS denialism have been used and the term climate change denialists has been applied to those who argue against the scientific consensus that global warming is occurring and that human activity is its primary cause. Use of the word denialism has been criticized, for example as a polemical propaganda tool to suppress non-mainstream views. Similarly, in an essay discussing the general importance of skepticism, Clive James objected to the use of the word denialist to describe climate change skeptics, stating that it "calls up the spectacle of a fanatic denying the Holocaust." Celia Farber has objected to the term AIDS denialists arguing that it is unjustifiable to place this belief on the same moral level with the Nazi crimes against humanity. However, Robert Gallo et al. Defended this latter comparison, stating that AIDS denialism is similar to Holocaust denial as it is a form of pseudoscience that "contradicts an immense body of research."

Several motivations for denialism have been proposed, including religious beliefs and self-interest, or as a psychological defense mechanism against disturbing ideas.

Relativism is the concept that points of view have no absolute truth or validity, having only relative, subjective value according to differences in perception and consideration. The term is often used to refer to the context of moral principle, where in a relativistic mode of thought, principles and ethics are regarded as applicable in only limited context. There are many forms of relativism which vary in their degree of controversy. The term often refers to truth relativism, which is the doctrine that there are no absolute truths, i.e., that truth is always relative to some particular frame of reference, such as a language or a culture. Another widespread and contentious form is moral relativism.

There is a cynicism regarding truth or objective truth. There also exists the desire to believe what is useful to believe and to believe that what matters are the consequences. In reaction to this there is not to be a promotion of truth that is conservative in advocating an allegiance to you beliefs. This is not truth but dogma. There is not to be support for the liberal equation of truth with absolute certain truth. This then would promote relativism.

Truth Does Matter

Without truth there is no support for outrage over atrocities if all reports are of equal truth value and treated as just text. Truth and its pursuit are politically important especially the need to distinguish right answers from wrong answers, true from false reports about the world

1. If there is no truth or if all truth is relative then
 - a. Criticisms are not permissible
 - b. Dissent is not permissible or supportable
2. The idea of a fundamental right or human right is undermined as they presuppose some idea of truth.
3. Truth is a necessary condition asserting the existence of any human right apart from what government decrees
4. Truth is necessary to reject the idea that believing in claim x makes claim x true.

It follows that a necessary condition for fundamental rights is a distinction between what the government -- in the wide sense of the term -- says is so and what is true. That is, in order for me to understand that I have fundamental rights, it must be possible for me to have the following thought: that even though everyone else in my community thinks that, for example, same-sex marriages should be outlawed, people of the same sex still have a right to be married. But I couldn't have that thought unless I was able to entertain the idea that believing doesn't make things so, that there is something that my thoughts can respond to other than the views of my fellow citizens, powerful or not. The very concept of a fundamental right, presupposes the concept of truth. Take-home lesson: if you care about your rights, you had better care about truth.

- Governmental transparency and freedom of information are the basis of a defense against tyranny.
- Truth is important for the integrity of the democratic process.

But the anti-tyranny argument will be of interest to those whose government is not yet tyrannical, but who fear it is heading in that direction. In brief, the anti-tyranny argument is precisely the sort of argument that is of interest to concerned citizens of a liberal democracy like our own. Unless the government strives to tell the truth, liberal democracies are no longer liberal or democratic.

Caring about truth provides a ground and a motivation for our curiosity about the facts and for our commitment to the importance of inquiry. Certain aspects of our experience make it apparent that they are independent of us. That is the origin of our concept of reality, which is essentially a concept of what limits us, of what we cannot alter or control by the mere motion of our will. We learn our powers and our vulnerabilities.

It is only through our recognition of a world of stubbornly independent of reality, fact and truth that we come both to recognize ourselves as being distinct from others and to articulate the specific nature of our own identities.

Scientific Truth

For logical, semantic, and systemic claims there are methods to determine their truth. It is with regard to the empirical claims about the universe, events and properties of it that is the main concern of the theories about truth. Perhaps the best that humans have been able to do with regard to getting at the truth concerning empirical claims is the development of a method for doing it. In Science there are a number of views that are operative in its various phases.

1. Instrumentalist view - pragmatist theory

The scientific theory makes predictions; the predictions are verified and so it works and it satisfies the community of inquirers (the scientists).

2. The realist view - correspondence theory

The scientific theory provides true explanations because its predictions are verified through empirical testing.

3. The conceptual relativist - coherence theory

The scientific theory is coherent within a given framework, which coheres or fits in with a system of beliefs

True theory is that which is accepted by the community of working scientists with its own conceptual framework. Independent checks are not possible because all observations are theory laden. So in the end perhaps the truth concerning empirical claims is that claim which:

- Corresponds to fact and
- Coheres with and is consistent with other established truths and
- Has useful consequences for those concerned.

Perhaps what is the most useful consequence of a belief concerning an empirical claim is to correspond to reality (facts) and to cohere (be consistent) with what has already been accepted as true by the same means.

Philosophers shall continue to spend time arriving at a more certain foundation for claims of truth. For now what do we have? What is knowledge? To claim to know and to have that claim accepted by others as being correct is to satisfy the criteria that the claim be warranted. What supplies the warrant is that the claim be justified and true. How is that accomplished or established? Well that depends on the type of claim that it is:

1. Semantic claim: supported by references to dictionaries or lexicons
2. Systemic claim: supported by the rules of the system in which the claim is being made

3. Logical claim: supported by and consistent with the rules of logic
4. Empirical claim: supported by a process of verification that establishes that the empirical claim.
 - a. Corresponds to fact and
 - b. Coheres with and is consistent with other established truths and
 - c. Has useful consequences for those concerned.

This may be the best explanation that humans have for what and how they know what they claim to know. It is not totally satisfying to all critical inquirers but it is more well founded within human experience than the position that there is no knowledge at all or that there is no knowledge that is objective or that there is no knowledge that is certain. There are types or forms of knowledge and within each there are the means to establish the justification for making and accepting claims.

Does Science = Truth



Read

- [Truth](#)
- [Theories of Truth](#)
- [The Coherence Theory of Truth](#)
- [Pragmatism](#)
- [When Can We Say We Know?](#)
- [The Post Modern Rejection of Absolute Truth](#)
- [Consequences of Pragmatism](#)
- [On The Scientific Method](#)
- [The Myth of the Scientific Method](#)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: The Mind-Body Problem

[6.1: The Mind-Body Problem](#)

[6.2: Dualism](#)

[6.3: Idealism and Monism-Materialism](#)

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6.1: The Mind-Body Problem

Problem: Mind and Body

No doubt about it, we are acculturated with the idea that we have minds. Yes, minds! We are taught in many different ways that we have both minds and bodies. Very few doubt this and very few think much about the meaning of this belief that we have both a body and a mind. We learn of this view from many sources and as those around us appear to share in the same view, we have no reason to doubt it or question it. However, there are problems with the view and more and more people are changing their beliefs and positions as experience, critical thinking and science appear to provide reasons and evidence that challenge the popular belief.

We believe that we have a body and a mind and somehow they are different from one another. Our language reinforces this view as well. Many common expressions assume this view that humans have minds.

Consider the following fairly common expressions in the English language:

- What's on your mind?
- Are you losing your mind?
- Are you out of your mind?
- A mind is a terrible thing to waste.
- You are always on my mind.
- Great minds think alike!
- Free your mind.
- What are you a master mind or something?
- It is a matter of mind over matter.
- I have a mind to...
- He has a mind like a steel trap.
- Back of one's mind
- Bear in mind
- Blow one's mind
- Boggle the mind
- Bring to mind
- Call to mind
- Cross one's mind
- Change one's mind
- Come to mind
- Frame of mind
- Go out of one's mind
- Great minds
- Half a mind
- Have a good mind to
- In one's mind's eye
- In one's right mind
- Know one's own mind
- Load off one's mind
- Lose one's mind
- Make up one's mind
- Meeting of the minds
- Never mind
- Of two minds
- One-track mind
- On one's mind
- Open mind
- Closed minded
- Piece of one's mind

- Presence of mind
- Prey on one's mind
- Put one in mind of
- Read someone's mind
- Set one's mind at rest
- Slip one's mind
- Speak one's mind
- To my mind
- It's all in your mind
- Don't mind
- Put your mind to it
- Mind bending
- Narrow minded
- Messing with your mind
- Mind games
- Mind boggling
- State of mind
- Out of sight (out of mind)
- Peace of mind
- Mind over matter
- No doubt in my mind
- Wrap your mind around this
- In my mind's eye
- Set your mind to it
- Get your mind out of the gutter
- A meeting of the minds
- Great minds think alike
- Peace of mind
- Beyond my mind's comprehension
- Put your mind at ease

There are a number of movies that have been made that contain as themes or as devices, the exchange of minds or the migration of a mind from one body to another. In these movies the idea is clearly in view and assumed that the mind is an entity that is not physical and can move from one body (brain) to another and along with it goes the person. There are movies in which minds are switched between two persons of opposite sex, skin color, or ethnicity or social or economic status.

Consider these:

- Big
- All of Me
- 17 Again
- Vice Versa
- Like Father Like Son
- Dream A Little Dream
- Man With Two Brains
- Prelude To A Kiss
- Ghost
- Chances Are
- Family Man
- Mr. Destiny
- Frequency
- Freaky Friday
- Wish Upon A Star
- Source Code

In all of them there is the common element--that the mind of a person is the seat of that person's being and identity. Further, the films appear to teach us that the mind of a person can "move" from one site or physical human body (brain) to another. We shall not consider whether or not such "switching" is possible (at least not as a planned part of this course). Instead just focus on the idea of a mind as something that can, at least in theory and in the movies, occupy one or another human body. It is not something physical, and can move right through matter, the brain, the wall, and the atmosphere and arrive inside of another head, skull, and brain. There are many films that depict minds or soul moving through physical barriers and entering another human body. Now people viewing these films don't generally get up a leave the theater or change the channel because they believe that such events are not possible and are preposterous. No, quite the contrary, audiences are prepared to accept the possibility that such events might occur and they remain to follow the rest of the action in the film.

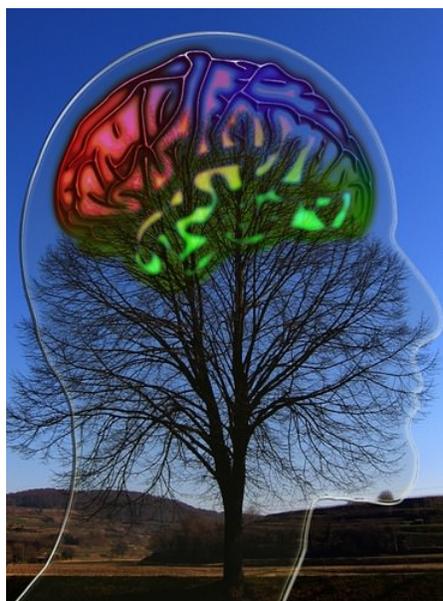
Ghost- Clip



These films tend to be comedies, romantics or even horror. They are part of the culture. The result is that we have a great number of people who believe that they possess a mind and that it is something that makes them what they are or it is what houses their personal identities. Further, they believe that the mind is not a physical entity but that it is non-physical, even spiritual, and can survive outside of the physical body and somehow can survive the death of the body and over half of the world's people believe that it is capable of entering into another body and having another life (reincarnation, metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls). This view that we have both a non-physical mind and a physical body is known as dualism.

Now there are some that have come to doubt and disbelieve in such a view. They have been brought up with another belief system or have come to disbelieve in dualism due to a consideration of evidence and the implications of the claims of the dualists. Of those who do not believe that we have both a body and a mind are those who do not believe that we have bodies. These are known as idealists. Another group, growing larger all the time, believes that we do not have mind at all, at least not as a separate and non-physical entity apart from our physical bodies. What we have are only physical bodies, which include the brain, which is responsible for what previously was thought to be the work of the mind.

How is it that there is a problem with the commonly held belief that human beings have both minds and bodies? How is it that there are a number of different views on this? What is the correct view? If there is a problem? What is the solution?



The problem comes about once you really consider what the implications are of believing that minds are not physical objects and that they still somehow or other influence the physical object that is our brain in order to get our bodies to do what they do. Nothing seems more obvious to most people but that our minds do interact with our bodies. I make up my mind to type something and my mind gets my brain to stimulate the neurons that continue to excite other neurons through my body down to my arms, hands and fingers which strike the keys according to the ideas and the plan that my mind is directing them to follow. It is quite obvious. But wait! Lots of things have been obvious at one time or another and then have turned out not to be true. Could this be one of them? That sun looks not so big, not so hot, not so far away and that it is moving and yet I know now that despite how it appears and how I thought of the sun, that it simply isn't true. The truth is quite otherwise. Could this be the case with the idea that I have a mind? More and more people are coming to think so. Why?

- What is a mind?
- Do you have a mind that is separate from your brain?
- Are you sure?
- How do you know this?

Rene Descartes thought he had proven that we have minds and that they are not material and that we do not need to have a body to have a mind. He arrived at the following idea as his first indubitable idea or clear and distinct idea or obvious truth.

Cogito, ergo sum: I think, therefore I am

Okay, so you know you have a mind. You must have one because you think. Because you think you also know that you exist in some way. But is the mind (the thing you think with) the same sort of thing as the body, or is it different? If it is different, how is it different? According to Descartes there are two very different sorts of things that exist or substances: the physical and the spiritual or non-physical. Brains are part of the physical realm and minds are part of the non-physical realm. The two realms make up all that is real.

Dualism is the distinction between

- Physical realm: matter
- non-physical realm: spirit

Bodies	Minds
Have mass, density	Have no mass
Have location	Have no location
Have tactile properties	Have no tactile properties
Have taste, smell, etc.	Have no taste, smell, etc.

Bodies	Minds
Have duration	Have no duration
Are physical	Are not physical

So, for Descartes and many people before and since his writing the mind is distinct from the body - they are two different sorts of things.

Dualism: the view that there are two sorts of substance in the universe - physical and non-physical.

With dualism comes many problems concerning the existence and relation of the two substances. One of those problems is the one we focus on here. So, how does the non-physical mind bring about a causal change (motion) in a physical substance? Finally, we have it! This is the problem. How does the non-physical mind bring about a causal change (motion) in a physical substance?

The Mind/Body Problem



Think of it this way: a mind, being non-physical, would not be able to contact, touch, move, tingle, excite, push, shove, a physical object such as a brain, a neuron, a synaptic fluid or molecule of any type because they are all physical. Consider it this way: in the films that show minds being changed or that show non-physical or spiritual beings, these entities are shown to move right through walls, skulls, windows, brains and all other physical objects. So, if a mind is not physical and moves through physical objects, then how does the mind get the brain to react or act or to do anything, for that matter. The mind is not made of matter, the brain is. How can something not made of matter or energy because something made of matter and energy to do anything?

Freaky Friday



Descartes thought that it was through the pineal gland! (he thought it was the master control unit where the soul contacted the brain (body) because it was singular and not doubled as are other parts of the brain.) Scientific investigation has now proven that the pineal gland does not function as a central control unit for the brain.

Problem: the pineal gland is still a physical thing how does the mind excite it? Or excite the neurons, for that matter? Suppose you would think that it is through a harmonic vibration?

Problem: how does a non-physical thing, vibrate?

Problem: how do we explain the interaction of the mind and body?

Mind certainly seems to effect the body: just move your fingers, toes, etc. Some evidence suggests that mind can heal the body. Body certainly seems to effect the mind: strokes are physical, yet effect the cognitive. Drugs and a high fever can disturb our abilities to think, to focus, concentrate, calculate, etc...mental states can effect changes in the body. There appears to be plenty of evidence from experience in support of some type of interact going on between the mind and the brain. Or is it the brain and the body?

Problem: If the mind is a non-physical entity and not the physical brain then harm to the physical brain should not cause any changes in the functioning of the mind. Yet when the brain suffers a physical change from:

- Physical blow to the brain
- Electrical shock to the brain
- Disease growths in the brain
- Chemical imbalance in the brain
- Chemicals induced into the brain

All of these physical events produce a change in the way people remember, feel, think, and act. If the mind is not physical and not the brain then why do these changes in the brain make any difference to how the mind operates? We know that the physical events made those changes but how can that be explained if the dualists are correct? Dualism says there should be no consequence to the mind, if it is not physical it cannot be touched by physical agents and acts.

Think of all the stories you have read and heard about the mind and what it is supposed to do or to have. Is it your mind that thinks, hopes, dreams, has memories and feelings, and calculates and can imagine things? Our own experiences and the careful study of scientists challenge the part of the story that claims that the mind is non-physical and separate from our bodies. Neuroscience and research is indicating that the entire list is accounted for without need of postulating or claiming or believing in some non-physical mind. Memories, hopes, emotions, and plans are all being located in electrical and chemical and physical entities in the brain.

Chemicals influence the physical brain. Chemicals enter the brain cells and alter emotions, perceptions, moods, abilities and more. When they do so it is evidence that there is a physical mind. Why? The chemicals are physical, they influence the physical brain, the brain influences the feelings and memory and thinking of the person. In this, there is no non-physical mind involved. If the mind was a non-physical it would not be influenced by physical blows or chemicals in the brain since the non-physical mind cannot be touched by physical agents.

So the mind body problem is located in this precise question of how is it that non-physical entities called "minds" can have any influence over the physical brain or interact with it or cause it to do anything?

4 traditional and most logical options:

1. **Dualism:** two kinds of substance mind and body (brain) that interact or are coordinated in some way.
2. **Monism:** one kind of substance.
3. **Materialism:** only material substance exists, there is no spirit.
4. **Idealism:** only spiritual substance exists, there is no matter.

We shall examine all the options and then you shall decide for yourself what you should believe.

There are the essentialists who believe that mind does exist. They believe in such concepts as the Self, the I, the Ego, and other ideas indicating that there is in the human being an entity that exists and yet is not physical but occupies or associates with the physical body. Among philosophers who have thought so are: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Leibniz.

Possible approaches to the mind - body problem

1. Dualism mind and body both exist

2. Variations

- a. **Interactionism** - minds and bodies exist and interact in some way
- b. **Epiphenomenalism** - body acts on mind but minds do not act on bodies
- c. **Double aspect theory** - there is one substance with two aspects (mind/body)
- d. **Parallelism** - minds and bodies exist in separate dimensions and are coordinated
- e. **Pre-established harmony** - minds and bodies are set in motion and coordinated from the beginning of time by a deity that creates the universe
- f. **Occasionalism**- on the occasion of the mind making a decision the body is moved by the creator (deity) to do whatever the mind has decided to make the body do.
- g. **Monism: materialism** - only body exists there are no minds. The brain accounts for the activities previously associated with the mind. In Monism: Materialism there are several variations such as;
 - i. **Behaviorism**
 - ii. **Logical behaviorism**
 - iii. **Semantic behaviorism**
 - iv. **Folklore**
 - v. **Functionalism**
 - vi. **Structuralism**
- h. **Monism: idealism** - there are no bodies only minds. All that exists is ideas. All is idea in the mind of the creator. Each human is a subset of ideas in the mind of the creator. We have similar ideas at similar times and think that we have bodies and are experiencing the same computers and rooms and chairs as other people because all is coordinated in the mind of the creator of all. The Divine Creator thought of the creation and there it was, as ideas in the mind of the creator.
 - i. In this world Hinduism holds a form of this and Christian Scientists hold similar views.

These questions are part of a branch or sub area of philosophy known as philosophy of mind. It is one of the most modern of the areas within philosophy. Today it has been influenced by questions being asked in Computer Science, Psychology, Neurophysiology, etc. Why?

First computers could do amazing things:

- once they are programmed they are more accurate than humans, and
- they are faster at complex computations than humans

These devices raise interesting questions such as: what was the machine doing? Could a machine think? To assist us we have a variety of disciplines, each with a great deal of knowledge and a number of theories and each with its own problems.

- **Neurophysiology** - knows a lot about how the brain works as a biological mechanism, but cannot find thought anywhere.
- **Computer science** - a great deal of information with respect to the computer, but no knowledge of how to program "thought" into the machine.
- **Psychology** - knowledge of how people behave, but not of consciousness itself or internality.
- **Philosophy** - many theories about all of the above - no consensus

In the following sections we will discuss each of the approaches.

Read

- [There is Only One Mind/Body Problem](#)
- [Philosophy of Mind](#)
- [Mind-Body Problem Overview](#)
- [Mind-Body Dualism](#)
- [Setting the Scene w/Science Fiction](#)
- [Cyberspace and Neuroscience](#)
- [Cyberspace and Philosophy](#)
- [Bridging the Gap Between Philosophy and Neuroscience](#)

Philosophical Application



Read the following quote and answer the question.

“How often has it happened to me that in the night I dreamt that I found myself in this particular place...while in reality I was lying in bed.”

Can you be certain that you’re not dreaming right now? If so, how?

Suppose you fell in love with someone who seemed to be the most intelligent, witty, and caring person you’ve ever met. Now suppose that “person” turns out to be an android.

1. Would you conclude that he or she doesn’t have a mind? Why or why not?
2. Would you still love him or her? Why or why not?

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6.2: Dualism

Dualism

Now we shall examine dualism. It is the first of the options on the mind body problem. It is the most popular conception, it appears as the most obvious answer to the problem and it is the source of the problem all at the same time!

Dualism, Cartesian Interactionist - the view that:

1. the mental and the material comprise two different classes of substance and;
2. both can have causal effects on the other.

Plato

Plato thought that the soul could and would exist apart from the body and would exist after the death of the body. He offered a "proof" for this position and was the first to do so in writing that we have any evidence of doing so. He offered several different proofs, or arguments, none of which are convincing today. They are held to be specious arguments or terribly flawed and unconvincing. He held that humans were composed of bodies and souls but the soul was more important and immortal. His arguments used premises which we question today. For example, Plato thought that he could conclude that the soul could exist independent of the body because it acted independently from the body when it engaged in pure thought. This is no longer accepted as true since it is equally evident today that without a physical brain thought appears unlikely to occur. Plato thought that the only way to explain how people come to know things is that they are remembering the knowledge implanted in their souls when the souls were in the realm of pure thought and eternal forms before entering into the body after which they forgot as they became confused by physical emotions and feelings and limited experiences through the senses. This is no longer accepted as the best explanation of how people come to have knowledge. None the less, Plato is credited with being the first human to attempt to set out any sort of a proof that humans had souls and that they survived the death of the body and that they were immortal. He offered these arguments in the dialogue he wrote titled the *Phaedo*.

Rene Descartes

Descartes also believed that the soul existed prior to and separate from the body (see *Meditation II of Meditations on First Philosophy*) and so was immortal. In his view all of reality consisted of two very different substances: matter/physical and spirit/non-physical. The physical was what would be extended in time and space and the non-physical would not be so characterized. For Descartes, the soul of a human exists prior to and separate from the body. His proof consisted of argumentation that has been seriously criticized and rejected. He thought that if he could in some form demonstrate that humans can prove that they exist without first proving that they have physical bodies then that would prove that they did not need a physical body in order to exist. He thought that his famous claim that "I think therefore I am" established not just that he existed, but that he existed without a body as a "thinking thing." A "thinking thing" is a thing that thinks and by that would be included: imagining, conceiving, hoping, dreaming, desiring, fearing, conjecturing, reasoning, remembering, and more. For him a "thinking thing" needed no physical parts to do what it does. Modern science has established that there is no evidence of humans that are without a physical body and its brain. There is no evidence that thought is possible without a brain. There is much evidence that what has been associated with Descartes' "thinking thing" is now explained solely in terms of the brain and how the brain is physically structured and the functioning of the brain.

Cartesian Skepticism



Variations of Dualism

1. **Interactionism** - minds and bodies exist and interact in some way
2. **Epiphenomenalism** - body acts on mind but minds do not act on bodies
3. **Double aspect theory** - there is one substance with two aspects (mind/body)
4. **Parallelism** - minds and bodies exist in separate dimensions and are coordinate
 - a. **Pre-established harmony** - minds and bodies are set in motion and coordinated from the beginning of time by a deity that creates the universe
 - b. **Occasionalism** - on the occasion of the mind making a decision the body is moved by the creator (deity) to do whatever the mind has decided to make the body do.

Interactionism; History and Critics

RENÉ DESCARTES AND THE LEGACY OF MIND/BODY DUALISM

1. René Descartes
2. The 17th Century: Reaction to the Dualism of Mind and Body
3. The 18th Century: Mind, Matter, and Monism
4. The 19th Century: Mind and Brain
5. Mind, Brain, and Adaptation: the Localization of Cerebral Function
6. Trance and Trauma: Functional Nervous Disorders and the Subconscious Mind

THE RISE OF EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

1. The 17th and 18th Centuries: The Epistemology of Mind
2. The 19th Century: The Epistemology of the Nervous System
3. Mind, Brain, and the Experimental Psychology of Consciousness

PSYCHOLOGY IN AMERICA

1. Mind, Body, and Culture: American Psychology before William James
2. Biological Consciousness and the Experience of the Transcendent: William James and American Functional Psychology

So with dualism comes a number of problems. The most conspicuous and troublesome are:

1. Where does the interaction take place?
2. How does the interaction take place?
3. The idea of the mental causing the physical to act appears to violate the principle of the conservation of energy
4. The idea of two realities appears to violate Ockam's Razor, the principle of simplicity, which holds that if there is no need to postulate additional entities one should avoid doing so.

Here are some of the dualists' responses to these points and objections to them or criticisms of them.

1. Non-physical entities do not have spatial properties, so there is no need to locate them in physical space.
2. Such entities have their own metaphysical laws to follow.
 1. God, mind, spirit, and souls all operate within that realm.

Objection: what are those laws and how do they account for the results in the physical universe?

1. Dualists claim that: substances do not need to be similar in order to interact.
2. There is also ample evidence that they do interact.

Objections:

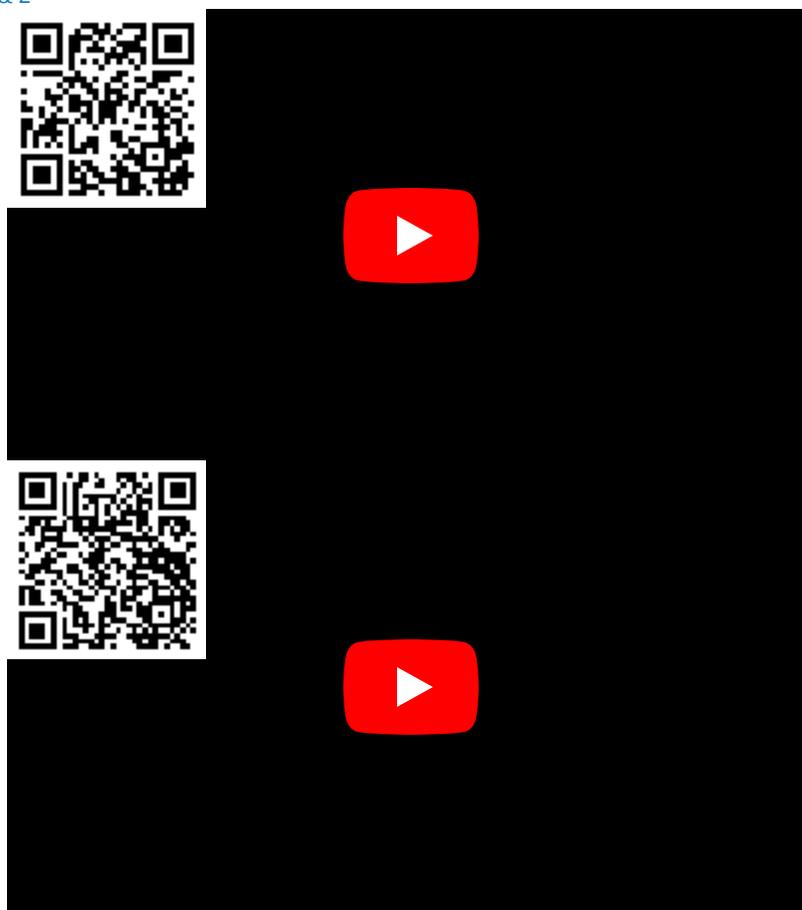
1. It was the dualists who established that the two substances were so different that they could not interact.
 - a. The source of the problem is the dualist distinctions of the two different substances.
2. The evidence for interaction could be explained in terms of brain actions alone. The obviousness of one's causing one's body to move by an act of the mind is not as obvious as it seems.
3. The mind may not add energy to a closed system, it may be simply redirecting the energy already present.

Objection: how does the mind affect the redirection if the mind is not itself made of energy or matter?

1. Dualists claim there is a compelling reason to hold that there are two substances and not just one.
2. They claim it is needed to account for all phenomena of human experience including consciousness.

Objection: The monists claim that it is not necessary at all and that they have a satisfactory explanation of such phenomena.

[Substance Dualism Part 1 & 2](#)



The other variations on mind body dualism

1. Interactionism - minds and bodies exist and interact in some way (covered above)
2. Epiphenomenalism - body acts on mind but minds do not act on bodies

[What is the stream of consciousness?](#)



Double Aspect Theory: there is one substance with two aspects (mind/body)

[Spinoza on Mind and Body Interaction](#)



[Baruch Spinoza and Double-Aspect Theory](#)

Born in Amsterdam, Spinoza spent his life as a lens grinder. A Jew who had been expelled from the synagogue for unorthodoxy, he maintained few ties to either Dutch or Jewish contemporaries and published little during his lifetime. The metaphysical masterpiece, *de ethica*, was first published in 1677, in order to retain the notion of God as the one true cause without sacrificing the idea of causality as operative in both the mental and the physical spheres. Spinoza abandoned Descartes' two-substance view in favor of what has come to be called double-aspect theory. Double-aspect theories are based on the notion that the mental and the physical are simply different aspects of one and the same substance. For Spinoza, that single substance was God. While agreeing with Descartes that the world of consciousness and that of extension are qualitatively separate, Spinoza rejected the Cartesian view that consciousness and extension are attributes of two finite substances in favor of the notion that they are attributes of only one infinite substance. That substance, God, is the universal essence or nature of everything that exists. The direct implication of Spinoza's view is that while mental occurrences can determine only other mental occurrences and physical motions can determine only other physical motions, mind and body nonetheless exist in pre-established coordination, since the same divine essence forms the connections within both classes and cannot be self-contradictory. In the latter half of the 19th century, dual-aspect theories underwent a revival.

[Occasionalism and Nicolas Malebranche](#)

Occasionalism is the idea that on the occasion of the mind making a decision the body is moved by the creator (deity) to do whatever the mind has decided to make the body do. If the natural world is radically divided into the mental and the physical such

that the physical is extended in space.

The mental is not, and if the nature of causality is such that causes and effects must have a necessary connection and be of a similar type, then mind/body interactionism of the Cartesian sort is obviously untenable. Perhaps the first important attempt to deal with this contradiction in Descartes was known as occasionalism. The work of Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715) was probably the most influential purveyor of occasionalism.

Malebranche was born in Paris and was educated at the Collège de la Marche and the Sorbonne, where he began to read Descartes in 1664. A decade later, he published *De la Recherche de la Vérité* in which he argued that both of Descartes' substances, mind and body, are causally ineffective. God is the one and only true cause. Not only is there no influence of mind on body or of body on mind, there is no causality operative at all except insofar as god, the one true cause, intervenes to produce the regularities that occur in experience. Thus, for example, when a person wills to move a finger, which serves as the occasion for God to move the finger; when an object suddenly appears in a person's field of view, which serves as the occasion for God to produce a visual perception in the person's mind.

Occasionalism and Nintendo



Objections:

- This theory would make God an accomplice in every evil act.
- The two aspects of the one substance are either illusory or if real then there is the dualism issue once again as to how they are to interact.

Parallelism (Psychophysical)

1. Minds and bodies exist in separate dimensions and are coordinated
2. Pre-established harmony; minds and bodies are set in motion and coordinated from the beginning of time by a deity that creates the universe.

Still another alternative to Cartesian Interactionism is that of Psychophysical Parallelism. This view retains both the dualism of mind and body and the notion of a regular correlation between mental and physical events, but avoids any assumption of causal mind/body connection, direct or indirect. Psychophysical Parallelism eschews Interactionism on the grounds that events as totally dissimilar as those of mind and body could not possibly affect one another. It also rejects Occasionalism and Dual-Aspect Theory on the grounds that no third entity, whatever that might be, could be responsible for such vastly different effects. Parallelists simply accept the fact that every mental event is correlated with a physical event in such a way that when one occurs, so too does the other.

Parallelism in this form is usually traced to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). Historian, mathematician, philosopher, scientist, and diplomat, Leibniz was born and received most of his education in Leipzig. In 1676, after a period at Mainz and four years at Paris. He later went to Hanover, where he spent the remainder of his life. An inveterate correspondent, contributor to scholarly journals, and creator of manuscripts, much of Leibniz' most important work was embodied in letters, published in article form, or left unpublished at his death.

Leibniz presented the famous articulation of Psychophysical Parallelism in which he adapted an occasionalist metaphor to support the view that soul and body exist in a pre-established harmony. Comparing soul and body to two clocks that agree perfectly, Leibniz argued that there are only three possible sources for this agreement.

1. It may occur through mutual influence (interactionism), through the efforts of a skilled workman who regulates the clocks and keeps them in accord (occasionalism),
2. Or by virtue of the fact that they have been so constructed from the outset that their future harmony is assured (parallelism)
3. Or by the notion that mind and body exist in a harmony that has been pre-established by God from the moment of creation.

Leibniz rejects interactionism because it is impossible to conceive of material particles passing from one substance to the other and occasionalism as invoking the intervention of a deus ex machina in a natural series of events. All that remains is parallelism - the notion that mind and body exist in a harmony that has been pre-established by God from the moment of creation.

Objection: This theory seriously challenges notions of human freedom.

Conclusion

Each attempt to defend the dualism of mind and body meets with objections. If you want to take the dualist position that we have both a physical and non-physical mind that position needs to be defended with reasoning and evidence and not merely made to rest on faith based claim. In Philosophy it must be supported by reasoning and evidence. There must be both the exposition of the problem with the dualist claim and its solution. The dualist position creates the mind body problem. What is needed is a response to all the criticisms of the dualist position? Remember it is the one position that creates the problem. A dualist needs to account for all the evidence that disproves dualism and then needs to bridge the gap between the non-physical and the physical and solve the problem of interaction.

Dualists also need to be aware that there is no claim about what a non-physical mind does that has not been demonstrated to be the result of brain activity and functioning. Neuroscience discredits the claim of a non-physical mind. What evidence is offered by contemporary dualists of the existence of a non-physical mind?

Mind refers to the aspects of intellect and consciousness manifested as combinations of thought, perception, memory, emotion, will and imagination, including all of the brain's conscious and unconscious cognitive processes. "Mind" is often used to refer especially to the thought processes of reason. Subjectively, mind manifests itself as a stream of consciousness. If this is the definition of mind then reflexes, controlled responses, survival instincts are not part of the mind, but actually a part of the brain.

Philosophical Application



Suppose you are playing a game of pool with Jose Sharco. Jose is more skilled than you, and he is already working on the eight ball while you still have most of your balls on the table. Suddenly Jose stops and put down his cue. He closes his eyes and stands very still. At first you think that Jose is simply concentrating before he attempts to sink the eight ball. But after several minutes, you become irritated and ask him: "Hey, Jose, what are you doing? You're supposed to take your shot." Jose responds, "I'm in the process of taking my shot. I have decided to sink this last ball with my mind. Just give me a couple of minutes to focus all of my mental energies on the ball."

You respond, "Well Jose, you can stand there and think about sinking the eight ball until you're blue in your face, but I can tell you one thing for sure: It's not going go anywhere. In order to move the eight ball you need another physical object like a stick or a hand. Minds are not sufficient to move matter."

What if Jose doesn't accept your explanation? What would you tell him then?

Thought Experiment: Zombies

Chalmers claims that it's possible for him to have a zombie twin, a creature physiologically and functionally identical to him, but lacking any conscious experience.

(1) Does this possibility show that consciousness is nonphysical? Why or why not?

(2) Could a zombie (a creature with no mental states) do everything that a normal human being can do? Why or why not?

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6.3: Idealism and Monism-Materialism

Metaphysical View of Idealism

Things are composed of

1. Sensible properties and
2. Matter

Matter

Matter was seen as necessary for differentiating one object from another. Suppose you had two objects with the same properties:

- a list of the properties of both would be identical.
- how would you know that you had two objects?

Matter itself had no properties of its own.

Idealism



Problem with Matter:

According to Bishop Berkeley, once you took away all of the sensible properties of a thing, you should be left with the bare matter. If it has no properties of its own, how would you know it? This led him to conclude that a thing is nothing more than its sensible properties. Things are nothing but their properties:

Experiment:

- Get three buckets of water, one at room temperature, one that is as hot as you can stand it, and the third must be very cold (put in ice).
- Hold your right hand in the pail of hot water and your left hand in the pail of cold water for about 3 minutes.
- Then, place both hands in the bucket of room temp water.
- How does the water feel to the right hand?
- How does the water feel to the left hand?
- Aha! What can we conclude from this experiment?
- The "hotness" or "coolness" of the water is not in the water.
- So where is the sensation of "hotness" or "coolness" existing?
- In your mind?

Idealism says that:

- if the sensible properties of things exist in the mind (not in the things themselves).
- and things are nothing more than bundles of sensible properties, then...
- things must exist in the mind only (as ideas).

Problems:

- **similarity of perception** (of objects): why do things seem the same to all of us

- **persistence of objects:** do things continue to exist when no one is perceiving them
- **problem of other minds:** how do I know other minds exist?

Similarity of perception:

Question: Why do things appear the same to all of us if they are just bundles of ideas in our (individual) minds?

Answer they might not - the wall may be "blue" because we have all been taught to call it that, not because it really is "blue"

Persistence of objects:

Questions: Do things continue to exist when no one is looking at them? Does the floor outside the room still exist? Does your car still exist in the parking lot?

Answer 1: Well, someone is out there right now "seeing" it - this keeps it in existence until i get back. But what if no one is out there right now?

Answer 2: Someone always is "seeing" all the things in the world at once. Couldn't that be God?

- Persistence of objects and similarity of perceptions
- Both can be explained by positing an all-knowing (all-seeing) God.
- Idealists use God to explain how these things continue to exist.
- They are as they are because God perceives them.

The problem of other minds:

Dualist response -

- Best explanation for what we see in the behavior of others
- Biological similarity between bodies makes it even stronger.
- But - in idealism there is no such physical similarity
- Only way to connect the two is to posit some sort of spiritual similarity.

Conclusion:

Because of the lack of evidence for other minds, and because of the (supposed) lack of any perceptive faculty by which we can know God (who is needed to solve other problems) idealism will not work as an explanation of how mind and body interact.

Monism-Materialism

So now we arrive at the real challenge to the dualist view and the solution to the mind-body problem that is attracting more and more adherents. In this view there are no minds at all. At least there are no minds separate from the brain. There are no non-physical entities. The mental activities are accounted for in terms of the brain and what it does. There are a variety of approaches to explaining the mind in terms of the brain. This approach is a form of monism for it claims or assumes that there is but one substance: matter. It is a physicalism.

Physicist View of the Mind



There will be a great deal of material here. It is put here to challenge your belief that you have a mind. More and more people are coming to think differently. The belief in a mind has been held by so many and for so long that it takes some doing to demonstrate that perhaps it just is not true.

The claim is made that there is no non-physical mind. All that we do and experience is accounted for in physical terms. When the day comes that humans interact with a very well made and very complex computer, perhaps in the form of a human body, a robot-android, and the humans cannot tell that it is a silicon based form of activity then humans will realize that they are not really different from the robot. Humans are a carbon-based life form. The android-robot will be a silicon-based life form. If humans and androids both act alike and speak of "feelings" and "thoughts" and so forth then humans will know that the mind is just another name for the physical brain. So, the views presented here will quickly get to the cases of computers and robots as a means of offering proof of the non-existence of a non-physical mind.

Future of Robotic Artificial Intelligence



What is there really that you or a human being does that indicates that they have this non-physical entity associated with the behavior. Robots can be programmed to speak, to write, to calculate, to learn and even to make other robots (first step successful in the year 2000). Robots, androids, can be made to speak of feelings and to report that when for example fluid intake over 4 hours drops below 50 cc to say, "I'm thirsty" or some other appropriate phrase. The android could be programmed to say what the humans say when fluid intake drops to a low point. Is there anything more to "feeling thirsty" than that? As the behaviorist, B.F. Skinner, claims, we know that someone is thirsty because they drink. We should not think that they drink because they are thirsty. Neurologists have been busy at work identifying the locations in the brain responsible for memory, speech, creativity and motor control as well as anger, depression and even love, both the physical attraction stage and the "romantic" stage. There have been

numerous examples of people who have had their basic behavior change as a result of brain injuries, illnesses and chemical imbalances. With all of this mounting evidence there are many people who believe that there are no non-physical minds, that we have only brains.

Variations on the materialist position

- Behaviorism
- Logical behaviorism
- Semantic behaviorism
- Folklore
- Functionalism
- Structuralism

Reading Your Mind

visit <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mind-identity/>



Physicalism

As used in the philosophy of science, physicalism is the view that all factual knowledge can be formulated as a statement about physical objects and activities. Thus, the language of science can be reduced to third person descriptions.

The positivists defined the physical as that which can be described in the concepts of a language with an intersubjective observation basis. This could be called unity of science physicalism. It is the primary meaning of physicalism in the philosophy of Science. Another type of physicalism might be called causal physicalism, the view that all causes are physical causes.

There is a lot of confusion in the philosophy of mind literature stemming from a tendency to take physicalism and materialism to be interchangeable.

Behaviorism

Some psychologists believe that they can account for all of human behavior in terms of operant conditioning. All that a human does (including ideas and feelings) are behaviors that can be explained in terms of basic physical factors:

- genetic inheritance
- physical drives
- individual human history of interactions
- conditioning-learned behavior patterns

There is no essential difference between a human and any other mammal. Humans use language according to what they were reinforced for saying or writing. There is no mind. There is only the brain as with any other mammal. Human thought is simply brain behavior (activity) that has been learned (reinforced) and associated with some stimuli and evoking some response.

Logical Behaviorism

The word "mind" is the result of a mistake, an error in logic. If a person arrived on the campus of a large college or university and asked someone in the parking lot, "where is the college?" that person might point out one building after another saying something like: "well that's the administration building over there." "That's the gym building way down there." That's the new Science

building over there." then the visitor interjects with "no, I want to know where the college is?" Well the visitor is making the mistake of thinking that the college is a specific place as are the buildings, instead of the college being a name for the entire collection of buildings, programs, instructors, students etc... The visitor is making an error. Well, in like manner the word mind has been mistaken for a thing when it is just a name for a collection of activities of the brain.

Semantic Behaviorism

Holders of this view believe that the word mind has been improperly associated with the existence of an entity that exists apart from the body, the brain. Those who speak of the mind as if it were a non-physical entity have been reinforced in this inappropriate behavior and incorrect association.

Folklore

All talk of the mind as distinct from the brain originates from an earlier time when people were not as well informed as we are today. Most people have had to abandon thinking of many things that were part of the old folklore, such as:

1. The earth is flat
2. The earth is at the center of the universe
3. The sun moves
4. The moon is a goddess
5. Lightning is sent by superhuman beings from above

Functionalism

The mind is really the name given to the collection of brain functions. The mind is what the brain does; we are (very sophisticated) biological machines. According to functionalism, 'mind' refers to the brain's activity of thinking; the mind is not a special kind of thing or substance--not a spiritual thing or a physical thing--but rather a certain kind of activity that is carried out by a physical thing, in the case of humans, by the brain.

Analogy #1: other bodily functions

Digestion is what the stomach does. Circulating the blood is what the heart does. Cleansing the blood is what the kidneys do. Thinking is what the brain does.

Some machines can do the job of our organs when they fail. Artificial organs are growing more common (cornea implants, kidney machines, and artificial hearts). If thinking is simply the function performed by the brain, it might someday be possible to replace parts of the brain (maybe even the whole brain) With artificial parts. But what does the brain do?

The brain processes information gathered by the senses and stored in memory. The outputs of this processing include the things we say, think and do. In effect, thinking is a form of computation. The mind is to the brain as software is to hardware.

Two important considerations have added plausibility to this view of the mind.

Computers can be made of almost anything. In principle, it is possible to build a computer out of almost anything. Early electronic computers were made with vacuum tubes. Current computers are made with transistors and silicon chips. Any device that can be used to "read" and "write" from a "tape" on which are symbols that represent "1's" and "0's" can be used to build a computer. In 1833 Charles Babbage conceived a design for a mechanical computer made from interlocking gears and levers. He called his computer "the analytical engine." the problem with using mechanical components is that computers made from them perform their computations so slowly, they are practically useless.

Nature, however, found a way to build a computer using biological components, without silicon chips and transistors. We call it the brain.

Levels of Explanation for Psychology

Psychology started out as the study of the mind, and by "mind," most early psychologists meant something like the Cartesian soul. When souls fell from fashion, psychologists faced a problem: if there are no souls, and if neurologists study brains, what's left for psychologists to study?

When behaviorism was "in" psychology became the study of behavior. But now behaviorism is "out," so what is psychology the science of? Today, psychology is the study of cognitive and other processes carried on in the brain. Who knows what it will be studying when that particular subject goes out of fashion.

Levels of Explanation for Computers and Brains

Computers

- **Physical level:** from one point of view (the engineer's) all that is going on in a computer is a series of electronic changes.
- **Design level:** from another point of view (the programmer's) the machine is running a program.
- **Commonsense level:** from our point of view (the user) the computer is word processing or solving an equation.

Brains

- **Physical level:** from one point of view (the neuro-biologist) all that is going on in a brain is a series of chemical changes
- **Design level:** from another point of view (the psychologist's) the brain is running a program.
- **Commonsense level:** from our point of view (the user) the brain is thinking

Thus, most psychologists are functionalists, the mind is to the brain as a program is to a computer. Is a thinking computer a possible thing? Since both computers and brains are computational/information processing devices, it should be possible, in principle, to build a computer that thinks.

Objection

A computer can only do what it is programmed to do. We aren't programmed; we decide what we will do.

Analogy

- Computer program + input history = what the computer will do next.
- Genetic make-up + experience = what you will do next.

Your behavior is the product of the nature of your genes and the nurture of your experience. The computer's behavior is the product of the nature of its program and the nurture of its input. So what's the difference?

So there are those who think that humans are just very complex organic machines, that humans are not essentially different from an organic computing device. When a computer is made that acts so much like a human that most people would not be able to tell that it was a computer then we shall know that humans do not have a non-physical mind or a non-physical soul but that we are hydro-carbon life forms that have complex information processing units (brains) that are capable of behavior indicating awareness.

There are numerous works of science fiction and movies and television series that have had robots in human form, androids. These robots or thinking machines have been mistaken for being human or have acquired so many human traits as to be deemed worthy of being accorded human rights.

Data Controversy Over Rights-Star Trek. Next Generation



Structuralism

The mind is a name given to a collection of brain structures. Each mental event is accounted for in terms of the various arrangements and operations of parts of the brain.



Materialism

Materialism is another form of Monism: There is only one kind of substance in the universe and only material substance exists; there is no non-physical substance. This view had important implications for existence of god, soul, angels etc...There are 3 main points:

1. Uniformity of (physical) laws
2. Denial that there is “intelligent” purpose
3. Denial of non-physical entities

Uniformity of Law

Physical laws are descriptive: they don’t say how it ought to be, but rather they describe how things actually behave. Physical laws describe a universe which operates according to regular, uniform laws.

1. Every event has a cause
2. Same causes under same conditions get same effects.

Denial of Intelligent Purpose

One challenge to materialism is that it must be able to explain “intentionality” of actions.

- acts can serve a purpose - like blinking reflex
- but acts occur because the laws of physics hold true - not because they are directed by someone.

Denial of Non-Physical Entities

Non-physical entities are proposed out of ignorance of the true nature of things. Once we realize that there are only physical causes for things, we will look for (and find) just those sorts of causes.

- Where are they?
- Can we spot such things?
- Why do we need to suppose they exist?

Brain As a Machine

The mere act of catching an object thrown to us requires an enormous amount of processing power and speed.

- calculate trajectory
- moving to intercept object on its trajectory
- coordinating grasping motions along with recovery from motion in 3 dimensional space.

So what do we do with mentalistic terms?

- **Thought** is a particular brain process
- **Mind** is our collective awareness of our own brain processes
- **Memory** is a physical process of information storage and retrieval

- **Dreaming** is testing and establishing relationships between information stored in memory.

Uploading Consciousness... Michio Kaku



What is consciousness?

Do we have consciousness because we are aware of it or are we aware of things because we possess consciousness? Why does it exist and, most importantly, how?

The answers to all these questions are constantly debated in philosophy, especially philosophy of mind. When it comes to robotics and the expansion of technology towards A.I., these arguments focus into the consequences and the treatment of the new perspectives humans would face if technology reaches the ability to produce robots that can develop consciousness. Some of the questions brought to awareness are of how would conscious androids be treated? Are they entitled to human rights, since they would possess, even if artificially, the same properties as human beings – feelings, awareness, consciousness, emotions? What to do if a conscious android wouldn't fit into the expectations of its purpose? The first impulsive answer would be too simply “turn it off”, but think again: could it be considered murder, since you are “removing” life from a conscious being?

Among the population, the idea of co-existing with conscious androids brings not only questions and concerns, but also fears. But what are we really afraid of? Are we afraid that they might become dangerous? That the androids may form an “army” and dominate humans, turning against their own “masters?” Or is it that we are not prepared to realize that humans may not be the last degree in the evolutionary scale we were always so proud and safe to dominate?

The Singularity

Singularity is the idea that machines could have the capacity to evolve at a faster pace than humans and is linked to the fear of robots gaining too much control.

403 ERROR

The request could not be satisfied.



s not allow for spiritual entities:

- no God, soul, angels, or devils.

Problems

- idealism may lead us into a radical solipsism: the view that I am the only being in the world
- yet, dualism cannot explain how the mind and body interact.

More Conclusions

If we as humans are just a form of organic machine, then:

- is it possible to construct a non-organic machine which can do the same things?
- could we create an artifact which was intelligent?
- this will require that we know what intelligence is
- it will also require that we understand how it is that humans are intelligent

Read

The Mind-Brain Identity Theories

Philosophical Applications



Gloria's Near Death Experience

“As I was lying on the table I heard the doctors pronounce the operation a failure and pronounce me dead. I then remember them frantically trying to resuscitate me. While they were trying to bring me back to life, I was just floating up near the ceiling. It was a weird feeling because I was up there and my body was below... Then I seemed to wander up through the floors of the hospital. I saw plainly, for instance, a young man who had been injured in an automobile accident... Then everything began to get dark: I passed through a spiraling tunnel until I seemed to come to a place illuminated by an immensely bright light... A tremendous peace overcame me. My grandmother, who had died 9 years before, was there. I couldn't see her—for she seemed behind me—but I could feel her presence and hear her voice... Suddenly I was thrust back into my body. I don't know how or why. My next recollection is of the nurse standing near me in the recovery room.”

1. Does Gloria's near-death experience convince you that mind and body are separate entities? Why or why not?
2. If yes, can you think of further reasons that support the conclusions that Gloria's mind had indeed left her body?
3. What would you say to the researchers who claim that Gloria's experiences were caused by neurological activity in the brain?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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7.1: Freedom? Is it Real? A Myth? Maybe Not!

What is Free Will?

What is at stake with this issue of Free Will are notions of responsibility and in particular moral responsibility. The more advances in science that present the picture of the universe as being deterministic, the more there arises the question of whether or not human actions are in any way exempt from that idea that all physical events are determined by prior events. How are humans to be considered possessed of free will when their actions might be described as being determined by their prior states of being?

Free Will or Not? Determinism or Free Will?



Free will is the ability of agents to make choices unconstrained by certain factors. Factors of historical concern have included metaphysical constraints (for example, logical, nomological, or theological determinism), physical constraints (ex., chains or imprisonment), social constraints (ex., threat of punishment, censure, or structural constraints), and mental constraints (ex., compulsions, phobias, neurological disorders, or genetic predispositions). The principle of free will has religious, legal, ethical, and scientific implications. [1] For example, in the religious realm, free will implies that individual will and choices can coexist with an omnipotent divinity. In the law, it affects considerations of punishment and rehabilitation. In ethics, it may hold implications for whether individuals can be held morally accountable for their actions. In science, neuroscientific findings regarding free will may suggest different ways of predicting human behavior.... The need to reconcile freedom of will with a deterministic universe is known as the *Problem of Free Will* or sometimes referred to as the *Dilemma of Determinism*. This dilemma leads to a moral dilemma as well: How are we to assign responsibility for our actions if they are caused entirely by past events?

Are you free? What makes you think so?

Humans are either free or they are not. They either possess free will and can use it or they do not have it at all. They either have it and can use it as often as they want to do so or they have only the appearance of free will and really never make decisions or choices devoid of prior influences that determine the outcome of the decision or choice making procedure.

That there may be social or physical constraints is not the issue here. Humans are not able to fly using only their own bodies to propel them through the air. You could say that humans are not "free" to do so but that would be to misuse the word "free" and change its meaning from "being able to choose" to "being physically able to do".

There may be repercussions or consequences for our actions so that a person might want to say something like "I am not free to rob a bank and by that mean that if they did they would be pursued and captured and imprisoned. If persons have free will, then that might mean simply that they can make the choice to rob a bank and flee capture. So "freedom" does not mean the ability to make decisions and to act without undesirable consequences.

Freedom in this context of the freedom versus determinism issue has a meaning that identifies it with possessing free will or being able to make choices for ones self.

Freedom's Not Just Another Word By DAVID HACKETT FISCHER, February 7th, 2005 New York Times

.....There is no one true definition of liberty and freedom in the world, though many people to the left and right believe that they have found it. And, yet, there is one great historical process in which liberty and freedom have developed, often in unexpected ways.

The words themselves have a surprising history. The oldest known word with such a meaning comes to us from ancient Iraq. The Sumerian "*ama-ar-gi*," found on tablets in the ruins of the city-state of Lagash, which flourished four millenniums ago, derived from the verb "*ama-gi*," which literally meant "going home to mother." It described the condition of emancipated servants who returned to their own free families - an interesting link to the monument in Baghdad. (In contemporary America, the ancient characters for "*ama-ar-gi*" have become the logos of some libertarian organizations, as well as tattoos among members of politically conservative motorcycle gangs, who may not know that the inscriptions on their biceps mean heading home to mom.)

Equally surprising are the origins of our English words liberty and, especially, freedom. They have very different roots. The Latin *libertas* and Greek *eleutheria* both indicated a condition of independence, unlike a slave. (In science, *eleutherodactylic* means separate fingers or toes.) Freedom, however, comes from the same root as friend, an Indo-European word that meant "dear" or "beloved." It meant a connection to other free people by bonds of kinship or affection, also unlike a slave. Liberty and freedom both meant "unlike a slave." But liberty meant privileges of independence; freedom referred to rights of belonging. ...

Freedom? Is it real?

FREEDOM	DETERMINISM
Free Will	Determinism
Mind	Destiny
Self	Fate
I have a Free Will	Will of God or of the Gods
I Choose.	What will be, will be
I	It was meant to be
Free Choice	Laws of Nature
Essentialism	Determinism
Autonomy	Hard Determinism-- B.F.Skinner
Without external coercion	Soft Determinism-- W.James
Without ignorance	Compatibilism- W.T. Stace

Most people born in the 20th Century were raised with a conflicting set of beliefs concerning the issue of freedom. On the one hand people have been taught or encouraged to believe that they are responsible for their actions and that they are capable of choosing from among the options that are presented to them. Yet there is in the language that is used and in the ideas people claim to hold as true another view entirely, namely that there are forces, or a force, over which humans have no control and that determines what occurs. There are those who claim that they are free and believe that here is such a thing as fate or destiny at the same time.

Questions to Consider

- How can it be that people are free to chose their own paths through life and yet all has been set out by the forces (deities) that have determined each person's ultimate end or destiny?
- Are humans free to make decisions concerning their behavior or not?
- If humans are not free then what becomes of the notion of responsibility and accountability?
- What is to be done with those humans who commit crimes if they did so due to factors over which they had no control?
- Are you one of those people who claim to believe in fate?
- Do you think that all things occur as they were meant to occur?
- Do you believe that "what will be will be?" (*que sera sera*)

If you do and you think that you are free to make decisions and that the future is undetermined you are a believer in contradictory ideas. The idea of a fate or destiny rests on the belief (in the absence of proof that is clearly convincing) that there is some power or agency that does determine the sets of experiences to be encountered by humans as well as their ultimate demise in both time and manner. You are believing in things that cannot all be true at the same time.

Does infallible foreknowledge of a human act by a deity or the "fates" take away free will? People that can consistently maintain both free will and infallible foreknowledge are called compatibilists. They have a very difficult time providing evidence and reasoning to support their position. People that prove that only one of them can be true are called Incompatibilists. They hold that free will and infallible foreknowledge by any entity contradict with each other. Here are attempts to explain and argue for each of these views.

Scenario 1

C has determined that at time (T) you will be in location (F) and event (E) that you are hit by a meteorite and die. Opps! Sorry! Now, you can do whatever you like but if there is such a fate then at T you will be at F and then E you die. Sorry again. But you can make a decision to remain where you are now at location (I) when time T comes and avoid E. But you do not know the future and so when T comes around you have made decisions that place you at F and you get hit and die.

Were you free to decide to remain at I or to go to some other location (O) when T came? People are brought up to believe that they are, but if there is a C that has determined that you are to be at F at T and get hit then you do not have such freedom to make the decision to be at O, act on it and to be at O, or I, and not die.

If it is your C to be at F at T and have E occur then you have been determined by C to make the decisions that put you at F at T. You have no choice to decide to do anything but to be at F at T.

Okay let's try to get freedom back into this. Let's say now you are at I and it is getting close to T and you decide of your own free will (if you have a free will) to go to a location (O) other than (F). If there is fate then when you decide to go to O something will happen that will force you, against your apparent free will, to go from O instead be at F at T where you get E. But are we still free? Well not quite, because when we make decisions to go from O we do not feel as if we are being forced to go to F. We make decisions throughout our daily life and it appears as if they are free and not forced and that our bodies are not being forced into physical places by physical agents. So if there is fate and fate determines what happens to us it is not through a series of physical agents acting like thugs and forcing us to do things. No we realize our predetermined fate by actions that appear to be our own choosing. If there is fate it would be fate that acts through us and gives us desires and aims and values and goals and they cause our decisions and they lead to our experiences and to our choices that bring us to F at T to have E. This would be such as to make the decision to go to O and as you are making your way to go to O you are on spot F at time T when you are hit by the meteorite E.

Conclusion: If there is fate, there is no free will.

Scenario 2

OK, let's suppose that there is a cause of events (C), a fate or fates or deity or deities that determine each person's destiny but has no foreknowledge of what will happen and no control over the decision making of humans. The C knows you are at L and wants to arrange that at time T you are at F and have E. So now if there is this sort of fate then some things, some events, will occur where you would react and move from L to F at T and have E. In this case C made you move to F at T. Were you free? Did you have free will? Could you have decided to go to O and not to F at time T? Perhaps, but if there is a C then when you make a decision in your daily life to go to O you would be forced to be at F by some agencies or agents that put you at F at T and boom E. Is this what daily life feels like? Are we regularly deciding to do one thing or go to one place only to be forced to another? If there is fate then it determines everything that happens and the events that lead up to the "Big Events" that are so memorable and the benchmarks of our lives. If there is fate then it determines everything that happens whether large or small events because they all contribute to the production of the memorable and the benchmarks of our lives. If there is such a fate operative we would experience a near constant subversion of our free will choices and the events we do experience will seem forced against our wills. This is not our experience on a minute by minute or hour by hour basis!

Conclusion: If there is fate, there is no free will.

Consider this:

The idea of a Fate or Destiny rests on the belief (in the absence of proof that is clearly convincing) that there is some power or agency that determines the sets of experiences to be encountered by humans as well as their ultimate demise in both time and

manner. As there is no convincing proof such an agency exists we will examine another sense in which freedom or free will is challenged.

Are humans free to determine each and every one of their own actions or is there some force, agency, or process that determines it as a result of prior experiences?

Consider some simple definitions for the basic positions:

- Causal determinism - every event has a cause
- Hard determinism - causal determinism is true, and therefore, free action and moral responsibility are impossible
- Soft determinism (or compatibilism) - causal determinism is true, but we still act as free, morally responsible agents when, in the absence of external constraints, our actions are caused by our desires
- Indeterminism - causal determinism is false, since free, uncaused actions that we are morally responsible for are possible

Examine this chart to learn of the positions of the traditions on five claims.

Situation	Hard Determinism	Soft Determinism	Indeterminism
1. Causal determinism is true; every event has a cause.	Accept	Accept	Reject (free actions are uncaused)
2. If causal determinism is true, then there are no free actions.	Accept	Reject	Accept
3. There are no free actions.	Accept	Reject (actions caused by our own desires are free)	Reject (uncaused actions are free)
4. If there are no free actions, then there is no moral responsibility.	Accept	Accept	Accept
5. There is no moral responsibility	Accept	Reject (compatibilist freedom allows moral responsibility)	Reject (indeterminist freedom allows moral responsibility)

Problems and Arguments

So here we have one form of the problem with the idea of human freedom. Are humans possessed of the capacity to make a decision, a choice, that is not fully determined by antecedent conditions or not? Are humans free, so free that they can do things that are totally unbound by the laws of the physical universe, totally undetermined by previous acts and events and physical circumstances? Or, alternatively, are humans potentially predictable as a physical object, say a dropped book. Pick up a book, hold it about four feet above the ground and let it go. The book will drop to the ground. The book has no choice. The book's actions are determined by the laws of the physical universe. The law of gravity operates on the book.

Well, there are those who believe that there is perhaps nothing more obvious than that they are free. They believe that they make decisions all the time. They believe that they have free will.

There are others who believe that humans are physical beings that are bound by the laws of the physical universes and that as the human brain are also part of that universe there are laws governing the operations of the brain as well. There are those who believe that the day will come when humans know enough about the laws of the human brain and behavior that humans will be able to predict with great accuracy exactly what a human being will do in a given situation. They believe that human behavior will be as predictable as a book when dropped. They believe that people will need to abandon the idea of human freedom.

Now you might not agree with them. You may think that you know that you are free. How do you know that you weren't just encouraged to believe that, taught to believe that, conditioned to believe that, trained to believe that, reinforced into believing that?

Freedom or Myth

Consider this:

You lift up a large book, say a textbook, and raise it four feet above the ground. You let it go and it hits the ground. No problem there! No surprises, just what you expected. Now suppose you lift up the book again and raise it four feet above the ground. In your other hand you hold a single sheet of paper, say printer paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches. You hold the piece of paper at the same height you

are holding the book. You let them go at the same time and they both fall to the ground. The book hits first then the paper. Do it again. Raise them both and then let them go and again. Well each time the same thing happens. The book hits the ground first and the piece of paper arrives on the ground a second or so later. Why does the book hit the ground first?

Did you answer that the book falls faster and hits the ground first because it is heavier? Lots of people think this. If you do you are in some pretty popular company.

But consider this:

You lift up a large book, say a textbook, and raise it four feet above the ground. You let it go and it hits the ground. No surprises, just what you expected. Now suppose in your other hand you hold a single sheet of paper. You crumple up the paper pretty well. You squeeze it into a small ball. You hold the paper ball four feet above the ground at the same time you are holding the book. You let them go at the same time and they both fall to the ground. Do it again. Raise them both and then let them go. What happens?

Well the book and the crumpled piece of paper hit the ground at just about the same time. Do it again if you doubt that. Well if you thought that the book was hitting the ground first because it was heavier than the single piece of paper, you have a couple of choices as to what to believe now:

1. Somehow the single piece of paper gained a lot of weight and now falls almost as fast as the textbook.
2. The textbook somehow lost weight and is now about as light as the single piece of paper.
3. You were wrong when you thought that the book falls faster because it is heavier.

If you thought that heavier things fall faster than light things, you were wrong! Oh my, now what to believe! Galileo disproved that idea about heavy things falling faster than lighter things because of the weight. He disproved it over 400 years ago. OK, what's my point here. That the idea about heavy things falling faster than lighter things because of the weight is still popular and it appears to a lot of people to be very obvious but, it is wrong.

On how things fall and why they fall as they do. See the following video for common misconceptions.

Misconceptions About Falling Objects



So if your belief about why things fall was not correct or not true at all, then consider this: maybe, just maybe, the belief most people have about human freedom is wrong as well. Not everything is as it appears to be.

Let's look at ideas of human freedom, even radical ideas. Let's start with exploring what most people already believe and then let's consider the ideas of the critics of freedom, the determinists.

There are 3 main positions in the free will debate:

1. Hard Determinism
2. Libertarianism
3. Compatibilism

Hard Determinists and libertarians are both Incompatibilists. They both subscribe to the Incompatibilist thesis that determinism is incompatible with acting freely.

Do We Have Free Will or is Everything Determined?



Philosophy Applications

1. Do Humans have free will, if so, how free is it? In other words, are all human actions determined, if so how so, to what degree?
2. Suppose that you are a bank teller and are held up at gun point. You decide that heroics are out of the question and hand over the money. Are you acting freely? Why or why not?
3. Psychologists have found that a belief in Determinism caused an increase in immoral behavior. If science succeeds in showing that there is no free will, should we nevertheless pretend that we have free will? Could we do such a thing?

Read

- [Foreknowledge and Freedom](#)
- [Elephant and Feather-Free Fall](#)
- [Acceleration and Gravity](#)
- [Determinism and Free Will](#)
- [Free Will](#)

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7.2: Libertarianism

Libertarianism



Human beings are free to choose among alternatives available and must be respected as such. This freedom is to be acknowledged and promoted. The believers in free will attempt to argue for their case against those that believe that all human actions are determined by previous events and the laws of the physical universe.

Below are several arguments in support of the Libertarian position.

The libertarians would ask that we consider the data of experience:

1. Experience of deliberation
2. I deliberate only about my behavior
3. I deliberate only about future things
4. I cannot deliberate about what I shall do, if I already know what I am going to do
5. I cannot deliberate unless I believe that it is "up to me"
6. Experience that it is "up to me" what to do

They hold that there is no necessity governing human behavior. There is no causal or logical necessity

[Do we really have free will?](#)



Libertarian data to which any theory must conform.

Libertarians propose the following method for finding out whether or not determinism is true: we try to see whether it is consistent with certain data, “that is, by seeing whether or not it squares with certain things that everyone knows, or believes himself to know, or with things everyone is at least more sure about than the answer to the question at issue.”

Libertarian's Data

1. I sometimes deliberate with the view to making a decision; a decision, to do this thing or that.
2. Whether or not I deliberate about what to do, it is sometimes up to me what I do.
 - a. By “deliberation” Taylor means the experience of weighing something in one’s mind, of trying out various options in one’s mind.
3. There are certain presuppositions of deliberation, namely,
 - a. I can deliberate only about my own behavior and never about the behavior of another.
 - b. I can deliberate only about future things, never about things past or present.
 - c. I can’t deliberate about what I’m going to do if I already know what I’m going to do.
 - d. I can’t deliberate about what to do, even though I may not know what I’m going to do, unless I believe that it is up to me what I’m going to do.

This data is not consistent with the thesis of Determinism. If Determinism is true, then it is an illusion that I ever genuinely deliberate about anything or that anything is ever really up to me. If these data are true, then Determinism is false. Taylor argues that it doesn’t make any difference whether we are talking about a forthright, Hard Determinism or a Compatibilist, “soft” determinism, like that of Hume. According to “soft” determinism, an action is free just so long as it is caused by an internal state of the agent himself or herself.

Against this, there is the counterexample of an ingenious physiologist who can induce in a subject any volition he pleases, so that, simply by pushing a button, he can cause the subject to have an internal state which the subject will experience as the desire to do a certain thing. If the subject then does that thing, unimpeded by any external obstacle, that action meets the criterion of being a “free” action, in accordance with the thesis of Soft Determinism.

That is, the action is due to an internal state of the agent and is not opposed by any external factor.

However, we see at once that this action is not free, because it was due to the subject’s being in a certain internal state over which he or she had no control. Then the supposition of the work of the ingenious physiologist isn’t necessary to reach the same conclusion. As long as there is any cause of the internal state that was not under the control of the person whose internal state it is, the resulting action is not free.

There is a real choice that is not to be evaded between accepting Determinism and rejecting the data with which we began, on the one hand or holding fast to our data and rejecting the thesis which is inconsistent with them. However, simply rejecting Determinism and embracing the thesis of simple Indeterminism, which says that some events are uncaused, brings us no closer to a theory explaining free actions that is consistent with our data. Imagine a case in which your right arm is free, according to this conception. That is, it just moves one way or another, without any cause whatever. Plainly, if the agent is not the cause for the arm movements, then those movements are not free voluntary actions of the agent.

Accordingly, there develops a theory of agency with the following elements:

1. An action that is free must be caused by the agent who performs it, and it must be such that no other set of antecedent conditions was sufficient for the occurrence of just that action.
2. An agent is a self or person, and not merely a collection of things or events, but a self-moving being.

This involves a metaphysical commitment to a special kind of causation, and suggests that perhaps “causation” is not the best language to use to describe it. We might want to say instead that an agent originates, initiates, or simply, performs an action. All other cases of causation we conceive of as a relation between events. One event or set of events is a sufficient, or necessary, or sufficient and necessary condition for the occurrence of another.

However, an agent is not an event, and we certainly wouldn’t say the mere existence of the agent is ever a sufficient condition for the occurrence of one of his or her free actions. Rather, it is only the free action of the agent that is the cause or the origination of the action. Since There is no further explanation of how it that this occurs and it is possible that the data that this theory was developed to explain might be an illusion after all, ending on an inconclusive note.

The idea of freedom operative in this view is one in which there is no obstacle or impediment that prevents behavior, no constraints, for it is constraints that force behavior. Freedom of the human agent is free activity that is unimpeded and unconstrained. So, there is the theory of agency in which there exist self-determining beings: free and rational. There exists the self or person, a substance and self-moving being. The Libertarians believe that this theory is consistent with the data of human consciousness. But that data may be illusion.

📌 Summary of Taylor's view by Omonia Vinieris (QCC, 2002)

In his work, *A Contemporary Defense of Free Will*, Taylor refutes the theories held by Compatibilism (Soft Determinism) and Simple Indeterminism to illustrate their implausibility. He further goes on to affirm his theory of agency to articulate his Libertarian standpoint.

Taylor clarifies the concept of deliberation as it is fundamentally the act of considering or assessing something in one's mind. According to Taylor, deliberation encompasses the following premises: "One can deliberate solely about one's own conduct and by no means about that of another due to the simple fact that each person makes up one's own mind and never the mind of a different person." There is only deliberation of future actions and never of precedent ones because one can not deliberate about or consider an action that has already transpired. Deliberation is a conditional state that is unconfirmed because it entails the action before it takes place and therefore if one knows or confirms a future action, deliberation is invalid. Altogether, deliberation itself does not exist or ensue if one does not even believe that it is ever one's own consideration that accounts for one's decision to do anything because that is essentially the principle that deliberation embraces.

In his critique of Soft Determinism, Taylor explains primarily what line of reasoning it maintains and then pinpoints its incongruity to negate its veracity. Compatibilism is a position whose advocates renounce Hard Determinist thought. Hard Determinist position asserts that we are not morally responsible for our own actions because we are not liable for anything we do. Yet, Soft Determinists say that freedom and Determinism are compatible. Determinism is plausibly coherent with freedom as an agent is a carrier of volition and acts appropriately to his or her desires and wishes. On occasion, it may be that one's actions are the product of one's deliberation or conditional forethought. Still, if Compatibilism holds true it must simultaneously maintain the Determinist idea that one's choices are preordained by prenatal events. If this is so, then how can it be possibly up to anyone to do anything?

Simple Indeterminism is the denial of Determinism. These Indeterminists affirm that free agents are morally responsible for their actions which are tamed and controlled. If actions originate from noncausal events as Indeterminists claim, then they are chaotic and untamed. Thus, Taylor considers it a contradiction to suggest that one's actions originate from uncaused events because neither is one really a free agent nor morally responsible for his or her actions. These actions are uncontrollable and irresponsible.

Taylor's theory of agency proclaims that all events are caused, but unlike Determinist Theory, some changes or actions have beginnings. A free action is triggered by the agent itself. An agent, in this case, is described as a human, a self-moving body, capable of being the first cause of motion in a causal sequence. It is important that no series of foregoing conditions is adequate for the actual happening of the action, otherwise it would not be free. He further specifies that we should not speak of causation in terms of his free agency. The agent, rather, initiates an action through its performance. An agent, he asserts, is not a set of events that executes causation and therefore it is the free action of the agent that is the cause of the action that occurred.

"In the case of an action that is free, it must be such that it is caused by the agent who performs it, but such that no antecedent conditions were sufficient for his performing just that action."

📌 John Searle on Free Will (2001)

The Freewill Problem:

1. The 'free will' problem:
2. What is the nature of free agency and how is it related to the conditions of responsible behaviour?
3. For instance, is the kind freedom that is necessary for moral responsibility freedom of the will, of the agent, of the agent's deliberations, of the agent's choices, or of the agent's actions?
4. Incompatibilism.
5. Incompatibilism is the view that the kind of freedom necessary for moral responsibility is inconsistent (incompatible) with the truth of determinism.

6. Incompatibilists form two camps: the Hard Determinists and the Libertarians.
7. Hard Determinists argue that since Determinism is true, it follows that there is no freedom and no moral responsibility.
8. Libertarians argue that since we are both free and responsible, Determinism must be false.
9. Incompatibilists generally hold that the kind of freedom necessary for moral responsibility is some kind of freedom of the will.
10. However, Incompatibilists generally find it difficult to explain what is meant by the notion of freedom of the will.

Compatibilism

1. Compatibilism is the view that the kind of freedom necessary for moral responsibility is consistent (compatible) with the truth of Determinism.
2. Compatibilists generally hold that the kind of freedom necessary for moral responsibility is some kind of freedom of choice or freedom of deliberation.
3. Compatibilists generally appeal to the social efficacy of our blaming practices in regulating behavior in order to explain why this kind of freedom is sufficient for moral justification. However, social efficacy does not seem to be sufficient for moral justification as a socially efficacious practice may be morally unjust.

Searle's Solution to the Freewill Problem:

The traditional debate conflates 2 problems:

The question of the sort of freedom that is necessary for moral responsibility. The question of whether or not our actions are causally determined by their antecedents.

Consider the following situation:

- Agent A must choose between 2 options 01 and 02 at time T1.
- A chooses 01 and acts accordingly.

A's action begins at T2 and ends at T3. Let us suppose that there is no time gap between T1 and T2, and that A's action was voluntary (in the normal sense).

There are 2 ways in which the brain might function in this situation (2 solutions to the freewill problem):

- A. The state of the brain at T1 was causally sufficient to determine the state of the brain at T2, and the state of the brain at T2 was sufficient to carry it over to T3. The psychologically real gap corresponds to no neurobiological reality.
- B. The state of the brain at T1 was not causally sufficient to determine the state of the brain at T2, and so forth. The psychologically real gap does correspond to some neurobiological reality.

Position A is the Compatibilist position: Psychological Libertarianism with Physiological Determinism. This position is implausible because, whilst it is based on an attractively simple picture of the brain, it makes the psychological processes of rational decision-making into a very biologically expensive Epiphenomenal illusion. Rational decision-making is useless because everything has already been determined in the brain.

Position B is more plausible but needs to be carefully stated. If stated in the form of a parallelogram, it gives a misleading picture of the relation between consciousness and the brain. This picture suggest that consciousness is a surface feature of the brain. It is not, it is a system feature in the same way that liquidity is a system feature of water. The whole system is conscious and the whole system moves towards a rational decision.

Conscious states can act causally in a way that affects neurobiological elements of the system of which is they are a systemic feature. This is similar to Sperry's wheel example: consider any single molecule in a rolling wheel. The movements of the wheel may determine the movements of the molecule even though the wheel is nothing more than a collection of such molecules. The principle difference between the wheel and the conscious brain is that the movements of the former are causally determined whereas the movements of the latter are not.

The conscious state of the brain at any given time is completely fixed by its neurobiology at that time. However, the conscious state of the brain at one time is not completely fixed by its neurobiology at another time. This gap can be explained by appeal to the self.

This position becomes more plausible if you think of quantum mechanics (after all, there's no reason why we should stop at the level of neurobiology). Total Determinism is not needed to make the universe intelligible. At the quantum level, the universe is not Determined.

One possible criticism of position B is that it postulates randomness.

This criticism is unfounded. Rational agency is realized in the neurobiological structures of the brain and can causally affect those structures. Thus, the neurobiological structures are driven by the same rational agency as conscious agency.

[John Searle on the Problem of Free Will](#)



 Read

[Freedom](#)

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7.3: Radical Freedom and Existentialism

Existentialism

There have been no greater defenders of the view that humans are free than the existentialists. Although their influence was in substantial decline at the end of the last century the legacy of their thinking is still evident in the ideas of many thinkers, artists, writers and even many students. We shall examine the ideas of one of the most famous of this group of philosophers. The thought of Jean Paul Sartre may appear to be quite appealing to those who hold for human freedom. However, the thinking of the existentialists is so radical and extreme that the implications of human freedom may be quite disturbing. In their writings the existentialists report of becoming quite disturbed and even physically ill as they would contemplate the full import of their ideas. It may be comforting to believe that we are free. For the existentialists that freedom is so extreme that it is part of our very being, our defining characteristic. The tremendous responsibility that accompanies that freedom can produce a “fear and trembling” and a “sickness unto death” even “nausea”. How do the existentialists arrive at their ideas of human freedom?

Jean-Paul Sartre

Key Ideas:

- Radical Freedom
- Existence Precedes Essence
- Consciousness
- Being - For -Itself
- Self Defining- Projection
- Condemned To Be Free

Sartre was a writer and existentialist following World War II. At the heart of his philosophy is a deep yearning for freedom and a concomitant sense of responsibility. While one is never free of their situation, Sartre felt, "in the end one is always responsible for what is made of one."

For Sartre a basic idea shared by nearly all existentialists is that: Existence precedes essence, by what is meant is that: Human beings first come into existence then they determine their own essence.

There is no essence to anything that exists. There is no pre-existent essence that makes a thing what it is. There is no essence to a human being that preexists the human and makes a human what that human is. There is no essence to being a male or a female. There are no predetermined roles. Nothing is predetermined. There is no fate or destiny. Humans make themselves what they are. Humans choose to believe what they do about themselves. Humans choose to believe in something called a human nature. But humans make that nature what it is by choosing to be what they are. There is no God that predetermines what humans are and even if there is a God, God made humans free to determine their own natures. Humans are freedom. I am what I choose. We are what we decide we are. There is no nature for a woman that requires that she produces children, stay at home and raise them and stay apart from the business world of men. A woman, any woman can be whatever she chooses. She can have her body altered to take on the physical characteristics of a male. All talk of absolute equality and opportunity and anti-discrimination and anti-stereotyping owes a great deal to the ideas of the existentialists.

We are told the story of how there was a beginning to time and how there will be an end of time. There was a creation and there will come an end. God started the universe and God will end it. This is the Western Story. It is a linear tale. Time has a beginning, moves ahead, and will come to an end.

[start-----middle -----end]

Each of us has a personal time line and history.

[birth-----middle-----death]

We believe that we exist in each second of time throughout our lives. Each moment is a pearl on a string of pearls.

We think that we are in some way the string of pearls. But the truth is there is no string of pearls. There is no collection of moments. There is no self that exists throughout the entire span of time.

For Sartre, there is no self that exists through time. There is only the now and in the now, the eternal present, there is only the awareness and not the awareness of our self being aware. We each of us are only aware of the computer in front of us, its light, the

feeling of the chair on our buttocks, the floor on the bottom of our feet. We are not aware of something called the self that would be doing these things and feeling these feelings. We are only the collection of awareness and we are not aware of the self being aware. We are our awareness. We are being. We are being—for-itself.

- There is no past.
- There is no future.
- They do not exist.
- There is only the present.
- You cannot touch the past.
- You cannot see it, hear it or prove that it exists.
- Not in any way does the past have real being.
- The past exists only in our memory and that exists only in the present.
- Thus, the past cannot determine in any way what we do because it does not exist.
- Neither does the future exist.
- We are always in the present and we are free to choose what of the past (our memories) we shall use and in what way we shall use it.
- We are also free to project into the future any idea we choose of what it is we want to be, including dead.
- It is all a matter of choice.

If I believe that I am a woman trapped in a man's body then I can choose to change that body. If I decide I am to be a bird then I can begin to fly by jumping high and flapping my arms. I may not fly very far; I may not fly very well and I may not look to others as a bird but I am not to allow them to define who I am or what I am. I am free to be whatever I choose. I can be master or slave to others thoughts about what and who I am and how I am to act and live. I can determine my own mode of being, my own essence. If others attempt to define me or confine me with definitions and DNA analysis and their attempts to categorize me and stereotype me, I have a choice. I can either accept their attempts to turn me into a thing for them to manipulate and confine or I can refuse and be who and what I decide I am and what I am to be.

Whether or not there is a God is a matter for humans to choose. No matter what humans do they must choose. Even if they decide not to choose they have chosen. For Sartre, humans are condemned to be free. Humans cannot escape from their freedom as long as they live. Some humans cannot tolerate the radical freedom and they choose to kill themselves. Then there is no more freedom and the human has become being-in-itself, a thing, a corpse. Humans decide whether or not to accept the Bible. They decide whether or not to believe in a God. If a human hears a voice or sees some vision the human must decide, is it:

1. An illusion, hallucination
2. The devil appearing as God
3. God, or entity sent from God

There is no escaping the choice.

Read

- [Existentialism is Humanism](#)
- [Jean-Paul Sartre-Biography](#)
- [Existential Philosophy](#)

[Jean-Paul Sartre-Condemmed to Freedom](#)



[Albert Camus on Freedom and Existentialism](#)

For Albert Camus, an existentialist, the first and most important philosophical question is: Why not kill myself? Each human is capable of suicide. It does not require a great deal of education or a great deal of chemicals or equipment. People can think of a dozen or more ways to kill themselves that requires no money. There are dozens of items in supermarket or hardware store with which a suicide can be facilitated. So, each day some human arises and does not commit suicide they have decided not to do so. They have decided to live their life and accept what is on their daily schedule. There is no escaping that we choose the life that we lead because if we did not want it we could do otherwise. We could even kill ourselves and end it all. But we don't. We go on. We choose to go on living. We choose to continue on in this course and put up with all the work. It is a choice. We are free. We can do otherwise. We can leave the course, leave college, and leave the country. We can do many things and we can choose not to choose anymore and commit suicide.

There are many people who act as if they have no choice. This is the one evil for Sartre. The one bad thing is to act as if, to speak as if there were no choice and as if one were not responsible for what one does or what is done with what one does. This is bad faith. There are many people who commit this bad act. They attempt to convince others that they are not responsible for their actions and that they are not really free. They make up many explanations and excuses for what they have done. They choose to represent the actions as being somehow forced upon them and not the result of choice at all.

- My abusive parents made me do it.
- My junk food diet made me do it.
- My drugs made me do it.
- Too much violent television made me do it.
- My premenstrual cramps made me do it.
- My postpartum depression made me do it.
- The devil made me do it.

Anything other than themselves made them do it. The truth is that they did it and that they chose to do it! No one makes anyone do anything. We choose to go along or we don't. We are free to say no! We are free to struggle against those who would compel us to do something. We can resist. We can fight against them. Or we can choose to surrender and thus enslave ourselves. No one makes any one a slave. People can imprison others. They can put shackles on a human and physically abuse them. But no one makes any one a slave. Each person becomes a slave when they decide to go along and follow the commands of the master.

[Albert Camus-Why don't we commit suicide?](#)



Friedrich Nietzsche on Power and Existentialism

For Nietzsche, an existentialist, there are the Masters and the Slaves. We each choose what we are to be. The masters should use and abuse the slaves. Exploit them for their own pleasure. All humans desire but one thing, power. The Will to Power is Nietzsche's foundational notion. We each have it. Some choose to exercise it. Others don't. When the slaves grow tired of being slaves and they don't want, wish or will to be slaves any longer they shall rise up and fight against the oppression. Even if they are to die, they die free, as fighters and not as slaves. "Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger!" This is an idea that originates with Nietzsche.

Human beings bear total responsibility for their choices. Human beings are responsible for how they exercise their freedom. Human beings determine their own morality and bear responsibility for how they do so. Human beings choose not just for themselves but for everyone else with each choice they make, they set examples and encourage others to act likewise. Human beings are radically free. So, humans are responsible for the consequences of their actions. Humans are responsible for what is happening to their world. There is no God to set things right. If there is a God that does not intervene into human freedom (affairs). Thus humans are totally responsible for all that they do and all that results from it.

Humans are being-for-Itself. Humans are not things, inanimate objects, being-in-itself. Human beings are conscious. Human beings are not things. Human beings are not conscious of consciousness. Human beings are not a self or immortal spiritual entity. Human beings exist in the present only. Human beings are free. Human beings are free to become what they project. Human beings can not escape from their freedom. Human beings are condemned to be free. To deny this freedom or pretend it isn't so are acts of bad faith. Human beings are what they project. Human beings must make choices.

Nietzsche Existentialism



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7.4: Determinism and Compatibilism

Determinism

Are you free or not... Let's find out.

1. Universal Determinism's
 - a. Everything is the effect of some cause or causes.
 - b. For everything that exists there are antecedent conditions.
2. Causal determinism - every event has a cause
3. Thesis of determinism: everything whatever is caused.
 - a. All things follow natural law, regular patterns.
 - b. All events are predictable if enough is known.
4. Determinism and human behavior: all behaviors have a cause.
5. Hard determinism - causal determinism is true, and therefore, free action and moral responsibility are impossible.

Read

- [Strong Determinism](#)
- [Determinism: A Realistic Definition](#)
- [Determinism](#)

The metaphysical theory about human freedom and free will and ethical theories may be in conflict. Two theories may be in conflict with one another but one can't resolve the conflict by assuming either one to be true or false to resolve the conflict. Humans cannot be held responsible for their behavior because they could not have acted otherwise.

There are laws that govern all physical events. Humans are physical and human actions are physical events. All events have their causes in prior events and the laws that govern the physical universe. Human actions are behaviors. Human behaviors are the result of their inherited genetic pattern, their chromosomes, and their basic physical drives and their prior experiences (conditioning, learned behaviors). All humans are animals and as such they have a drive for food, drink, sex, and rest. All humans have learned other behaviors from their interactions with their physical and social environments (other people). Humans have been conditioned by deliberate and accidental patterns of stimulus response reinforcements. Humans have been rewarded or punished for their behaviors. Humans repeat those behaviors they are rewarded for and avoid those behaviors they have been conditioned to associate with punishment. The conditioning may have been deliberate with hugs and kisses and food from parents for good behavior and frowns and scolding and denial of food or other experiences for behavior that was not to be repeated. Teachers in school act in a similar pattern offering rewards and punishments and so they condition our behavior as well. Siblings and friends act likewise towards us. So humans are the products of physical factors. All human actions are caused by those prior factors. Each of us knows that humans have behaviors that are predictable. The Determinists believe that when they have greater knowledge of the laws of human behavior they will be able to:

1. Predict exactly what a human will do under any set of circumstances
2. Manipulate a human into any behavior.

All that would be needed would be:

1. Knowledge of all the laws of human behavior
2. Knowledge of all the prior conditioning any human has had

Each person knows of the following expressions:

1. Everyone has a price
2. You know how to push his buttons

These expressions support the Determinist view. If someone has been conditioned for certain behaviors and one knows what those conditioning's are (the buttons) then all one needs to do is to “push” them to get the response that has been conditioned or programmed into the human.

Evidence:

1. Children learn quickly about conditioning. Small children learn what cries and screams will get their parents attention. They learn what hugs and kisses will get them the gift they want. Parents learn what rewards and punishments will get their children to do what the parent wants.
2. Each of us knows that there have been time when someone has pushed our buttons and we have wished that we would not have lost control but that we did. We feel bad. We wanted to act otherwise, under control. But we lost it! They push our buttons, really got our goat, got to us and we behaved in a manner that we wished were otherwise. Well, that little description of an experience we all can relate to establishes evidence in support of the determinist position. We are not free. We are the products of conditioning.
3. Advertisers pay a great deal of money to people who believe that they know something of the laws of human behavior. Advertising is effective in raising the sales of products. People buy things to look classy or to fit in with a group. They often buy things that they cannot afford and have little use for but do so because of the advertising. The ads push the buttons and get the response that has been conditioned. People make a great deal of money each year proving that this is so.
4. At casinos people put money into slot machines and other games of chance. They don't always win but they get a return often enough to keep them gambling. These behaviors are evidence of the laws of conditioning and of intermittent reinforcement. If a person can get another to do what they want how can it be said that people are free? If everyone has a price to do something and that price is met then they will do it. They will not refuse. They cannot refuse.
5. There is an expression to the effect that we all have a price. The price may not be money it could be the guaranteed safety of our children or fame, power, or something else. If this is true it lends support or evidence in support of the determinist position. Is it possible for someone to turn down their price when it is offered? Would that not mean that their price was higher or something different than what was offered?

It appears that the claim that "everyone has a price" is a very difficult claim to disprove. There is lots of evidence in support of it and none opposed to it because any instance of a price being turned down would be a case of the price being miscalculated by whoever made the offer. It would not be the real price. If this is so, there is something either very powerful about the claim or something wrong.

Some will claim that when offered money to do some act that "never in a million years! You couldn't pay me enough to do that!" and even claim that for them there is no price. This only means that the price for them has not been offered as yet. What a person would never do for money they would do to protect the lives of their children or for some other "price" No freedom just different prices for different people for different acts!

I do not know the personal histories of the students in my class. I do know some general things about people and what motivates them. Money is one big conditioning agent. In class I offer something to someone I think is particularly susceptible to a particular offer in return for a behavior I want exhibited. It has never failed.

Example

I select a student and take out a five-dollar bill. I offer five dollars in return for barking like a dog. He barks. I hand over the \$5. I offer another student a ten dollar bill. The student must stand in front of the class and state "I am an ass". He does so and I hand over the \$10. I then ask the class if there is anyone there who would turn down \$100,000 in return for dropping out of the course and the college for a semester. No one has ever said that they would refuse. They all have a price and if I can meet it I can get them to do the act. I enter the room with an envelope. It is sealed. In it I have a slip a paper on which I have written the action I will make someone do. I have always succeeded. There is something I have the power to do that can get a student to get up and leave the room and the building for the duration of the class. I select a student I make the offer and they get up and leave. It does not cost me any money. They are happy. The class is left wondering whether or not the student could have said no. I claim that the student could not have refused, once I met the price. If I know a person's buttons, their programming, their conditioning, and if I can push those buttons i can make that person do what i want.

Hard Determinism

Introduction to Hard Determinism



In Hard Determinism there is no freedom of the will at all. We have been conditioned to believe in freedom. It is a silly and outmoded idea that stops us from being more effective in reducing criminal behavior and improving the quality of life for everyone. When criminals are found guilty they need to be reprogrammed, reconditioned to avoid the criminal behavior. We do not do that now because of the silly beliefs we have in souls, minds and freedom. Psychology and Neuroscience will continue to provide more and more evidence that people are not free and that we do not have minds. We have brains and we have conditioning. That is all.

Evidence:

1. The brain contains elements that determine what appear to be human decisions: the neurological basis for decision making.
2. The brain in its unconscious processing determines what appear to be conscious choices.

Either you are forced to do something by some external agent or you are forced or made to do something by an internal agent such as a reason or a motive or a feeling or a aim or a purpose or a goal that you have.

Either way your behavior is determined by the forces working on you that make you who you are and make you do what you do. No freedom. When you claim that you decide to do x and that the decision to do x was free what do you mean? What made you decide to do X? Whatever made you decide to do X made you decide to do it. It made you decide.

If I ask why did you decide to do X and you indicate that it was your values or motives or goals or aims or desires or prior experiences then that is what made you decide. There is no freedom there is only determinism. Antecedent conditions and experiences have produced as a consequence the decision to do X.

The point is this is evidence that people act out of motives and you can get them to do things if you know what those motives are. Motives are the result of prior experiences and so people are determined by their past to act in certain ways. They cannot help themselves. They have no free will. They are conditioned to believe otherwise and they enjoy thinking that they are free but the evidence is that they are not.

Final Piece of Evidence

Would you stop reading this book or drop this course in return for \$10,000? Tell the truth! Would you really have a choice? If I met your price? You "gotta" do what you "gotta" do! The "gotta" is your conditioning.

Compatibilism

Soft determinism (or compatibilism) is the position or view that causal determinism is true, but we still act as free, morally responsible agents when, in the absence of external constraints, our actions are caused by our desires. Compatibilism does not maintain that humans are free. Compatibilism does not hold that humans have free will.

What Does Compatibilism Hold?

1. The thesis of determinism is true, and that accordingly all human behavior, voluntary or involuntary, like the behavior of all other things, arises from antecedent conditions, given which no other behavior is possible: all human behavior is caused and determined
2. Voluntary behavior is nonetheless free to the extent that it is not externally constrained or impeded

3. The causes of voluntary behavior are certain states, events, or conditions within the agent: acts of will or volitions, choices, decisions, desires etc...

What is Compatibilism?

1. Compatibilism is determinism with a slight modification for the sake of appearances and for our language use.
2. It is a position taken because of the perceived need to have some idea of accountability or responsibility for human behavior.
3. For those who hold this position humans can be held accountable for their actions and blameworthy if they act according to their will (however formed) and are not coerced or forced by external agencies or agents.
4. If the motives or goals or other factors that form the will are the results of prior events and experienced and are so determined that does not nullify the idea that the human acts according to a will and has freedom of the will.

What Compatibilism is Not

1. Compatibilism is not a position that combines the libertarian and determinist positions.
2. Compatibilism is not a compromise of the two other positions.
3. Compatibilism is not a position that holds that humans are "a little bit" free.
4. Compatibilism is not a position that holds that humans have "limited free will".
5. Compatibilism is not a position that holds that humans have some free will.

Humans are either free or they are not. They either possess free will and can use it or they do not have it at all. They either have it and can use it as often as they want to do so or they have only the appearance of free will and really never make decisions or choices devoid of prior influences that determine the outcome of the decision or choice making procedure.

That there may be social or physical constraints is not the issue here. Humans are not able to fly using only their own bodies to propel them through the air. You could say that humans are not "free " to do so but that would be to misuse the word free and change its meaning from "being able to choose" to "being physically able to do".

There may be repercussions or consequences for our actions so that a person might want to say something like "I am not free to rob a bank and by that mean that if they did they would be pursued and captures and imprisoned. If persons have free will they can make the choice to rob a bank and flee capture. Freedom in this context of the freedom versus determinism issue has a meaning that identifies it with possessing free will or being able to make choices for ones self.

Read

- [Religion and the Modern Mind](#)
- [Could Have Done Otherwise](#)
- [Incompatibilists](#)

Crash Course on Compatibilism



Criticisms of Compatibilism:

The Determinists criticize the Compatibilists for for claiming that there is any freedom at all. The Determinists think the Compatibilists are defining freedom in a different manner in order to make the claim that there is some freedom of choice. The

Determinists hold that all apparent decision making or choices are determined by internal and external factors, including desires, motives, principles that are in turn the effects of prior causes.

The Libertarians criticize the Compatibilists for being Determinists in a different guise.

Fatalism and Determinism

1. Universal causation + causal determination of all human behavior
2. Fatalism concerning the past-it cannot be changed
3. Fatalism concerning the future-it cannot be changed
4. The future is already known by God-Divine Omniscience
5. Therefore, all events are unavoidable

Argument for Fatalism

Law of Excluded Middle

1. All statements are true or false
2. All statements about the future are true or false
3. Statements that are true or false can not be changed, altered or avoided
4. Therefore, all future events are already determined and unavoidable.

Invincible Fate

People make statements about "the" "future". Do these statements or claims exist as true or false statements? If so, is the future already set, is it determined? If not then what is the meaning of such statements or claims?

Read

- [Fatalism](#)
- [Determinism vs. Fatalism](#)
- [Law of the Excluded Middle \(Contradiction\)](#)

Conclusion

1. Free or Determined? You choose?
2. Or has your thinking has already been determined by prior events? There are a variety of positions and each has strong and weak aspects.
3. Which position has the best evidence and reasoning in support of it?
4. Which position is your position?
5. Do you choose not to have a position?
6. Have you been programmed, trained or conditioned into making that response?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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8.1: Morality and Moral Development

Mores, Laws, Morality and Ethics

How are we to behave toward one another? Morality is a social phenomenon. Think about this. If a person is alone on some deserted island would anything that person did be moral or immoral? That person may do things that increase or decrease the chance for survival or rescue but would those acts be moral or immoral? Most of what we are concerned with in ethics is related to the situation in which humans are living with others. Humans are social animals. Society contributes to making humans what they are. For humans there arises the question of how are humans to behave toward one another.

- What are the rules to be?
- How are we to learn of them?
- Why do we need them?

Why be moral?

Consider what the world would be like if there were no traffic rules at all. Would people be able to travel by automobiles, buses and other vehicles on the roadways if there were no traffic regulations? The answer should be obvious to all rational members of the human species. Without basic rules, no matter how much some would like to avoid them or break them, there would be chaos. The fact that some people break the rules is quite clearly and obviously not sufficient to do away with the rules. The rules are needed for transportation to take place.

Why are moral rules needed? For example, why do humans need rules about keeping promises, telling the truth and private property? This answer should be fairly obvious. Without such rules people would not be able to live among other humans. People could not make plans, could not leave their belongings behind them wherever they went. We would not know who to trust and what to expect from others. Civilized, social life would not be possible. So, the question is: Why should humans care about being moral?

Reasons:

1. Sociological
 - a. Without morality social life is nearly impossible.
 - b. Reputation
 - c. Social censure
2. Psychological
 - a. People care about what others think of them.
3. Conscience
 - a. Some people care about doing the right thing.
4. Theological
 - a. Some people care about what will happen after death, to their soul or spirit.
 - b. For many religions there is an afterlife that involves a person's being rewarded or punished for what they have done.

So, that is out of the way. We know that we should be moral and so should others, without some sense of morality it would be very difficult if not impossible for large numbers of humans to be living with one another. Now to the questions that deal with the rules of morality and all the rules which govern human behavior. First, some terms need to be clarified

- Etiquette – rules of conduct concerning matters of relatively minor importance but which do contribute to the quality of life. Violations of such rules may bring social censure. Etiquette deals with rules concerning dress and table manners and deal with politeness. Violations would bring denunciations for being, rude or crude or gross. Friendships would not likely break up over violations of these rules as they would for violating rules of morality, e.g., lies and broken promises! These rules are not just “made up by a bunch of old British broads” as one student once volunteered in class. But they are made up by people to encourage a better life. In each society there are authorities on these matters and there are collections of such rules. Many books are sold each year to prospective brides who want to observe the proper rules of decorum and etiquette. There are newspapers that have regular features with questions and answers concerning these matters.
 - This deals with matters such as when do you place the napkin on your lap when you sit at a dining table?
 - How long do you wait on hold on a telephone call with someone with call waiting?

- Should you use a cell phone at the dining table?
- Should you have a cell phone on in class?
- In a movie theater?
- Mores- customs and rules of conduct
 - Morality- rules of right conduct concerning matters of greater importance. Violations of such can bring disturbance to individual conscience and social sanctions.
 - Law- rules which are enforced by society. Violations may bring a loss of or reduction in freedom and possessions.

What is the relation of law to morality? They are not the same. You can't equate the two. Just because something is immoral does not make it illegal and just because something is illegal it does not make it immoral.

Things that are illegal but are thought to be moral (for many).

- Drinking under age.
- Driving over the speed limit.
- Smoking marijuana.
- Cheating on a tax return.
- Splitting a cable signal to send it to more than one television.

People do not think of themselves or of others as being immoral for breaking these laws.

Things that are immoral (for many) but are not illegal.

- Cheating on your spouse.
- Breaking a promise to a friend.
- Using abortion as a birth control measure.

What is the relation of morality to law? Well, when enough people think that something is immoral they will work to have a law that will forbid it and punish those that do it. When enough people think that something is moral, they will work to have a law that forbids it and punishes those that do it repealed or, in other words, if there is a law that says doing X is wrong and illegal and enough people no longer agree with that then those people will work to change that law. such as the 18th Amendment (Prohibition) was repealed by the 21st Amendment.

- Moral Philosophy is a discipline that seeks to understand and to justify moral principles
 - A person is moral if that person follows the moral rules.
 - A person is immoral if that person breaks the moral rules.
 - A person is amoral if that person does not know about or care about the moral rules.
- Ethics is a discipline created to establish principles of the good and those of right behavior.
 - Ethics deals with the basic principles that serve as the basis for moral rules.
 - Different principles will produce different rules.
 - A person is ethical if that person is aware of the basic principles governing moral conduct and acts in a manner consistent with those principles.
 - If the person does not do so they are unethical.
- Meta Ethics - is a discussion of ethical theories and language

So, ethics and morality are not the same things.

Morality vs. Ethics



Read

- [Do we Need a God to be Moral?](#)
- [Do Morals Come From God?](#)
- [Religious Morality and Secular Morality](#)

People often think and many claim that morality is dependent on religion. Some claim religious morality is superior to secular morality. Some refer to the nearly universal association of morality with religion on planet Earth as evidence in support of their claims. This is backwards. Research is showing that morality is linked with and dependent upon both physical structures and functioning of the brain and on cultural inheritances.

Morality Results From Both Genes and Memes

Neuroscience is finding the brain structures and functioning that make for the "ethical brain". How is this so? Humans are social animals and as Aristotle put it *zoon politikon*. As such they have evolved in part due to a capacity to relate to others and have empathy and sympathy for others that serves as the base for acceptance of basic rules of conduct needed to live with others in relative peace sufficient to support social or group life and then the advantages of social life. Evolutionary Psychology is finding/hypothesizing the evolution of moral notions as an expression of hard-wiring in the brain. The brain appears to have structures evolved and passed on through our genetic makeup (genes) that provide for empathy and sympathy for the social species of Homo Sapiens. Morality is a result of an expression of those operations. Particular moral expressions or rules are enunciated and passed on as cultural inheritances and thus memes.

The Primatologist, Frans de Waal, was one of many who have argued that the roots of human morality lie in social animals such as the primates, including apes and monkeys. The feelings of empathy and expectations of reciprocity are necessary for the behaviors needed to make any mammalian group exist as individuals living in the midst of others. This set of feelings and expectations of reciprocity may be taken as the basis for human morality. Neuroscientists are locating that sense in mirror neurons in the brain.

Morality is as firmly grounded in Neurobiology as anything else we do or are. Once thought of as purely spiritual matters; honesty, guilt, and the weighing of ethical dilemmas are traceable to specific areas of the brain. It should not surprise us, therefore, to find animal parallels. The human brain is a product of evolution. Despite its larger volume and greater complexity, it is fundamentally similar to the central nervous system of other mammals.

Everywhere humans are found and where evidence exists of human culture there is evidence of a sense of morality. While the particular moral rules may not be the same there is significant similarities and a commonalities in purposes served by moral codes. Morality is needed for human community and humans demonstrate this worldwide. There is evidence that all societies have morality. Is this because they could not exist without some sense of how we are to behave? Human beings are social beings, they have language which is a social creation. Humans could not live in groups without some sort of sense of how to behave in ways

that enhance the survival of the group, hence sympathy and empathy are needed and they are part of the basis for morality--a "moral sense".

There is now the study of Evolutionary Ethics which claims that the moral nature of man has reached its present standard, partly through the advancement of his reasoning powers and consequently of a just public opinion, but especially from his sympathies been rendered more tender and widely diffused through the effects of habit, example, instruction, and reflection. It is not improbable that after long practice virtuous tendencies may be inherited. With the more civilized races, the conviction of the existence of an all-seeing Deity has had a potent influence on the advance of morality.

Ultimately man does not accept the praise or blame of his fellows as his sole guide, though few escape this influence, but his habitual convictions, controlled by reason, afford him the safest rule. His conscience then becomes the supreme judge and monitor. Nevertheless the first foundation or origin of the moral sense lies in the social instincts, including sympathy, and these instincts no doubt were primarily gained, as in the case of the lower animals, through natural selection.

Read

- [Scientist Finds the Beginnings of Morality in Primate Behavior](#)
- [The Basis of Morality](#)

Consider the following three scenarios. For each, fill in the blank with morally “obligatory”, “permissible” or “forbidden.”

1. A runaway trolley is about to run over five people walking on the tracks. A railroad worker is standing next to a switch that can turn the trolley onto a side track, killing one person, but allowing the five to survive. Flipping the switch is _____.
2. You pass by a small child drowning in a shallow pond and you are the only one around. If you pick up the child, she will survive and your pants will be ruined. Picking up the child is _____.
3. Five people have just been rushed into a hospital in critical care, each requiring an organ to survive. There is not enough time to request organs from outside the hospital. There is, however, a healthy person in the hospital’s waiting room. If the surgeon takes this person’s organs, he will die but the five in critical care will survive. Taking the healthy person’s organs is _____.

If you judged case 1 as permissible, case 2 as obligatory, and case 3 as forbidden, then you are like the 1500 subjects around the world who responded to these dilemmas on our web-based moral sense test [<http://moral.wjh.edu>]. On the view that morality is God’s word, atheists should judge these cases differently from people with religious background and beliefs, and when asked to justify their responses, should bring forward different explanations. For example, since atheists lack a moral compass, they should go with pure self-interest, and walk by the drowning baby. Results show something completely different. There were no statistically significant differences between subjects with or without religious backgrounds, with approximately 90% of subjects saying that it is permissible to flip the switch on the boxcar, 97% saying that it is obligatory to rescue the baby, and 97% saying that is forbidden to remove the healthy man’s organs. When asked to justify why some cases are permissible and others forbidden, subjects are either clueless or offer explanations that cannot account for the differences in play. Importantly, those with a religious background are as clueless or incoherent as atheists.

These studies begin to provide empirical support for the idea that like other psychological faculties of the mind, including language and mathematics, we are endowed with a moral faculty that guides our intuitive judgments of right and wrong, interacting in interesting ways with the local culture. These intuitions reflect the outcome of millions of years in which our ancestors have lived as social mammals, and are part of our common inheritance, as much as our opposable thumbs are.

Neuroethics and the Trolley Dilemma



Research in Neuroscience has proceeded so far as to call into discussion how humans are responsible for their actions and the degree to which all ethical thinking or morality is merely *post facto* rationalizations for the near automatic responses made to situations by the brain. Morality may be rooted deep in the evolved workings of human brains with its mirror neurons and the operation of the *ventromedial* prefrontal cortex.

Read

- [The Brain on the Stand by Jeffrey Rosen](#)
- [Brain Injury and Moral Choice](#)

However, if you reflect a moment on the question of how people become moral (genes for brain structures and functioning) and how they then acquire the exact moral precepts or rules (menes-moral codes and ethical principles) by which they live you will probably realize that a number of factors come into play in the development of personal morality. Indeed you will probably think that people become moral or learn about morality due to their involvement with:

- Parents
- Siblings
- Friends
- School
- Religion
- Media- television, films, videos, music, music videos
- Advertising

How exactly each person develops their ideas about right and wrong is a subject being studied by psychologists. This type of study is part of what is known as Moral Psychology. One of the most famous of the psychologists who does such studies is Lawrence Kohlberg. He has a theory of moral development based upon his research with people from very young ages through the adult years.

Stages of moral development

1. Pre-conventional: concern for self
 - a. Reward / Punishment
 - b. Reciprocity
2. Conventional: concern for self and others
 - a. Ideal Model -Conformity
 - b. Law and Order
3. Post Conventional: concern for others

- a. Social Contract
- b. Universal Principles

 Read

[Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development](#)

Heinz Dilemma



Kohlberg used scenarios to elicit responses from his subjects concerning their thinking about what makes an act right or wrong. He was less concerned with their answer as to what they would do or approve of in others as he was interested in their reason for thinking as they did. Here is a simplification of his famous Heinz Scenario: How would you solve the following scenario which Kohlberg used on his research subjects?

- A man named Heinz had a dying wife. The wife had an almost fatal disease. The local druggist owned a \$20,000 drug that could save her. Heinz could not raise the money in time and he certainly did not have the cash to buy the drug. Heinz therefore made a decision and that night he broke into the drug store and stole some of the medication.

Should Heinz have done that? Why do you think that?

Kohlberg thought that fewer than 25% of people ever progress beyond the fourth stage and do so because of some event that presses them to develop further. Events can force a person to move further. The decision to have an abortion, to resist the draft, or to assist your mother lying on her death bed to die quickly with less pain and suffering, are the sorts of events for which individuals must come to face to with to understand what it is that makes an action right or wrong. It is at those times and through those types of events that individuals come to learn what their values are, who they are, and what their moral rules will be. Consulting with friends and religious advisors about such matters will bring advice but leave still leaves the decision-making about the rules and the actions to the individual.

 Read

- [Learning Right From Wrong](#)
- [The Moral Instinct](#)

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8.2: Relativism and Normative Ethical Relativism

Relativism

People develop their thinking concerning morality over time. They do so as a result of interactions with individuals and social institutions. In different societies each with their own cultures there are different ideas concerning how humans are to behave. Different societies and cultures have different rules, different mores, laws and moral ideas.

In the twentieth century people became quite aware of these differences. The impact of this information when coupled with the theories of the Existentialists and Pragmatists became quite significant in the realm of Ethics. The Existentialists with their theory of radical freedom and human choice and responsibility placed morality within the sphere of human decision-making. There were no essences before existence of beings and there would be no rules before the existence of the beings who would make the rules for themselves. The Pragmatists also departed from belief in absolutes and generalizations and any universal criteria for judgment. For the Pragmatists reality itself was not a given but a human construct and reflective of the society's criteria for judgment concerning truth. So, it came to pass as a part of Post Modernism that there would be a school or tradition of thought that would hold that all thinking about Ethics was also subject to human decision making within a social framework. This school would hold that there are no universal or absolute principles in Ethics to which all humans are to be subject.

Through the twentieth century many humans have come to accept a good deal of the relativistic perspective. Relativism has entered into the thinking of many people, even people who would hold for some absolutist ideas. Yes, there are people who hold inconsistent and contradictory ideas concerning morality and ethics. How does this come to be?

Terms to Know

- Cultural relativism
- Descriptive ethical relativism
- Normative ethical relativism

Cultural relativism describes the simple fact that there are different cultures and each has different ways of behaving, thinking and feeling as its members learn such from the previous generation. There is an enormous amount of evidence to confirm this claim. It is well known by just about every human on the planet that people do things differently around the globe. People dress differently, eat differently, speak different languages, sing different songs, have different music and dances and have many different customs.

Relativism



Descriptive ethical relativism -- fact that in different cultures one of the variants is the sense of morality: the mores, customs and ethical principles may all vary from one culture to another. There is a great deal of information available to confirm this as well. What is thought to be moral in one country may be thought to be immoral and even made illegal in another country. This is a scientific theory well supported by the evidence gathered by cultural anthropologists.

Examples include

Moral in USA	Immoral
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Eating Beef	India
Alcohol and Gambling	Middle Eastern Countries
Women in school or business	Afghanistan
Women wearing shorts, face uncovered	Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan

Or just the opposite

Immoral in USA	Moral or Acceptable
Killing newborn females	China, India
Female genital mutilations	Many African Nations (female circumcision)
Family kills a woman family member who hasn't been raped	Somalia, Sudan

Normative Ethical Relativism

Normative ethical relativism is a theory, which claims that there are no universally valid moral principles. Normative ethical relativism theory says that the moral rightness and wrongness of actions varies from society to society and that there are no absolute universal moral standards binding on all men at all times. The theory claims that all thinking about the basic principles of morality (Ethics) is always relative. Each culture establishes the basic values and principles that serve as the foundation for morality. The theory claims that this is the case now, has always been the case and will always be the case.

This is a philosophical theory that is not well supported by the evidence gathered by cultural anthropologists, nor could science support a theory about the past and future! It is a theory that has evidence against it.

Theory of Normative Relativism by Thane Doss of CUNY, Hunter

At any rate, the underpinning of all this is that I expect that we all have the capacity and even some degree of recognition that ethics and morality are social constructs*, and that therefore, it's not "morality" or "ethics" that one truly refers to in the about-to-shoot-someone situation. Generally, if you've got time to think about it, you already know the position of society on what you're about to do. If you're a soldier, your culture (or someone who hired you, if you're a mercenary) sent you there to shoot people, so you know you've got cultural backing. If you're a criminal, you also know your position, and you've made some calculations based on likely personal gain, kicks, probability of getting caught, etc. There really are no moral questions at play. If you're neither of these, it's likely that you're also not really free to sit down for long to mull things over, so you react and hope that your reaction fits within accepted norms of self-defense or defense of others as established by your culture.

What underlies things is calculation of gain and loss, though, not some greater thing to be named "morality." As an example, I don't believe that dueling was always illegal, though after a certain point in time it becomes so in most countries. Why would there have been a time when the situation of two hot-headed men (as far as I know, women weren't involved in duels, though it'd be a neat book if one could find some examples) choosing to try to murder one another would not have been illegal, as just a rotten thing to train the kids on and not a terribly good way to perpetuate the species? Well, if the alternative is getting all my buddies together to attack and try to kill all your buddies, then as far as the culture and the personal well-being of a bunch of individuals goes, saying "Hey, if you guys really want to risk your lives and the likelihood that those pistols are going to blow up in your own faces instead of firing accurately, go ahead and leave me out of it" makes a lot of sense.

But in time, there is enough rule of law about to, at least often, prevent the whole "My buddies and I are going to kill you and your buddies" thing in the first place, so allowing the duel is no longer a measure to keep all the buddies alive, and it can be declared illegal as a rotten way to bring your kids up, etc. Same action--different times, different "moralities" [i.e. cultural considerations].

Second, shorter example--it would be horrible--"immoral"--to knowingly kill an innocent man, wouldn't it? But there are anthropological reports of the incredibly effective deterrence obtained by tribes that understood that if a member of tribe A killed a member of tribe B, some member of tribe A--any member except the killer--would be killed by tribe B. Every member of both tribes has a direct investment in keeping any member of his/her tribe from killing anyone in another tribe, because any member could find him/herself to be the payback for the killing. There's not much killing around as a result. As far as getting the results that people generally agree upon as desirable goes, this is far preferable from our capital punishment system, which

makes killing more attractive to those already to dispose to murder and gives everyone else an incentive to just stay out of the way. You may have to kill an innocent every now and then as a result of this approach to justice, but you have to choose your basis for what you're going to call morality--is it better to have less murder overall, but kill an innocent every now and then, or is it better to have more murder overall and only kill the guilty? (This is, of course, the argument that the pro-capital punishment people make, too, but they don't look at the statistics and psychological studies to check their assumptions about capital punishment as a deterrent.)

There really is no good or evil, only what is human, and apparently among the things that is human is a tendency to create abstractions and treat them as if they are concrete, when a bit of analysis really would show that the meanings of those abstractions change considerably with time and place. As long as this recognition of change is present, this is a very useful sort of behavior--one might compare it to scientific modeling.

Rohit mentioned a million dogs a year being killed as an example a while back, apparently expecting a purely emotional response. I prefer cats myself, but have nothing really against dogs. Of course, I have nothing against cows, either. But millions are killed yearly in this country, and yes, I do eat some of them. I feel some guilt. I feel some guilt when I kill a cockroach, though. But the universe was not designed so that I could absorb energy directly from a star. Even if I didn't eat animals, plants would have to die to keep me going. It is unfortunate that life depends on things dying, but it does. That is neither good nor evil, though. We don't call the cheetah evil for killing an antelope--we call it a cheetah.

People have more reasoning power, and indeed, they should apply their reasoning to their killing, but to say that applying this thing called "morality" to killing is reasoning is quite questionable. At best, it's like a small-angle approximation.

In most cases, going with what you call morality will keep you safely within the range of cultural acceptance for your specific time and place. But that's all that it really reflects--the cultural understandings that formed it.

Why do people come to believe the normative ethical relativism? Consider four reasons that may account for the phenomenon.

Normative Ethical Relativism



Factors contributing to the popularity of the theory of Normative Ethical Relativism

1. It is obvious that moral rules and laws vary from country to country. Many people believe that laws that exist for other people in other countries should not apply to within their own country. Traditions and customs are different around the world: what is wrong in one place might be right in the other. So to some people it is true that there should not be a universal moral standard binding on all men at all times.
2. The decline of religion in the Western Hemisphere and in advanced technological societies. As Nietzsche and Dostoevsky have noted, *if God is dead, then all is permitted*.
3. Increased sensitivity to peoples of different cultures and the need to avoid the evils of ethnocentrism. The desire to be tolerant and to appreciate the values and beauty of a multi-cultural world.

4. The failure for most people to think that there could be a third alternative to moral absolutism (associated with religion) and cultural relativism. Consider the question: Are all moral duties binding on all people at all times or are moral duties relative to culture? Few can think of a third alternative to these two choices. Finding absolutism untenable many simply accept the relativist position.

Philosophers have been attempting for centuries to develop that third alternative.

Socrates could not accept the mythopoetic thought of his time as the basis for morality and neither could he accept the relativism of Thrasymachus and other Sophists who taught and proclaimed that might makes right and accident makes might. The Sophists believed that each society makes its own rules and there are no universal rules, no gods ruling overall and making rules.

This theory has become a very popular part of postmodern times. It is a theory that manifests its influences in many parts of the culture. The theme of tolerance and appreciation for other cultures and the inappropriateness of applying one standard from one culture to actions in another culture is in evidence in the arts and in politics.

Example

Shortly after Bill Clinton was first elected to the office of President of the United States there was an election of a school board in a Florida county. The majority of the school board were members of the Christian Coalition, a conservative political action group. The school board voted that all public schools in the county would teach in all grades, as part of social studies, that the United States has a culture superior to that of many others. This was to be supported by the claims that the United States held the values of freedom and equality most high, was a democracy and provided for the welfare of many in need and a number of other claims. Both President Clinton and his wife, Hillary, criticized the school board for their intolerance. They stated that the U.S. does not have a superior culture but that all cultures are equally valued and are to be equally respected. These proclamations are affirmations of doctrines of the postmodern movement and are part of the set of "politically correct" ideas currently popular. Nine months after this event a young citizen of the United States was arrested in Singapore for acts of vandalism. Michael Fay confessed and was tried and found guilty and sentenced to a canning. At that time many people in the USA were very upset with this situation. President Clinton wrote a letter to the president of Singapore and requested that the sentence be changed. President Clinton wrote that the act of caning was barbaric. The president of Singapore was offended by the letter and upheld the custom and laws of that land. How could President Clinton declare another countries practices or any countries practices as being barbaric if he believed that all cultures are equally praise worthy? The President was being inconsistent. He also criticized the people of China, the government, for their barbaric practices with regard to political and religious dissidents. When he later ordered the bombing in Bosnia and one of the planes bombed the Chinese embassy, several nations, including the Chinese, called that act one of barbarism.

Three years after the criticism of the Florida school board action, Hillary Clinton attended an international conference on women in China. She represented the USA. At that time she condemned the treatment of women in China and India and a number of other countries and used harsh language in doing so. How was she able to do that if she believed that all cultures are equal in value and no one can judge another? She too was being inconsistent.

So, Normative Ethical Relativism is part of the cultural milieu. It is evidenced in the thinking of many and yet at the same time many of those who espouse or accept this theory hold opposing views as well.

There are several problems and criticisms of the theory of normative ethical relativism.

1. According to the theory there are no universal moral criteria, there can be no absolutes not even that of tolerance. Therefore the supporters of this theory cannot promote the theory with the claim that its acceptance will support tolerance for peoples of other cultures because tolerance is not necessarily a good thing. It is only a good thing in those cultures where it is promoted. It cannot be promoted for all peoples. If people are raised in a culture where it is thought to be a good thing to be intolerant, then that is what people should be. There have been and there are cultures in which people are raised to believe that they have a superior culture and a right to use and abuse other people. So for that group of people tolerance is not a good thing. Normative ethical relativism cannot be used to promote tolerance. It is a poorly thought out and confused notion of tolerance that leads to the theory of Normative Ethical Relativism.
2. According to the theory of Normative Ethical Relativism each culture has its own ideas about ethics and morality. In each culture the predominant view is correct because it is the predominant view. There are no principles that could override or take precedence over the predominant view. Thus there can be no criticism of the moral views held by the majority of people in a given society by any minority. This is so because the minority must always be wrong by virtue of the fact that it is the minority view. The Theory of Normative Ethical Relativism cannot support or explain criticisms of the majority's views by minorities. Yet there have been such criticisms and many have led to moral reforms. Such reform cannot be accounted for by the theory.

3. If the theory applies to peoples of different cultures because they are raised in different social environments then it applies as well to any peoples raised apart from other peoples. So it would apply within a culture and within a society wherever there are isolated groups. Indeed the theory eventually supports a subjectivism in which each person raised differently from others must make his or her own moral rules and those rules are equal in value and importance as any other set of rules. In this application of the theory of Normative Ethical Relativism no one has the right to make moral judgments about another person, for each person has the right to have his or her own morals.
4. The Theory of Normative Ethical Relativism runs counter to our ordinary experiences and concept of morality. Even people who claim that they believe that the Theory of Normative Ethical Relativism are correct to make moral judgments concerning the practices of people in other cultures. For example, they do condemn female infanticide and genital mutilation and a number of other practices, even practices that go back many centuries. It appears quite evident that there are certain acts which ordinary people simply regard as being morally wrong no matter who is committing them.
5. Although there may be variations among the various cultures on this planet that does not mean that there are no points of agreement or that there are no fundamental set of ethical principles that could be common to all. Take for example the rather basic principle that there is a right to life and so killing is wrong. Now there may be societies that permit the killing of a cheating spouse or of unwanted children at birth. Still despite the differences there may be a common principle to the effect that an unjustified killing is wrong. Then societies have differences over what constitutes the justification for the deliberate termination of a life but not over the basic rule that killing is morally wrong.
6. The fact that societies differ concerning their views of morality and the principles upon which morality rests does not mean that there is no possibility of there being a concept of the good that all humans could come to recognize and accept. There is some support that it is the brain as the basis for morality.

Read

- [The Ethical Brain](#)
- [The Challenges of Cultural Relativism](#)
- [What's Good Natured?](#)
- [The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals](#)
- [Morality Without the Idea That Human's Are Special](#)

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8.3: Ethical Theory and Ethical Egoism

Ethical Theories

If Normative Ethical Relativism is flawed and cannot provide for a basis for moral society for humans on planet earth, then what is to provide that basis? What would provide a basis for universal moral codes?

📌 On Morality by Lowell Kleiman

If by "morality" we mean a code of conduct that is universally valid, then the basic issue in the study of ethics is--Is there a universally valid code of conduct? Are there rules of behavior that prescribe how a person should conduct themselves in all places and all times? For example, when anybody adds $2 + 2$ the result should be 4. If any other answer is obtained, the person made a mistake. $2 + 2$ does not equal 5 or 3 or anything other than 4. To say otherwise reveals an ignorance of addition, not an alternative but equally valid code of mathematics.

The rules of mathematics are universally valid. The same rule, for example, $12 + 19 = 31$, tells us how to add, whether we are living on Long Island or Timbuktoo, in the late 20th century or the 4th century BC. An Izbekustany peasant who counts 12 goats on this side of the pasture and 19 goats on that side of the pasture, concluding that there are 32 goats in the pasture, makes the same mathematical error as an instructor at Suffolk Community College who counts 12 students on this side of the room, 19 students on that side of the room, concluding that there are 32 students in the room. That the peasant and instructor live several thousand miles apart, are brought up in different cultures, are of different ethnic backgrounds, subscribe to different religious and political traditions, is irrelevant in determining the rights and wrongs of their behavior. The only relevant considerations are whether they are using the correct rule and whether they are applying that rule in the correct way. For example, if either instructor or peasant thinks that $12 + 19 = 32$, then one of them does not know arithmetic, and the other does not know how to count.

The same is true of morality. Just as any proposed rule of addition that is not universally valid cannot be a rule of mathematics, so any proposed rule of conduct that is not universally valid cannot be a rule of morality. For example, cultures that have practiced incest, ritual human sacrifice, matricide, patricide, slavery or female sexual mutilation are immoral since their creeds are not universally valid. Clearly, mutilation, slavery or any of these other modes of conduct are not valid here, certainly not at Suffolk Community College, certainly not on Long Island, New York State, California, the Mid-West, Canada, Mexico, or any part of any country or state that comprises the "civilized" world. Just as $2 + 2$ does not = 5, so sexual mutilation does not = morality.

It may be objected that the argument above makes us; students, teachers, residents of the United States, followers and proponents of Western Civilization, arbiters of right and wrong. We are imposing our values on the rest of the world, or at least on those few countries, such as Libya and the Sudan where slavery and mutilation are still practiced. We are judging people by standards that are not their own; we are committing the "ethnocentric fallacy."

Perhaps we are. Perhaps we have no right to condemn killing, maiming, brutalizing and destroying when other people do these things. Perhaps our beliefs about right and wrong are limited, provincial, and naive, uninformed. Maybe slavery for others is not so bad after all; perhaps child abuse for other people's children should be encouraged; murder in other societies condoned, rape in foreign countries commended. Perhaps we must rethink our beliefs about right and wrong. Maybe we don't know the difference.

But if we don't know what we think we know, how can we be certain? How can anyone be sure that aside from mathematics there is no universally valid code of conduct? If we don't know that incest was wrong among the ancients, then we don't know that it is wrong today. Aside from the fact that the Egyptians who practiced incest lived many years ago, the act itself has not changed since then. Nor has rape, enslavement, mutilation or murder. If we cannot condemn the acts of others, then neither can we condemn the same acts when performed by those among us. And if we cannot condemn our own rapists and murderers, then rape and murder, and all the rest, are not just to be condoned for others, but condoned for everyone. So there is a universally valid code of conduct, although it seems very different from what we naively take it to be. The question is, which code is correct, the one that condemns ritual mutilation, or the one that condones it? To answer that question we must turn away from the theory of normative ethical relativism.

If the theory of Normative Ethical Relativism is flawed then what is the alternative? Can there be an ethics? Can there be a basis for moral rule making? Since Socrates, Philosophers have sought that basis in reason. All humans have reason and if through the use of reason certain principles of ethics, the principle of the good, can be discerned or discovered, then all humans would have contact with the basis for the moral life that all cultures and societies need. Plato believed he had found those principles. After him several others in the West have reached similar conclusions concerning the existence of principles that might have universal application. Unfortunately, they have not all agreed as to what those principles are.

There are some fundamental distinctions to be made in the approaches taken to thinking about the good. What makes something, an action, good? Is it something in the act or in the intention behind the act? Is it the result of the act or what is in the act itself?

For example, there is a terrorist with a gun pointed at a group of innocent hostages being held. There is the declaration that he will kill them. Someone nearby has a gun and points it at the terrorist and shoots. The would-be hero misses the target and kills one of the innocent hostages. Now is the act of the would-be hero good or bad? Is it the intention behind the act or the result of the act that makes it good or bad? If something is good, is it good because of what it is or because of what it results in?

Intrinsic vs Instrumental value

- Something is said to have intrinsic value if it is good "in and of itself" i.e., not merely as a means for acquiring something else.
- Something is said to have instrumental value if it is good because it provides the means for acquiring something else of value.

Consequentialist vs Non-Consequentialist Theories of Ethics

There are two broad categories of ethical theories concerning the source of value: consequentialist and non-consequentialist

- A consequentialist theory of value judges the rightness or wrongness of an action based on the consequences that action has.
 - The most familiar example would be utilitarianism -- "that action is best that produces the greatest good for the greatest number" (Jeremy Bentham)
 - Teleological theories
- A non-consequentialist theory of value judges the rightness or wrongness of an action based on properties intrinsic to the action, not on its consequences.
 - Libertarianism--People should be free to do as they like as long as they respect the freedom of others to do the same.
 - Contractarianism--No policy that causes uncompensated harm on anyone is permitted.

Philosophical Theories Based on Principles and Reason	
Teleological Theories	Deontological Theories
Consequential	Non-Consequential
Egoism	Kantian-Categorical Imperative
Act-Utilitarianism	Rawl's Theory of Justice
Rule Utilitarianism	Divine Command Theory
Situation Ethics	Natural Law Theory
	-theistic
	-non-theistic
	Post-Modern Relativism
	Existentialism
	Pragmatism
	Feminism

Teleological Theories

In this approach to ethics it is the consequence of the act that is the basis for determining its worth. One of the most basic of consequences is the impact on people and one of the most basic of all values for determining whether something is good or not is the pleasure that it brings to someone. Some think that emotional and physical pleasure is the only basis for determining what is good.

Theories of the good based on pleasure are termed hedonism. There are two popular theories of the good based on pleasure

1. Egoism is based on pleasure to one self.
2. Utilitarianism is based on the pleasure that results for all humans in the world.

This section will focus on Egoism.

Read

- [Teleological Theories: Consequentialist Approach](#)
- [Deontological Theories](#)

Ethical Egoism

1. **Common-sense Egoism:** is the view that egoism is a vice. It involves putting one's own concerns over those of others. One's behavior is egoistic if it involves putting one's own interests over those of others to an immoderate degree.
2. **Psychological Egoism:** is the view that humans are always motivated by self-interest, even in what seem to be acts of altruism. It claims that, when people choose to help others, they do so ultimately because of the personal benefits that they themselves expect to obtain, directly or indirectly, from doing so.
 - a. *Argument For Psychological Egoism:* Human agents (at least on a deep-down level) are all egoists; insofar as our behavior explainable in terms of our beliefs and desires are always aimed at what we believe is our greatest good.
 - b. *Objection to Psychological Egoism:* The psychological egoist confuses egoistic desires with motivation. An agent may act contrary to his desires and what is in his own best interest. People often act in ways that they know are detrimental to their well-being. Moreover, what one most wants may not be in their own self-interest (e.g., giving money to Amnesty International rather than buying a new CD). Even if it were shown that we often act for the sake of our own interest, this is not enough to prove that psychological egoism is true. According to this theory, we must show that people always act to promote their own interests. If we can find only one counterexample to psychological egoism, then it is not true.
3. **Egoism as a Means to the Common Good**
 - a. *Argument for Egoism as a Means to the Common Good:* According to the economist, Adam Smith, when entrepreneurs are unimpeded by legal or self-imposed moral constraint to protect the good of others, they are able to promote their own good and, as a result, provide the most efficient means of promoting the good of others. Such a view leads to the doctrine that, if each pursues her own interest as she conceives of it, then the interest of everyone is promoted.
 - b. *Objection to Egoism as a Means to the Common Good:* Apart from positing an "invisible hand" guiding the market processes, the common-good egoist makes the fallacy because if each person promotes her own interest, then everyone else's interests are thereby promoted. Clearly this is a fallacy, for the interests of different individuals or classes may, and under certain conditions (of which the scarcity of necessities is the most obvious) do conflict. Then the interest of one is the detriment of the other.
4. **Rational Egoism:** Rational egoism is concerned with reasonable action.
 - a. *Strong Rational Egoism:* It is always rational to aim at one's own greatest good, and never rational not to do so.
 - b. *Weak Rational Egoism:* It is always rational to aim at one's own greatest good, but not necessarily never rational not to do so.
 - c. *Argument for Rational Egoism:* When doing something does not prima facie appear to be in our interest, our doing said act requires that we justify our action by showing that it is in our interest, thereby justifying our action.
 - d. *Objection to Rational Egoism:* Such an approach to justifying actions in our own interest may be abused if we do not have criteria established to determine what the interests of agent's amount to. If such criteria are established, such actions may be reasonable so long as they do not result in conflicts between agents. In such cases, creative middle ways are called for.
5. **Ethical Egoism:** Coupled with ethical rationalism is the doctrine that if a moral requirement or recommendation is to be sound or acceptable, complying with it must be in accordance with reason—rational egoism implies ethical egoism.
 - a. *Strong Ethical Egoism:* It is always right to aim at one's own greatest good, and never right not to do so.
 - b. *Weak Ethical Egoism:* It is always right to aim at one's own greatest good, but not necessarily never right not to do so.
 - c. *Argument for Ethical Egoism:* If we accept rational egoism and if we accept ethical rationalism, then we must accept ethical egoism. This is true because if acting in one's own self-interest is reasonable, then it is a moral requirement that one acts in one's own self-interest.
 - d. *Objection to Ethical Egoism:* Ethical egoism is incompatible with ethical conflict-regulation. For example, would it be morally wrong for me to kill my grandfather so that he will be unable to change his will and disinherit me? Assuming that

my killing him will be in my best interest but detrimental to my grandfather, while refraining from killing him will be to my detriment but in my grandfather's interest, then if ethical conflict-regulation is sound, there can be a sound moral guideline regulating this conflict (presumably by forbidding this killing). But then ethical egoism cannot be sound, for it precludes the interpersonally authoritative regulation of interpersonal conflicts of interest, since such a regulation implies that conduct contrary to one's interest is sometimes morally required of one and conduct in one's best interest is sometimes morally forbidden to one. Thus, ethical egoism is incompatible with ethical conflict-regulation.

[Ethical Egoism vs. Altruistic Egoism](#)

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[dundant but Necessary](#)



 Read

- [Egoism](#)
- [Ethical Egoism](#)
- [Egoism and Altruism](#)

[Arguments for Ethical Egoism](#)

1. An altruistic moral theory that demands total self-sacrifice is degrading to the moral agent.

Objection:

This is a false dilemma: there are many non-egoistic moral theories that do not demand total self-sacrifice.

2. Everyone is better off if each pursues his or her self-interest.

Objection:

- This probably is not true in practice
- True egoism isn't concerned with what will make everyone better off.

[Arguments Against Ethical Egoism](#)

1. Provides no moral basis for solving conflicts between people.

2. Obligates each person to prevent others from doing the right thing.
3. Has the same logical basis as racism.
4. The egoist cannot advise others to be egoists because it works against the first egoist's interest.
5. No one person can expect the entire world's population to act in such a way as to produce the most benefit (pleasure) for that one person.

So although we all know people who attempt to live their lives as egoists, they are not generally well liked. Being so totally focused on the self is not likely to make someone many friends. Egoists can have friends but most people avoid egoists as they are thought to be untrustworthy. Egoism is not the basis for the moral foundation needed for social life.

There are other options that we will explore in the next section.

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8.4: Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism: The Basic Idea

To overcome the obvious defects of using Egoism as a moral guide, Utilitarianism approaches the question of the good from an opposing point of view. Instead of that being the *good* which serves one's own interest and provides for one's own pleasure, the Utilitarian's take that which produces the greatest amount of pleasure (Hedonism--Physical and emotional) for the greatest number of people to be *the good*. This is the principle of utility. Expand beyond the idea of pleasure to that of satisfying the interests of people and you have the more complete development of the idea of what consequences of human action will determine the moral correctness of that act.

Utility is a principle of the good which locates moral goodness in the feelings of humans and that makes it the form of Hedonism. However, Utility's aim is increasing the total amount of satisfaction or happiness for the greatest number of people and not just oneself. The morally good thing to do is whatever promotes the greatest utility even if the individual acting will not prosper or be satisfied. It would be nice if the actor benefits as well but it is the interests of the many and the most over the one that is what Utility is about.

The Principle of Utility



The theory developed from an attempt to direct the lawmakers of England to consider the common good rather than the welfare of their social class when they made laws. The *good* is that which provides for the happiness of the greatest number of people even if it results in no happiness to the agent at all. In this approach each human being has exactly the same worth as all other human beings. In this view the benefit of the action must be maximized:

When confronted by some situation and facing a choice or dilemma and when considering what would be the correct thing to do, what would be right, what would be good, the Utilitarian would:

1. Consider the options available, however many there are.
2. Calculate how much happiness would be produced were each of the options to be acted upon or how many interests of how many people would be satisfied
3. Determine which option produces the greatest resulting happiness or the greatest number of interests being satisfied for greatest number of people
4. Choose that option which produces the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people, or the greatest number of interests being satisfied for greatest number of people, therefore, the greatest utility.

Note: it is not a matter of making the majority (>50%) happy but the greatest possible number of people. So if there are three options, (a),(b), and (c) and (a) makes 87% happy, (b) makes 76% happy and (c) makes 89% happy the Utilitarian must choose to

do (c). Choice (c) is the good or the morally correct choice while the others (a) and (b) are not good or would be morally incorrect choices.

Read

- [John Stuart Mill Ch2 on Utilitarianism](#)
- [John Stuart Mill Ch4 on Utilitarianism](#)

Act and Rule Utilitarianism

There is a difference between Rule Utilitarianism and Act Utilitarianism. The Act Utilitarian considers only the results or consequences of the single act while the Rule Utilitarian considers the consequences that result of following a rule of conduct.

Crash Course Utilitarianism



Why are there two different approaches (Act and Rule) to Utilitarianism? Consider the following case:

Someone goes to the doctor. The person is ill, experiences pain and dysfunction. The doctor performs a series of test and examinations. The person returns to the doctor's office to learn of the results, the diagnosis and prognosis. The doctor is aware that the tests all show that the person has a disease that is incurable and life threatening. In fact even under the most aggressive treatment option there is a survival rate of less than 15% for two years. The doctor is considering what would be good to tell the person. Should the person know the truth or should the person be told something other than the truth? Which is better? Which is the right thing to do? What would be the good to do?

The Act Utilitarian might calculate that in telling the truth there will be a great deal of pain and no pleasure at all. The person will be upset, their family will be upset, the doctor will be upset. Informing the ill person that there is nothing that the doctor can do to alter their condition will upset everyone. The doctor's staff will be upset seeing the person come in for whatever treatment there may be. On the other hand if the doctor makes up a story concerning the diagnosis and prognosis that is not true but that gives the ill person more time to enjoy life before the illness makes it obvious that the end is near, well then the results are different. The doctor is not so upset in seeing the person, the doctor's staff is not upset. The family and friends of the person have some more time with that person to enjoy things instead of being morose and depressed. So the Act Utilitarian might calculate that the good in this case is to lie.

The Rule Utilitarian would need to consider what would the long term consequences be if doctors were to lie to those who come to them and have life threatening, incurable illnesses. The Rule Utilitarian might calculate that people would no longer be able to trust their doctors and this would break down the confidence they need for their therapies to be effective. The Rule Utilitarian might calculate that there is far more harm in lying and so the good is to tell the truth.

The same result might obtain were there to be a consideration of cheating on an examination. The single act might produce a great deal of happiness for the cheater, teacher, family and friends. The rule of cheating might produce quite the opposite result as society could no longer trust that the doctors, lawyers, engineers, repair people etc... really know what they are doing and deserve their position.

Rule Utilitarianism (RU) has no rule other than utility. Every act is evaluated according to the utility. Does it or doesn't it produce happiness. Utilitarian's must maximize happiness. They must never accept unhappiness if they can minimize it.

Both Act and Rule Utilitarian's must assume nothing. They must actually poll or measure what act will produce the greatest utility.

The difference is that the:

- Act Utilitarian measures the consequences of a single act.
- Rule Utilitarian measures the consequences of the act repeated over and over again through time as if it were to be followed as a rule whenever similar circumstances arise.

Nothing is right or wrong in itself for a utilitarian. Nothing! It all depends on the consequences of the act -- the results are what matters not the act.

The idea behind Rule Utilitarianism is that whenever you are in a situation and have alternatives you calculate the utility to be produced by adopting a course of action (rule) which would produce the greatest utility in the long run if it were followed every time that situation arose.

Let's consider the rule that states you must stop your vehicle at a red traffic light.

Situation: Pregnant woman in back seat. About to deliver. Water has broken. Contractions are 2 minutes apart. It is 4 am. The vehicle is 2 miles from the hospital. There are no other cars around. The RU would think if you were as a rule to break the law and go through that red light it would produce more utility than not doing so and therefore it would be the morally good thing to do. So the RU rule would be to go through red lights whenever it is 4 AM and there is a pregnant woman in the back seat who is about to deliver and you are heading to the hospital.

Problems with the Theory:

1. It is difficult if not impossible to do the calculations required. How do you measure the happiness (pleasure) produced?
2. Not everyone will be able to measure their happiness.
3. One persons' maximum happiness may not be the equal of another person's maximum.
4. Do the calculations range over 1 year, ten years, century, etc..? How long?
5. Do the calculations measure the happiness for a small group, entire country, the whole world?
6. Do they consider only humans or non-humans who are sentient beings (have awareness and feelings). Peter Singer is a Utilitarian who includes all sentient beings.
7. The theory can support opposing actions on different occasions as the correct or the good thing to do.
8. The theory can't really resolve conflicts in views, e.g...Sometimes it supports lying, cheating, killing, stealing, etc... and sometimes not.
9. The theory can support doing horrible, heinous acts, as long as they produce the greatest amount of pleasure for the greatest number of people. There is no act that is wrong in and of itself. Murder, lies, rape, child molestation, whatever can be the good thing to do.
10. The theory treats all people as being equal. It does not take into consideration special relationships that exist between people, for example the relationships of family members.

In the next section we examine approaches to determining right from wrong that does not consider the consequences of the acts but the acts themselves and the intentions of the actors.

Read

- [John Stuart Mill Biography](#)
- [Jeremy Bentham](#)

- Nothing is right or wrong in itself for a utilitarian. Nothing! It all depends on the consequences of the act, the results are what matters not the act.

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8.5: Deontology, Divine Command, and Natural Law

Deontology

These theories of the good hold that actions are intrinsically right or wrong. They are right or wrong in themselves and irrespective of their consequences. They are traditionally associated with Kantian duty but can also be linked to ethical systems, which uphold absolute moral norms and human rights. Deontologists hold that one cannot undertake immoral acts like torture of spies even if the outcome is morally preferable, such as the early ending of a war. It is contrasted with Teleological/Consequentialist ethical theories.

In a 'Deontological' system of ethics the consequences of an action are generally irrelevant to moral assessment. Rather, morality comes about from a rational agent's recognition of its duties toward others. These duties can be grounded in different ways, from divine revelation to objective rational principles.

While each type of Deontological theory finds the locus of our moral obligations in different places, they all contend that 'goodness' resides in our ability to recognize and keep moral obligations; the consequences of our actions are of only secondary concern, if at all.

 Read

[Duties Are Everything](#)

What is Deontological Ethics?



Divine Command Theory

There are ethical theories that make reference to or depend upon the existence of a deity. Two are presented here in this section. They are not the same. Divine Command theory is not used anywhere in the world by the major organized religions. It is mistaken for the foundation of the moral theory of Judaism and Christianity and Islam but it is not so. The Divine Command theory has too many problems with it to be used by large organized religions. It is used by small cults and by those who are uneducated about what their own religion holds.

Divine Command Theory in Ethics



Socrates (469-399 BCE) was one of the first to question this theory. He asked whether we call the 'good' good because the God's have done it or whether they have done it because it is good. His question implies the possibility of the existence of a standard for the good separate from the divine.

Religions often base their notion of morality on the character of their God claiming that

1. What is 'good' is good because God commands it and
2. People cannot live moral lives unless they follow God's moral teachings.
3. In Christianity it is often believed to be impossible until a person has had their sin dealt with by God. Only then will they be in a position to want to do what God wills and be able to do it. ("The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so"). However, this raises questions concerning the relationship between morality and God. If what is 'good' is good only because God wills it is it not possible that one day God might say that what was previously known as 'bad' is now 'good'? Some might say that this would not happen because we would know God was making something 'bad' good but this means we have an independent criteria by which we can assess God's morality. If this is the case then we know what is right and wrong without God's intervention-so why bother with God.

Read

- [The Euthyphro Dilemma](#)
- [Christian Divine Command Theory](#)

The Euthyphro Dilemma goes like this;

1. If the good is such because God says it is, then morality is arbitrary (e.g., God condoning all sorts of immoral acts in the Old Testament).
2. If the good is absolute, and God cannot do evil, then we don't need the middle-man to figure out what is good and what is not (e.g., we know that killing innocent children and women, ethnic cleansing, etc. are wrong, period).

Notice that this is not an argument against the existence of god, only about gods' irrelevance to morality. Yet, if one cannot avoid either side of the dilemma, it is difficult to see what the point of religion ultimately is...

[The Euthyphro Dilemma Explained](#)



There are many people brought up to accept the Ten Commandments as guides for a moral life and they think that following those commandments would make them adherents to the Divine Command Theory. This is not the case at all. In Divine Command Theory the good is whatever the "god" or deity commands. This means whatever, whenever, and wherever God commands. Divine Command Theory does not rest on scriptures. Divine Command is Divine Command. Divine Command does not stop with the Ten Commandments. The theory holds that the deity did not go out of existence after issuing those commandments but continues to exist and issues new commandments. The deity can even issue commandments that change the previous commandments and are even in contradiction to them. In fact, it is often the case that someone claiming to have received a direct command from the deity or god will do something quite inconsistent with or a violation of one of the Ten Commandments, for example killing innocent children because the deity told them to do so.

How does anyone know what the "god" or deity commands? The "god" or deity tells them either directly or through some intermediary or through signs or omens or some experience that those who receive the command claim has been the transmitter of the message or the command. How exactly do people get the command? Well again it is either directly or indirectly through some intermediary like a person or a written work. Can the deity continue to issue commands after previous recordings? Yes, the deity can update and change commands as the deity wishes.

There are many problems with this theory.

The religions of the West have rejected Divine Command Theory and instead hold for Natural Law Theory. The rejection may be based on the fear of some charismatic person receiving a divine command to change the religion or to kill the leaders of that religion.

Divine Command Theory does not rest on scriptures. Divine Command is Divine Command.

1. People claim that god has commanded them to do X
 - a. Therefore doing X is a morally good act.
 - b. X can be any act at all.
 - c. Any act at all can be good if god commands it.
2. In Divine Command Theory there is no good or bad by itself at all. There is only what God commands
 - a. God commands=good
 - b. God forbids=bad
 - c. God gives a New Command, then New Command=good.

No one who accepts Divine Command Theory can question the commands of the deity or make a statement such as "I do not believe God would command the things you stated here at all." because a person who accepts the Divine Command Theory accepts no act as being good or bad except according to what the deity commands.

According to Divine Command Theory all that matters is that the "God" commands it:

- rape can be good
- child molesting can be good
- lies can be good
- theft can be good

- slaughter of thousands of innocent people can be good

Scriptures can record what some people at some time thought god commanded them to do. Some people can follow what is written in those scriptures. That is not Divine Command Theory. Why not? Because for those who believe in a deity or a god then god lives forever. God is alive. God keeps issuing commands.

People hear the Divine Command in 1205 and 1776 and 1848 and on May 10, 2003 and on December 23, 2005, March 19 in 2017, and so on. They follow it thinking the command makes the act that is commanded the morally correct thing to do. Here are some recent cases of Divine Commands.

 Read

[Divine Command Theory](#)

Divine Command Theory has so many problems that there are very few people on earth that use it and they tend to be fanatics, and mentally unstable people. No organized religion actually supports Divine Command Theory because of all the problems with it and the threat it poses to organized religions. Judaism and Christianity and Islam support Natural Law and not Divine Command.

Problems:

1. Is there a God or any deity?
2. Who knows what the commands of the deity are? Can anyone claim to have heard the command and respond to it? [Here are some recent cases of Divine Commands.](#)
3. The commands may need to be interpreted, but by whom?
4. If there are a few who claim to be designated by the deity or who are designated by some group to be the official recipients of the divine commands are humans prepared to follow the commands of these designated recipients as if they were the commands of the deity?
5. If the deity commands or the designated recipients of the deity's commands do command that every human sacrifice the second born child on its third birthday on an altar would that make human sacrifice a morally good act?

So there are several and severe problems with the Divine Command Theory. They account for the reasons why no major organized religion would use this theory as the basis for morality.

There is another theory that in one of its forms involves belief in the existence of a deity, God. It is the ethical principle employed by the major religious traditions of the West: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

[Natural Law Theory](#)

With this theory actions in conformity and support of natural laws are morally correct.

[A Short Summary of Natural Law Theory](#)



What is consistent with the Natural Law Is right and what Is not in keeping with the Natural Law is wrong. This is not what is natural is morally correct and what is unnatural is morally wrong. The focus is on the natural laws and not simply natural acts.

In this view humans have reasoning and the Laws of Nature are discernable by human reason. Thus, humans are morally obliged to use their reasoning to discern what the laws are and then to act in in conformity with them.

Humans have a natural drive to eat, drink, sleep and procreate. These actions are in accord with a natural law for species to survive and procreate. Thus activities in conformity with such a law are morally good. Activities that work against that law are morally wrong. As an example consider that to eat too much or too little and place life in jeopardy is morally wrong. NLT derives from a rational deduction of what would be consistent with what appear to reason to be the laws of nature governing human behavior. Humans are animals and as such are governed by certain natural drives and instincts, e.g., to eat, drink, sleep, procreate, survive. Thus, there would be according to NLT a right to life and health needed for life. Thus, any action that harms human life and health would be morally incorrect, i.e., morally wrong. An operation that harms human flesh is morally correct if it is intended to produce benefits such as removing threats to life (cancer), correcting malfunctioning organs etc... Medicine and surgery intended to further health and life are morally good.

This theory has two major variations on it.

1. For the theists there is a deity that created all of nature and created the laws as well and so obedience to those laws and the supplement to those laws provided by the deity is the morally correct thing to do.
2. For atheists there is still the belief that humans have reasoning ability and with it the laws of nature are discernable. For atheists who accept this approach to act in keeping with the laws of nature is the morally correct thing to do.

What are the laws of nature that provide guidance for human actions? These would include: the law of survival, the natural action for living things to maintain themselves and to reproduce, etc. But it is a major problem for this theory to determine what exactly those laws are and how they apply to human circumstances.

Read

- [The Ethics of Natural Law](#)
- [Natural Law Theory](#)

[The Doctrine of Double Effect](#)



Case Study: Homosexuality

Natural Law Theory

Under the Natural Law Theory, if two people of the same sex interacting to produce orgasms this would be morally good or bad depending on whether or not such actions are in accordance with natural laws or not.

Atheistic Natural Law Theory

Under Atheistic Natural Law Theory, if there are species on earth in which members of the same sex physically interact to produce physical pleasure, then homosexual couplings among humans would be morally good. The purpose of orgasms would be more than to produce offspring.

Problem

The physical record may not be all that clear and open to interpretation. There is evidence of same sex couplings in species other than human. How many cases or species are needed to conclude that such behavior is natural among mammals and fulfilling a basic physical drive in a non-harmful manner to the species is what is debatable?

Theistic Natural Law Theory

1. God made Nature.
2. God made the Natural Laws.
3. God made humans.
4. God gave humans reason by which they are to learn of the natural laws.
5. God also provides revelation concerning god's will and wishes.

In the scriptures there are passages dealing with human matters and they are interpreted to have been given as a guide for the moral life. So in addition to the physical universe which is provided for the study of humans there is also the word of god.

Case Study: Onan

There is a passage in the bible where Onan is condemned because he did not go into the tent of his dead brother's wife and have sex with her so as to produce more children. (See two accounts below). At that time it was the custom in the tribe that when a man died his brother would be responsible for his wife and take her as another wife in order to continue the tribe. Onan went into the tent had sex with the dead brother's wife but pulled out of her and spilled his semen on the ground. He was condemned for doing so.

The Sin of Onan Genesis 38:6-9

This passage describes how Tamar's first husband Er was killed by God because he was wicked. Under ancient Jewish tradition, Er's brother Onan was required to marry and engage in sexual intercourse with Tamar. Widows were not asked whether they wanted to remarry. In many cases, the woman would have experienced the sexual activity as a form of rape -- something required by tribal tradition which they had to endure. Similarly, nobody consulted the widow's brother-in-law about his wishes in the matter.

Their first son would be attributed to Er. Because any offspring would not be considered his child, Onan decided to use a common and relatively ineffective contraceptive technique to prevent conception. He employed "coitus interruptus". That is, he

disengaged from Tamar just before he ejaculated, and "spilled his semen on the ground." (NIV) God was displeased at this action and killed Onan also -- presumably because he refused to follow Jewish tradition.

This passage was used until recent decades by some Christian groups who maintained that Onan's sin was actually masturbation. The term "Onanism" was coined as a synonym of masturbation. This interpretation is no longer in common use.

Alternate Account of Onan's Story

Onan was the middle of the three children of Judah, son of Jacob and father of the tribe which eventually produced both King David and Jesus. His older brother died without producing an heir. In those days, it was customary for the younger brother to take his deceased brother's wife and provide that brother with an offspring. So, Judah, Onan's father, ordered him to do such.

According to the account, Onan realized that his biological son, produced in this manner, would not be considered his own. If Onan provided his older dead brother with a son, that child would inherit both the seat of chief of the tribe as well as the oldest portion of the estate. It meant that Onan would be inferior to his own biological child. It also meant that Onan would lose "financially."

The laws of inheritance in those days required that the older brother receive a double portion. This meant that if Onan provided his brother with an heir, Judah's holdings would be divided four ways, with two fourths (or one half) going to this child while Onan would only receive one fourth. However, if Onan retained his status as oldest surviving son, the inheritance would be divided three ways, with Onan receiving two of those thirds or about one and a half times more.

According to the scriptural account, Onan insured his failure by practicing the most ancient form of birth control known, premature withdrawal. For this, God struck him dead.

The account says that Tamar was the name of the wife and her dead husband committed a sin so grave that God killed him, although it doesn't specify the sin. Now, her husband's younger brother commits a sin, with her, and he is struck down by God. This man sent to her to provide her dead husband with an heir, has sexual relations with her. He pulls out before ejaculation, spills his seed on the ground and dies on the spot.

Problem

1. Was Onan condemned for entering into sex for a purpose other than having children? If so then all sexual acts other than intercourse between a man and a woman who are married and preparing to have children would be immoral. These acts would include: Premarital sex, extra marital sex, masturbation, homosexuality, oral sex, anal sex, use of birth control.
2. Was Onan condemned for not being willing to father children by his dead brother's wife? If so, then sexual acts entered into for a purpose other than procreation would be morally acceptable.

There are many people who take each of these possible interpretations of the passage.

Read

- [The Historical Course of Natural Law](#)
- [St. Thomas Aquinas on Natural Law](#)
- [The Ethics of Natural Law](#)

Problems for the Natural Law Theory

One of the difficulties for natural law theory is that people have interpreted nature differently.

1. Natural Law Theory seems to assert that the moral law of human nature is knowable by natural human reason.
2. How do we determine the essential or morally praiseworthy traits of human nature? Traditional Natural Law Theory has picked out very positive traits, such as "the desire to know the truth, to choose the good, and to develop as healthy mature human beings." But some philosophers, such as Hobbes, have found human beings to be essentially selfish. It is questionable that behavior in accordance with human nature is morally right and behavior not in accord with human nature is morally wrong. For instance, if it turns out that human beings (at least the males) are naturally aggressive, should we infer that war and fighting are morally right?
3. Even if we have certain natural propensities, are we justified in claiming that those propensities or tendencies should be developed? On what grounds do we justify, for example, that we ought to choose the good?

4. For Aquinas, the reason why nature had the order it did was because God had put it there. Other thinkers, such as Aristotle, did not believe that this order was divinely inspired. Does this alleged natural moral order require that we believe that there is a God that has produced this natural moral order? Evolutionary Theory has challenged much of the basis of thinking that there is a moral natural order, since on evolutionary theory species has developed the way they have out of survival needs.
5. It is doubtful that one can infer moral principles forbidding adultery, rape, homosexuality, and so forth, either from biological facts about human nature or from facts about the inherent nature of Homo sapiens.
6. Critics of Natural Law Theory say that it is doubtful, however, that the inherent nature of Homo sapiens establishes laws of behavior for human beings in the same way as it may establish laws of behavior for cats, lions, and polar bears. It is especially difficult because so much of human behavior is shaped by the environment, that is, by deliberate and non-deliberate conditioning, training, and education.
7. Two philosophers (Aquinas and Aristotle) integral to the theory have different views about God's role in nature, which confuses the issue, especially when trying to decipher if the theory relies on the existence of God.
8. The intrinsic nature of humans as it pertains to establishing laws of behavior may not be the same for animals, which presents difficulties within the theory.
9. Human behavior may be solely reliant upon the environment that one is exposed to, which includes social classes, education and upbringing, this opposes the theory

[Crash Course: Natural Law Theory](#)



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8.6: Categorical Imperative and Justice As Fairness

Kant's Categorical Imperative

For Kant the basis for a Theory of the Good lies in the intention or the will. Those acts are morally praiseworthy that are done out of a sense of duty rather than for the consequences that are expected, particularly the consequences to self. The only thing good about the act is the will, the good will. That will is to do our duty. What is our duty? It is our duty to act in such a manner that we would want everyone else to act in a similar manner in similar circumstances towards all other people. Kant expressed this as the Categorical Imperative.

Act according to the maxim that you would wish all other rational people to follow, as if it were a universal law. For Kant the good involves the Principle of Universalizability. Kant argues that there can be four formulations of this principle:

1. The Formula of the Law of Nature: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature."
2. The Formula of the End Itself: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end."
3. The Formula of Autonomy: "So act that your will can regard itself at the same time as making universal law through its maxims."
4. The Formula of the Kingdom of Ends: "So act as if you were through your maxims a law-making member of a kingdom of ends."

Never treat a person as a means to an end. Persons are always ends in themselves. We must never use or exploit anyone for whatever purpose. The Categorical Imperative is not the Golden Rule

Kant in his *Critique of Practical Reason* wanted to find a basis for ethics that would be based on reason and not on a faith in a God or in some cold calculation of utility that might permit people to be used for the benefit of the majority. Kant thought carefully about what it is that all humans would find reasonable as a guide for human conduct. People think it wrong to kill, lie, steal, and break promises. Why is this so? Kant arrives at the idea that humans think these acts wrong because they cannot will that others would do these things because it would mean the end of civilized life, perhaps even the life of the actor contemplating the right way to behave. One cannot will that people lie all the time, for that would mean the end to human communications if we could not trust what was said to be true most, if not all, of the time. Kant thought that there would be perfect and imperfect duties.

Perfect Duties are that which we are all obliged to do all of the time.

Such as:

- no killing
- no physically harming others
- no lies
- no theft
- no breaking promises

Imperfect Duties are those which we should do as often as possible but cannot be expected to do always.

Such as:

- be charitable
- loving
- kind
- patient

Read

- [Immanuel Kant](#)
- [Kant and Kantian Ethics](#)
- [Kant, The Moral Order](#)

The Golden Rule

The same essential golden rule has been taught by all the major religions (and philosophies) of the world going back approximately 3500 years.

The Golden Rule Around the World	
Hinduism 13 th Century BCE Do not to others what you do not wish done to yourself... --This is the whole Dharma, heed it well.	Zoroastrianism 12 th Century BCE Human nature is good only when it does not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.
Buddhism 6 th Century BCE Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.	Judaism 6 th Century BCE "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your kinsfolk. Love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD". Leviticus 19:18 "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn it". ---Hillel in Talmud, Shabbat 31a
Janism 6 th Century BCE In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, regard all creatures as you would regard your own self.	Christianity 1 st Century CE In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, regard all creatures as you would regard your own self.
Confucianism 6 th Century BCE Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself. Confucius, Analects	Islam 7 th Century CE No one of you is a believer until you desire for another that which you desire for yourself. The Sunnah (from the Hadith),
Sikhism 15 th Century CE Be not estranged from another for, in every heart, Pervades the Lord. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, in Singh	Bahá'í 19 th Century CE Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not. This is my command unto thee, do thou observe it.

For Additional Reference: [The Golden Rule in History](#)

Kant's improvement on the golden rule, the Categorical Imperative:

- Act as you would want all other people to act towards all other people.
- Act according to the maxim that you would wish all other rational people to follow, as if it were a universal law.

The difference is this.

- With the Golden rule a masochist or a sadist would be justified in causing or receiving pain.
- This is not what the Kantian Principle would support. The Golden Rule, as Kant well knew, is a deeply misguided ethical principle.

Problems with Kant's Theory

1. The theory applies only to rational agents. It would not apply to non-humans or to humans who are not rational, e.g., humans with brain malfunctioning, illness or persistent vegetative coma.
2. The theory cannot resolve conflicts between duties:
 - a. between two perfect duties
 - b. between a perfect duty and an imperfect duty

How would a person resolve a conflict between two perfect duties such as never tell a lie and avoid harming someone? What if telling the truth were to harm someone?

How would you resolve the conflict between the perfect duty, say to keep a promise to pick your friend up with your car at a certain time, and an imperfect duty, say to stop on the way to pick up your friend in order to give CPR to someone, a stranger, and save that stranger's life?

A clever person could phrase the maxim to be universalized in such a manner as to permit almost anything. By placing qualifiers on the maxim or peculiar definitions on terms a clever actor could satisfy the categorical imperative and yet be acting in a manner otherwise not consistent with it.



Read

- [What is the Best Way to Live?](#)
- [The Ethics of Duty](#)
- [A Critique of Kantian Ethics](#)
- [Kant in the History of Ethics](#)

Justice As Fairness



The first significant and unique contribution to the study of Ethics by an American has been that of John Rawls, a Professor of Philosophy at Harvard University. He developed a *Theory of the Good as Justice and Justice conceived as Fairness*. His theory was developed to assist a society in ordering its affairs. His ideas have influenced many lawmakers and Supreme Court decisions in the United States. Among many examples are the laws for providing equal access to opportunities for minorities and the disabled.

Rawls wants to use reasoning which all humans have to arrive at the Principle of the Good. He is similar to Kant in this regard. He wants to avoid the problems with Kant's theory and he wants to avoid providing any justification for morally outrageous actions which could be justified on utilitarian principles. He wants to avoid the disadvantages of those approaches. His approach places humans in a position wherein they view the moral dilemma or problem without knowing who they are in the situation. What would rational beings decide was best in situations where not all the humans involved are equal in physical conditions, social or economic circumstance? Rawls believes that humans would resolve the conflict or problem in such a way that whoever was worst off would be not as bad off as they otherwise might be because the person making the decision does not know whether they are going to be in the position of the worst off.

The Maximum-Minimum Principle is the Principle of the Good

- Maximize Liberty (opportunities)
- Minimize Inequalities (differences, disadvantages)

Rawls proposes the following two Principles of Justice:

1. Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.
2. Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:

- a. to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and
- b. attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

First priority rule:

Rawls proposes these principles, along with the requirement that:

- (1) must be satisfied prior to (2)
- and (2b) must be satisfied prior to (2a).
- Principle (1) and Principle (2b) may also be thought of as principles of distributive justice:
 - (1) to govern the distribution of liberties,
 - and (2b) the distribution of opportunities.
- Looking at the Principles of Justice in this way makes all Principles of Justice, Principles of Distributive Justice (even Principles of Retributive Justice will be included on the basis that they distribute negative goods).

Read

- [Rawls: The Original Position](#)
- [Rawls: Decisions in the Original Position](#)
- [Rawls: Liberty](#)

The Difference Principle

The main moral motivation for the Difference Principle is similar to that for strict equality: equal respect for persons. Indeed the Difference Principle materially collapses to a form of strict equality under empirical conditions where differences in income have no effect on the work incentive of people. The overwhelming opinion though is that in the foreseeable future the possibility of earning greater income will bring forth greater productive effort. This will increase the total wealth of the economy and under the Difference Principle, the wealth of the least advantaged. Opinion divides on the size of the inequalities that would, as a matter of empirical fact, be allowed by the Difference Principle, and on how much better off the least advantaged would be under the Difference Principle than under a strict equality principle.

Rawls' principle however gives fairly clear guidance on what type of arguments will count as justifications for inequality. Rawls is not opposed to the Principle of Strict Equality per se, his concern is about the absolute position of the least advantaged group rather than their relative position. If a system of strict equality maximizes the absolute position of the least advantaged in society, then the Difference Principle advocates strict equality. If it is possible to raise the position of the least advantaged further by inequality of income and wealth, then the Difference Principle prescribes inequality up to that point where the absolute position of the least advantaged can no longer be raised.

Rawl's Theory of Justice

1. All theories of human action, social organization, morality rest on idealized or schematic persons and not real individuals. They are not fully scientific in the contemporary sense but they are as close as you can get in morally relevant contexts. Hence, Rawls deals with representative persons and invests them with several qualities; rationality and reasonable self-interest being two salient features. If that shoe can't fit the reader then there would be no reason to read further as nothing else will be entirely agreeable thereafter.
2. Rawls does not advocate in any form the equal distribution of resources or their blind redistribution to the disadvantaged. Everyone who has thought the matter through knows that these are socially wasteful distributions. The idea behind Rawls' Difference Principle is to arrange before-hand (behind a veil of ignorance) for a system of distribution of resources which will differentially reward the socially useful so long as it will always also be to the advantage of the least well off. So if we determine that a sanitation engineer is necessary to a well ordered society because his/her activities will be to everyone's advantage we have reasonable grounds to award him/her a disproportionate portion of the available pool of social wealth, and then so on down the line of socially useful pursuits (we want to reward all socially useful activities, discourage the opposite and improve the lot of those who may contribute little or even nothing). This we do theoretically beforehand so we can in the blind determine what a 'just' distribution would be like. Then we are in position to criticize actual distributions that substantially vary from the distribution we selected as 'unjust'.

Example

1. Person P is attempting to reach a conclusion as to whether or not to do action A or decide which action (B,C or D) would be the morally correct thing to do.
2. Well, for Rawls a person would want to consider whether actions A, B, C, or D would support or violate the principle of the moral Good which for Rawls is the maximum-minimum principle:
 - a. Maximize the liberty and freedoms of all involved.
 - b. Do not restrict or deny the freedom and choice of anyone involved in the situation.
 - c. Minimize the harms or the plight of the least well off in the situation or minimize the differences in the welfare of the least well off as compared to those who are most well off.
 - d. Do not make matters worse for those already most disadvantaged in the situation.
 - e. Problems

Because there has been such extensive discussion of the Difference Principle in the last 30 years, there have been numerous criticisms of it from the perspective of all five other theories of distributive justice. Briefly, the main criticisms are as follows.

1. Advocates of strict equality argue that inequalities permitted by the Difference Principle are unacceptable even if they do benefit the least advantaged. The problem for these advocates is to explain in a satisfactory way why the relative position of the least advantaged is more important than their absolute position, and hence why society should be prevented from materially benefiting the least advantaged when this is possible. The most common explanation appeals to solidarity: that being materially equal is an important expression of the equality of persons. Another common explanation appeals to the power some may have over others, if they are better off materially. Rawls' response to this latter criticism appeals to the priority of his first principle: The inequalities consistent with the Difference Principle are only permitted so long as they do not result in unequal liberty. So, for instance, power differentials resulting from unequal income are not permitted if they violate the first principle of equal liberty, even if they increase the material position of the least advantaged group.
2. The Utilitarian objection to the Difference Principle is that it does not maximize utility. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls uses Utilitarianism as the main theory for comparison with his own, and hence he responds at length to this Utilitarian objection and argues for his own theory in preference to Utilitarianism (some of these arguments are outlined in the reading on Distributive Principles below).
3. Libertarians object that the Difference Principle involves unacceptable infringements on liberty. For instance, the Difference Principle may require redistributive taxation to the poor, and Libertarians commonly object that such taxation involves the immoral taking of just holdings. Some of these arguments are outline in the reading on Libertarian Principles below).
4. The Difference Principle is also criticized as a primary distributive principle on the grounds that it mostly ignores claims that people deserve certain economic benefits in light of their actions. Advocates of Desert-Based Principles argue that some may deserve a higher level of material goods because of their hard work or contributions even if their unequal rewards do not also function to improve the position of the least advantaged. They also argue that the Difference Principle ignores the explanations of how people come to be in the more or less advantaged groups, when such explanations are relevant to the fairness of these positions.
5. The Original Position and the Veil of Ignorance may exclude some morally relevant information. The theory excludes in order to promote rationality and is biased in favor of rationality.
6. Some criticize it for being similar to Utilitarianism in as much as these two principles could permit or demand inequalities and suffering in order to benefit the least well off.
7. Like Desert theorists, advocates of Resource-Based Principles criticize the Difference Principle on the basis that it is not 'ambition-sensitive' enough, i.e. it is not sensitive to the consequences of people's choices. They also argue that it is not adequately 'endowment-sensitive': it does not compensate people for natural inequalities (like handicaps or ill-health) over which people have no control.
8. There is also the difficulty in applying the theory to practice. It is difficult if not impossible for people to place themselves under the Veil of Ignorance in the Original Position in order to formulate what conduct would be required of them by the Maximum-Minimum Principle.
9. Some question whether or not people are rational enough to assume the veil of ignorance and operate under the two principles.
10. The theory was developed more to handle problems within society and there are difficulties in applying the principles to individual decision-making involving specific others.

 Read

- [Distributive Justice](#)
- [Distributive Principles-Libertarian](#)
- [The Plight of the Poor in the Midst of Plenty](#)

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8.7: Post Modern Ethics in Existentialism, Pragmatism, Feminism, and the Dialectical Process

Post Modern Ethics

During the Twentieth Century the advanced technological societies of the West and some in the East experienced a decline in the number of people who practiced their religion regularly and accepted a morality based upon Natural Law Theory.

There was a decline in the belief that:

1. There is a single reality and that humans can have knowledge of it.
2. There is objective truth
3. There are absolutes

This decline can be attributed to a number of factors:

1. The increase in information about other cultures and their various practices, beliefs and values
2. Advances in what science and technology could provide for humans in improvements in their basic living along with an appreciation for material goods
3. The spreading influence of ideas from the existentialist and pragmatist movements
4. The spread of democratic ideals

In the Post Modern view there are no absolutes of any kind and there are no universal truths nor universal criteria for beauty and nor are there universal principles of the Good. Thus, there is a return of relativism in the sphere of morality. With that return there is also the threat of chaos which relativism spawns. As reaction to this trend there is an increase in the numbers of people returning to religion and religious principles as the foundation for their moral lives. The fastest growing religion in the world is Islam. Islam is increasing in its population through a birth rate higher than average and through conversions. Islam fundamentalism is growing in the number of adherents. Fundamentalists of Islam and of Christianity and Judaism are all declaring their condemnation of the current state of moral decline and the rise of relativism and materialism.

In moral theory there has developed a number of traditions that extol alternatives to the teleological and deontological approaches based upon reason and the belief that universal principles can be reached through the exercise of reason.

- **The Existentialists** called for an acceptance of the inescapable role of human emotions.
- **The Pragmatists** focused on the impossibility of reason reaching beyond the frailties of limitations of human reason.
- **The Feminist** theoreticians have devised a number of approaches to ethics that have at least this much in common; the denial of previous theories as being biased and deluded.

Post Modern Existential Ethics

Nietzsche's ethical principle of the will to power makes a claim to the egoistic nature of humanity. The doctrine asserts that all humans strive to forcibly impose their will upon others as a primal drive in their nature compels them to do so. Man will relentlessly exercise his will over others as an example of his determination, spirit, and strength of character. To demonstrate and acquire his power and influence is his inherent motivation to act, even if his actions essentially seem unselfishly provoked. Nietzsche alleges that no true altruistic deeds exist because humans are wholly egocentric and self-seeking by nature. We may give the impression that we are considerate, caring, and selfless as we may perform kind deeds for others that regard us as humane, but our innate intentions are truly self-absorbed and do not entail goodness or benevolence. By this, Nietzsche does not suggest by any means that mankind is innately malicious out of its deceptive intentions, but rather that it is more rapt in its own aspirations or purposes of life. These aspirations are to be esteemed as an example of human prominence and not mistaken for the malice and deterioration of mankind.

Conversely, sympathy, generosity, and equality are all qualities that one associates with good moral character, not with contemptibility as Nietzsche does. The noble spirit that Nietzsche speaks of would not embrace these traditional ethical traits. To manipulate characters of fragility and frailty, to indulge in one's supremacy, and to pamper one's self with praise, are preferably what Nietzsche considers to be the intrinsic and admirable traits of the good. Traditional ethicists revile these characteristics and see them as they may prompt the decaying of civilization. Nevertheless, Nietzsche merely suggests that it is instinctive of humans to inflict their will to power. Analogously, the Darwinist Theory of Evolution verifies such a claim as it is the survival of the fittest that determines what species endures and what species ceases to exist. The fittest in accordance to Nietzsche's ethical principles are

the good and those who strive to dominate over inferior beings. Perhaps this is precisely why many conventional ethicists would refute Nietzsche's will to power. It is evident that the fundamental institution of morals into society is to impede many of our natural propensities in order to avert the chaotic unruliness that may arise from them.

Nietzsche distinguishes between noble (masters) and base (slaves) souls. The concept of a noble soul originates from Nietzsche's admiration of ancient Greek culture. The ancient Greeks were an animated people who paradoxically welcomed the inevitability of death, facing the ordeals and hardships of life, whilst celebrating its magnificence. The noble soul or master, according to Nietzsche, is a replica of the ancient Greek. He grows comfortably amidst the suffering and toils of human pain as he confronts life. This confrontation is natural and only drives him to grow and acquire more. He may have to exploit the base soul for his own good, but this maltreatment of another being only supplements his pride and his will to power. In this sense, affliction provides the master with the prospect of extensive growth, and does not hinder his path to power.

On the contrary, the base spirit or slave trembles in the face of affliction. He does not challenge the hardships of life, but rather seeks to assuage the pain which he finds intolerable. Such a being seeks out consolation from others out of his apprehension and despicability. He considers sympathy, benevolence, and equality to be the essential attributes of goodness because they falsely detract from the injustice and agony of life. The slaves are inferior to the master in that they do not anticipate growing in a torturous, pain-inflicted world. Nietzsche considers this base soul to represent the greater part of humanity today. Thus, his ethical principle of the noble's will to power over the base epitomizes a complete *avant-garde* reversal of the nature of bad and good in traditional ethical thought.

[Nietzsche: The Good Life](#)



 Read

- [Nietzsche's Anti-Ethics](#)
- [Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist](#)

[Does Christianity Make Us Weak](#)



Nietzsche submits this idea of morality to radical critique. He believes both that the idea is philosophically insupportable and that when we understand its genealogy, we will see that what actually explains our having it are profoundly negative aspects of human life. Morality is an ideology. We can believe it only if we ignore why we do. Central to Nietzsche's thought is a fundamental distinction between the ideas of good and bad, on the one hand, and those of (moral) good and evil, on the other. The natural form ethical evaluation first takes, he believes is that of excellence or merit. People who excel, who have merits we admire and esteem, thereby have a kind of natural nobility.

These are:

- rank-ordering
- rank-defining value judgments

We naturally look up to, we respect and esteem, those with merit. He calls them “knightly aristocratic values.”

1. The “primary” half of the pair is good. Bad is what is not--good. What is not worthy of esteem and respect.
2. The “good” features are naturally “positive”; they affirm and sustain life, vigor, strength, etc., e.g. openness, cheerfulness, creativity, physical strength, agility, grace, beauty, vigor, health, wit, intelligence, charm, and friendliness.

On the other hand, the “primary” half of the good/evil pair is evil. The idea of evil is reactive. It comes from the negation of good. Indeed, Nietzsche believes that it derives from negating good (natural merit). And the idea of moral good is simply the negation of that negation. It is what is not evil. The original negation is due to resentment—a psychological process through which the naturally weak suppress their anger at being slighted by the strong who consider them of little merit. Unable to express their anger honestly, they suppress it to an unconscious level, in the “dark workshop” of the human psyche. It then comes to be expressed not as personal anger, but in an alienated, impersonal form, namely, as moral indignation and resentment. The strong who disrespect the weak are seen, by virtue of their disrespect, as deserving moral disapproval—as being evil.

We can see how this process is supposed to work in Nietzsche's parable of the lambs and the birds of prey. The birds see the lambs as their natural inferiors, as meat. The lambs are angered by this, but can't do anything about it directly by expressing personal anger. So they express their anger in an impersonal way. They reproach the birds; they hold them morally responsible for what they lambs see as their evil conduct. They project the ideology of morality, which is just the impersonal expression of their personal anger and hatred. Nietzsche is saying that morality is born in denial.

The problem from Nietzsche's perspective is that, unlike the birds of prey, the naturally strong have been taken in by this ideology. Through Judeo-Christian religion, a “priestly caste” has taken over culture to such a degree that the ideology of morality is now the dominant view. But in addition to being born in hatred and denial, Nietzsche believes both that the idea of morality is philosophically insupportable (for example, in its assumption of free will) as well as one that has terrible consequences for human culture—it is an ethic of weakness and illness that chokes off genuine human achievement.

Problems:

1. Some people feel that the will to power advocated by Nietzsche encourages people to be callous and cruel, ignoring humanity for the sake of gaining power.
2. Theists argue that it is not the individual who obtains power according to to them; power is something dished out by God. It is not up to man as to whether or not he will be powerful. Additionally, God gives rewards for following His ways, not as a result of a power struggle.
3. Theists can also argue that the will to power can be seen as merely a response to helplessness, as Nietzsche's method for wishing to attain control of a life that is really left up to God

Postmodern Ethical Pragmatism

<http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9602/reviews/nietzsch.html>

For pragmatists the matter of ethics is approached practically. Our practices are our habits. In pragmatic ethics there is the Primacy of Habits, which empower and restrict. They explore the Social nature of habits and the relation of habit to will. For them morality is a habit and being fallibilists, pragmatists know that no habits are flawless. They also hold that morality is social and that changing habits for moral reasons is necessary. Features of pragmatic ethics include:

- Employs criteria, but is not criteria
- Gleaning insights from other ethical theories
- Relative without being relativistic

- Tolerant without being irresolute

Read

[Pragmatic Ethics](#)

[Embracing A Pragmatist Ethic \(directly below\)](#)

Embracing A Pragmatic Ethic

A pragmatic ethic is not based on principles, but it is not unprincipled. Deliberation plays a significant role, albeit a different role than that given it on most accounts. Morality does not seek final absolute answers, yet it is not perniciously relativistic. It does recognize that circumstances can be different, and that in different circumstances, different actions may be appropriate. So it does not demand moral uniformity between people and across cultures. Moreover, it understands moral advance as emerging from the crucible of experience, not through the proclamations of something or someone outside us. Just as ideas only prove their superiority in dialogue and in conflict with other ideas, moral insight can likewise prove its superiority in dialogue and conflict with other ideas and experiences. Hence, some range of moral disagreement and some amount of different action will be not be, for the pragmatist, something to bemoan. It will be integral to moral advancement, and thus should be permitted and even praised, not lamented. Only someone who thought theory could provide final answers, and answers without the messy task of doing battle on the marketplace of ideas and of life, would find this regrettable”

[Post Modern Feminist Ethics](#)

This theory is based on the assumptions that the world is male oriented, devised by men and dominated on a male emphasis on systems of inflexible rules. The goal of feminist ethics is to create a plan that will hopefully end the social and political oppression of women. It is believed that the female perspective of the world can be shaped into a value theory.

Read

1. Omonia Vinieris [On the Feminist Theory of Care \(below\)](#)
2. Sharon Higgins [on Feminist Ethics \(below\)](#)
3. Kathy Krisman [on Care Ethics \(below\)](#)

1. Omonia Vinieris (QCC, 2002) on the Feminist Theory of Care

It has been conventionally thought by traditional thinkers of ethics that the moral development of females is slow-paced and secondary to that of males. Standard ethical attitudes entail hostile, aggressive, and masculine principles of authority, supremacy, and social order. Feminist opponents consider the latter to incite the debasement of women’s moral capabilities and to demoralize the conception of morality altogether. The “ethics of justice” is often the terminology used to denote moral duty based on the masculine traits of reason and aloofness. Feminists strive for vindication by formulating a theory entitled the “ethics of care” to counter its antithetical parallel, the manly principle, “ethics of justice”.

Ethics of care focus on the morality and integrity of women which primarily center on interpersonal relationships. Feminine values such as gentleness, sympathy, and genuine caring are devalued and deemed irrelevant to the public world where self-rule and power thrive. Carol Gilligan, a feminist theorist and psychologist, presumes that the morality of women is merely different from that concerning men’s and that it is not at all inferior as her male counterparts claim it to be. She profoundly opposes the theories of moral development devised her colleague, Kohlberg, who only confined his study to males. His study neglects a woman’s ability to possess self-legislated ethical dogma.

Gilligan, in attempt to refute Kohlberg’s philosophy, composes a scale to illustrate the different stages of a woman’s moral development. In the first stage, the female is only concerned with herself as she is basically helpless and vulnerable and finds comfort in her seclusion. She steers clear of any type of relation with others. In the second stage of moral development, she acquires an awareness of others around her and clings on to various personal contacts that she develops. She feels a sense of responsibility and devotion to care for them. She essentially cares for and finds interest in the people she relates with. She is naturally able to sacrifice herself for these people out of her innate goodness. Finally in the third stage, she masters equilibrium between the first two stages. She exhibits self-concern for herself and others. In order to essentially care for others, she must

care for herself first, and perhaps the reciprocation of care between her and different people is an indication that she cares for herself. This universal factor of ethical principle verifies a woman's ability to control the moral principles concerning her, as it also exemplifies the potency she holds in concurrently providing for others.

Gilligan further goes on to say that an ethics of care is an essential component of ideal moral thought. Children must be taught to “value their hearts over their heads” (Gilligan) rather than disregard their natural emotions in fear of resorting to subjection which defies the traditional male-oriented “ethics of justice”. In sum, women and children may exhibit more moral depth than men (Gilligan).

If women are to tolerate the impersonal and “rational” principles anchored in the “ethics of justice” they might as well become merciless, heartless brutes. However, women are humane and acknowledge the fact that genuine impartiality requires emotive input in ethical reasoning and assessment. In order to judge morally, we must identify emotionally with the individual to make sense of his or her motives that triggered their actions. Yet, masculine or “traditional” ethical principles eschew the idea of involving emotion in moral judgment. Sarah Hoagland comments that traditional ethics undermine rather than promote individual moral ability and agency because the direction of traditional ethics is impersonal and merely focuses on control and social organization. Thus it does not uphold individual integrity as social organization is acquired through oppressive and authoritative means.

Unfortunately, feminists realize that in their own quest to incorporate their “ethics of care” principle into the canons of society, society is much too fixated on the masculine tenets of competition and self-interest. An environment based on inter-familial relations and mutual communication is one where an “ethics of care” ideology will be embraced by its people. Human emotional responses are now a low key supplement to traditionalist ethical principles, as sensitivity and kindness were never equated with human goodness. Yet, it still seems that rationale and intellect overpower these feminine aspects in a male-dominated world.

2. Sharon Higgins (SCC, 2005) on FEMINIST ETHICS

Feminist ethics and care ethics are similar in that both reject abstract rules or principles that judge the morality of certain actions. The feminist ethical focus is on social arrangements and practices instead. One goal of feminist ethics is to reduce or eliminate women being subordinate to men and for gender equality. This is approached by feminist ethics by critiquing practices and institutions that keep women subjected to men and to make society aware of how it is being done. Feminists support efforts to expose the domination of one group by another and view ethics as a continuous effort to help eliminate social inequality. Social equality is the main goal of feminist ethics and there are concerns about social equality occurring in healthcare because women still dominate in positions of nurses, while men dominate in positions as physicians, which leaves women as nurses subordinates on men.

Feminists have questioned the value of healthcare because if food and shelter were equally distributed to everyone, that would help eliminate the need for expensive health care because more people would be kept healthy.

There is controversy between feminists with assisted reproduction. Some feminists feel that the technology that permits otherwise infertile women to have children empowers them while other feminists argue that reproductive technology causes male dominance and can force women to have children.

There is not a lot of consistency with feminist ethics, there are many different opinions and claims from different feminists. This has caused feminist ethics to be criticized for not being a coherent ethical theory like traditional ethical theories. The relevance of feminist ethics is questioned with traditional ethical theories because some argue that social equality is irrelevant when deciding to terminate life support.

Feminist ethics is about equality of women and to resolve conflicts that arise and to learn about the many different factors that influence the varied views of different feminists

3. Kathy Krisman (SCCC, 2005) on CARE ETHICS

Care ethics is a strand of feminist care ethics. Like feminist ethics the basis for ethics rejects the idea of abstract principles. More accurately it is a conglomerate of beliefs of how values should be seen in people's character and how they act. Carol Gilligan was a psychologist whose research on morals development contributed to the philosophical ideas of care ethics. She researched the idea that women have a different style of moral reasoning than men have. Women tend to focus on details and

personal relationships. A way to resolve conflict for women would be to avoid harming anyone and to keep everyone in the situation as happy as possible. Men on the other hand tend to analyze the situation and then use abstract rules to guide them in finding a conclusion. Care ethics share general ideas and a point of view as feminist care ethics, but does not concern themselves with feminism as much.

The main idea of care ethics is values not principles. Care ethics says it is not appropriate to think with rules of principles where a type of relationship is concerned. For example a mother should not use a principle to decide to help her child or a friend help another friend. Certain relationships like these do not need a rule or principle to tell the person what the right decision is. Care ethics understand that situations are complex. The point to care ethics is to resolve the problem with everyone's concerns in mind. They do not care who is wrong or being treated unfairly. Their main concern is to instill values such as the importance to personal relationships, the respect of individuals and the respect for responsibility. Care ethics sees there as being an obligation to teach all in our society to respond correctly to moral situations with the values above in mind.

When faced with medical issues, care ethics believes everyone should know everyone's views who are involved in the conflict. Each side should present their concerns and the possibilities of care. Once all the information is provided it may be easier to come to a decision. The decision may be one that they arrive to together completely different from the original two conflicting decisions. Although the outcome is not for certain an educated, informed decision is arrived at. Each person in the situation might get a greater understanding of why the other has the beliefs they have. Care ethics is based on the traditional beliefs that traits like compassion, sympathy, kindness and willingness to take responsibility should be present in human character. Such things like medicine, nursing, and other simpler areas should have these values. We should rely on values of care and not on a principle or a rule to resolve our conflicts.

Although care ethics sounds like a good way to resolve conflict it too has its problems. It has been found that Gillian's research on women and men's reasoning is a bit out dated. It has been found though that Gillian's claims are not detrimental to care ethics. The importance of values is enough to show how care ethics can be used in life situations. Some feel that the basis of care ethics is what traditional philosophical ethics is about. Disclaiming any evidence that care ethics even exists. The biggest reason care ethics is criticized is because there is no obvious way to resolve conflicts. There may not be enough time in a situation to debate it and in the end no real decision can be concluded. The person having to make the decision may have their own reasons for why they choose the decision they do. Many will find the decision based on the care ethics to still be unfair.

Problem with Care Theory

1. Some philosophers argue that the ethic of care is based on traditional women's values in a quest for new virtues.
2. Beings other than women may not agree because humans often only understand what they can relate to.
3. Gender free morality may be impossible, according to Nel Noddings. Traditional philosophers believed that women were inferior to men and female goddesses were involved in silence, obedience and service. These female roles can be shaped into an ethic of care according to many women philosophers.
4. It is politically imprudent to associate women with the value of care.
5. The theory ultimately disempowers women.
6. A person cannot truly care for someone if she is economically, socially, and/or psychologically coerced to do so.
7. Criticizes the inconsistency of modernism but hold inconsistent norms themselves.
8. Stresses the irrational
9. Feminists contradict themselves by relinquishing truth claims in their own writings.
10. Calls for behavior that is tailored to each individual situation. If this is the case, then there is no true theory of ethical behavior because you are changing your view of what is acceptable and what is not to suit your needs at the time.
11. Feminist theories do not allow for the natural tendencies of men. They do to men exactly what they claim was wrongly done to women for centuries.
12. Cared based approach clouds the basic moral code. Emotions and feelings make it easy to break moral codes.

Read

- [Feminist Ethics](#)
- [Post Modern Feminism](#)
- [Post Modernism and its Critics](#)

The Post Modern Dialectical Process

In attempting to reach a conclusion as to the morally correct thing to do responsible moral agents should examine the reasons for the beliefs held concerning what is morally correct. People should reflect on the beliefs held to determine what principles are involved and what values serve as the base for the belief that one ethical principle is to be placed before or over another. When taking a position on a moral issue or in attempting to reach a conclusion as to what is morally correct the reasoning and responsible person would give reasons for what they hold to be morally correct and and make arguments for the claims they would make. Humans should examine the moral arguments in a continuing process of review and reflection. There must be a critical examination of all arguments offered in support of positions taken and urged on others. In the ongoing process of inquiry into the basic reasoning and the manner in which principles are used the critical examination would look to see that the reasoning was consistent and coherent. If the arguments do not appear to be well reasoned or not well supported then revisions would be needed or even the discarding of the first argument in favor of another that was either prompted by the inquiry itself or derived from it. In turn the new argument in support of the new position becomes itself the candidate for subsequent critical examination. This continuing process is referred to as being dialectical.

In the critical examination of arguments or positions on moral issues there is a sort of testing of the arguments as the principles used in the argument are applied to cases either actual or hypothetical in order to examine how well they fit the case and resolve conflicts or if they give rise to further difficulties. Consider a moral argument that sets a high value on freedom of speech and related to freedom of thought and thought as essential to the moral lives of human beings. In setting the value of freedom of speech nearly as an absolute value or as a high or, perhaps, the highest value what then becomes of that argument when considering whether or not to allow such freedom on the internet and the presentation of child pornography to any and all viewers?

In entering into the process of moral inquiry, even unto the level of examining the most basic principles and values being used, human beings are developing their skill in ethical thinking and along with that they are growing as responsible moral beings. As humans do this they are developing and defining the moral aspect of their personalities and their moral personhood.

The answers or positions arrived at through the process of dialectical inquiry and review are going to be subject to the ongoing process for review and criticism wherein humans will consider as many alternatives as they can. As long as humans have consciousness and a basic sense of morality and they can reason, then they will use their intellectual faculties to examine and re-examine moral theory and ethical principles.

That the dialectical process does not produce single definitive absolute and eternally unchanging answers to moral questions and resolutions of moral dilemmas should not be discouraging in any way. The answers to moral problems that have been urged on the communities of people in this world have proven to be in need of revisions over time and adaptations have been made. The absolutism preferred by some has more often proved to be the basis for what in retrospect appears as atrocious behaviors towards those who disagree. The ongoing process of continual review of moral thinking and refinement of ethical principles appears to offer the human community the hope for advancement as moral beings. If there is any hope for the people of planet earth to arrive at some common understanding about how to resolve moral problems and find resolutions to dilemmas it would appear not to be through insistence on moral absolutes to be imposed on all peoples of the world. Neither would it be to accept any and all ethical principles and moral reasoning to be of equal worth and use. The dialectical process does reveal weaker arguments distinguishing them from the stronger and the more useful and more adequate to the tasks at hand and more applicable to situations as we actually encounter them.

The open ended and ongoing process of moral inquiry offers hope for individual and collective advancement in moral maturity. Through the process of ongoing moral inquiry we learn more about morality itself and about what we value and how we value and how we can better go about resolving our conflicts and dilemmas. That process may lead to agreement on the values and principles and the reasoning most acceptable to humans who must find common resolution to moral and physical conflicts without resort to violence of any sort.

The Hegelian Dialectic



Chapter 8 Conclusion

These are three of many popular theories concerning the Good which hold for no single universal principle of the Good. Instead they relate the determination of such a principle to be an exercise in power or self-service which is put under a disguise of being a rational exercise of an unbiased mind. What they have in common is a relativism. The need for societies to have a moral foundation are not being served well by what are at their base appeals to power as the only basis for the resolution of conflict. For these theories, morality collapses into self-serving exercises. What are we left with then?

Hopefully, by considering the various theories and examining how they would be applied to the various situations and dilemmas involving medical practices and institutions each person will become more aware of their fundamental values and which of the theories is most in keeping with what they think of as the good. Such a theory would then serve as a source of moral guidance.

People should have some principle by which they make their decisions as to what is the morally correct thing to do. At times doing the morally correct thing will not make the actor happy except to know that they did what was right. It is only the Egoist that thinks doing what is correct must always make the actor happy.

Well you may be correct in thinking that most people in the world are Ethical Egoists (EE) in that they think about what pleases them first. But it may be time for humankind to grow up and mature and use reason and decide what each of us will live and die for. What will be the principle of the Good used to make moral decisions? Do you want to make decisions with yourself at the center or do you want to think and arrive at a principle consistent with your values that you will use to make moral decisions and you will attempt to convince others to use as well so that there can be resolution to moral conflicts. EE lacks logic in that there is no consistency or universalizability. It cannot resolve moral conflicts as there is no agreed upon principle of the Good among EE's in a conflict. Result: Power plays and violence. At the United Nations they operate with the Principle of Utility in an effort to resolve conflicts and avoid violence. There are other principles. The religious fanatics who employ tactics of violence and terror such as the Islamicists use Divine Command as their principle. The world community appears clearly unwilling to accept such a principle as the basis for moral conflict resolution. What will the world use in an effort to avoid the violence?

So, which principle is it that we are to use direct our lives and to give it a meaning and a value through our choice? Each makes the decision. In Philosophy the attempt is made to consider the principle that would serve best, the principle, which has the fewest disadvantages, and hopefully to find a principle that is the best to meet the demands of the current world situation and is correct as to setting humans on a path of conduct that serves the core values of the human community.

When people are confronted with their impending deaths they often review their lives. Few make judgments as to its worth based on how much they own. Most people regard how they treated others and were treated by them as much more important than possessions of material objects. One's sense of morality is then seen in retrospect as one of the most important parts of a person's life. Did I do the right thing is seen as more important than did I possess as much as I could have or was I as happy as I could have been?

It is your decision as to which principles will guide your decisions. There is advice that others can and do give you but it is your decision. Choose wisely. For Plato this was the whole point of Philosophy: to assist someone in choosing wisely, in choosing what truly is the Good.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Social and Political Philosophy

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9.1: Who Gets What?

Social Philosophy



The principle question for social philosophy is: Who gets what?

Principles of Justice: The Veil of Ignorance



This matter is known as Distributive Justice. Just how are the goods and services within any society to be distributed? In any society no matter how small (an island society) or how large (the People's Republic of China) there will arise the question of how goods and services are to be distributed. Whether people will be free to work and keep what they earn or whether all must contribute in some way to the welfare of others, particularly those not capable of working and caring for themselves. Below there are a number of principles which have been developed in response to this problem of deciding how social life is to be regulated and people are to be cared for. Read these and note the differences.

Read

- [Distributive Justice](#)
- [Scope and Role of Distributive Principles](#)
- [Strict Egalitarianism](#)
- [The Difference Principle](#)
- [Equality of Opportunity and Luck Egalitarianism](#)
- [Welfare-Based Principles](#)
- [Desert-Based Principles](#)
- [Libertarian Principles](#)
- [Feminist Principles](#)

Strict Egalitarianism

One of the simplest principles of distributive justice is that of [strict, or radical, equality](#). The principle says that every person should have the same level of material goods and services. The principle is most commonly justified on the grounds that people are

morally equal and that equality in material goods and services is the best way to give effect to this moral ideal.

The Difference Principle

The most widely discussed Theory of Distributive Justice in the past four decades has been that proposed by John Rawls in a Theory of Justice and Political Liberalism. Rawls proposes the following two principles of justice:

1. Each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all; and in this scheme the equal political liberties, and only those liberties, are to be guaranteed their fair value.
2. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions:
 - a. They are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity;
 - b. They are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society

Equality of Opportunity and Luck Egalitarianism

Dworkin proposed that people begin with equal resources but be allowed to end up with unequal economic benefits as a result of their own choices. What constitutes a just material distribution is to be determined by the result of a thought experiment designed to model fair distribution. Suppose that everyone is given the same purchasing power and each uses that purchasing power to bid, in a fair auction, for resources best suited to their life plans. They are then permitted to use those resources as they see fit. Although people may end up with different economic benefits, none of them is given less consideration than another in the sense that if they wanted somebody else's resource bundle they could have bid for it instead.

In Dworkin's proposal we see his attitudes to 'ambitions' and 'endowments' which have become a central feature of luck egalitarianism (though under a wide variety of alternative names and further subset-distinctions. In terms of sensitivity to 'ambitions', Dworkin and many other luck egalitarians argue that provided people have an 'equal' starting point (in Dworkin's case, resources) they should live with the consequences of their choices. They argue, for instance, that people who choose to work hard to earn more income should not be required to subsidize those choosing more leisure and hence less income.

Welfare-Based Principles

Welfare-based principles are motivated by the idea that what is of primary moral importance is the level of welfare of people. Advocates of welfare-based principles view the concerns of other theories—material equality, the level of primary goods of the least advantaged, resources, desert-claims, or liberty—as derivative concerns. They are only valuable in so far as they affect welfare, so that all distributive questions should be settled entirely by how the distribution affects welfare. However, there are many ways that welfare can be used in answering these distributive questions, so welfare-theorists need to specify what welfare function they believe should be maximized. The welfare functions proposed vary according to what will count as welfare and the weighting system for that welfare. Economists defending some form of welfarism normally state the explicit functional form, while philosophers often avoid this formality, concentrating on developing their theories in answer to three questions:

1. The question of what has intrinsic value, and
2. The question of what actions or policies would maximize the intrinsic value.
3. Moreover, philosophers tend to restrict themselves to a small subset of the available welfare functions.

Although there are a number of advocates of alternative welfare functions such as equality of well-being, most philosophical activity has concentrated on a variant known as Utilitarianism. This theory can be used to illustrate most of the main characteristics of welfare-based principles.

Desert-Based Principles

The different desert-based principles of distribution differ primarily according to what they identify as the basis for deserving. While Aristotle proposed virtue, or moral character, to be the best desert-basis for economic distribution, contemporary desert theorists have proposed desert-bases that are more practically implemented in complex modern societies. Most contemporary desert theorists have pursued John Locke's lead in this respect. Locke argued people deserve to have those items produced by their toil and industry, the products, or the value thereof, being a fitting reward for their effort. Locke's underlying idea was to guarantee to individuals the fruits of their own labor and abstinence. Most contemporary proposals for desert-bases fit into one of three broad categories:

1. **Contribution:** people should be rewarded for their work activity according to the value of their contribution to the social product.

2. **Effort:** people should be rewarded according to the effort they expend in their work activity .
3. **Compensation:** people should be rewarded according to the costs they incur in their work activity.

Libertarian Principles

The market will be just, not as a means to some pattern, but insofar as the exchanges permitted in the market satisfy the conditions of just acquisition and exchange described by the principles. For Libertarians, just outcomes are those arrived at by the separate just actions of individuals; a particular distributive pattern is not required for justice. Robert Nozick has advanced this version of Libertarianism and is its best known contemporary advocate. Nozick proposed a 3-part “entitlement theory”. If the world were wholly just, the following definition would exhaustively cover the subject of justice in holdings:

1. A person who acquires a holding in accordance with the Principle of Justice in acquisition is entitled to that holding.
2. A person who acquires a holding in accordance with the Principle of Justice in transfer, from someone else entitled to the holding, is entitled to the holding.
3. No one is entitled to a holding except by (repeated) applications of (1) and (2).

The complete principle of Distributive Justice would say simply that a distribution is just if everyone is entitled to the holdings they possess under the distribution.

Rawls and Nozick on Libertarian Principles of Justice



Consider some matter of importance to us today that relates to the question of the distribution of goods and services. Apply any of the social theories you have read about and take a position on it. For example:

1. The distribution of the funds of the charities to the victims of the 9-11 disaster, how should the federal money be distributed?
2. What principle of distributive justice do you favor using to decide who gets what?

Read how the money was distributed. [\\$7 billion for the grief of Sept. 11](#)

[Paying the 911 Victim-From the Fund Administrator](#)



There are a variety of social situations that result from the application of these principles or from a combination of the principles. The range of variations is quite broad and includes Communist States and Democratic States. It includes societies that have great concern for individual welfare and those that have great concern for the common welfare. It includes those that have liberal as well as conservative orientations. What does this mean?

We shall contrast two rather different approaches to the matter of distribution in the next section: liberalism and conservatism.

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9.2: Liberalism and Conservatism

Liberalism vs. Conservatism

The debate between liberals and conservatives is quite active in contemporary society. How much you pay in taxes of all types is the outcome of that ongoing debate. There are many other ways in which the ideas associated with those social and political views have consequences in the lives of all members of society. It is important to have some idea of the meaning of those terms and the ideas associated with those movements.

Today the term 'liberal' has come to be associated with a variety of principles, concepts and programs. Liberals are often associated with ideas related to a welfare state and a system of taxes, subsidies, deductions, payments, regulations, restrictions, permissions, refunds, entitlements and other such ideas and programs. The term was not always so associated.

Liberal meant to "liberate" or "free" and as applied to social questions meant that individuals should be as free from interference from the government as possible. There were and remain a number of theories that are based upon placing a very high value on human autonomy, freedom or liberty. In social affairs it was taken to mean that individuals were to remain free to pursue their own interests and to work and to keep the results of their labor, that individuals had a right to property and to pursuit of what would make the happy. The ideas of the Utilitarians contributed heavily to this view of how social life ought to be arranged. Along with it came the idea that government should not interfere with individual's earnings and with businesses. There was the idea of *laissez-faire* economics. These ideas were supportive of capitalism.

Many of these ideas are linked to what are called "conservatives" in contemporary American society. Among the most radical defenders of this view has been Ayn Rand and her ideas which are titled: Objectivism.

Her views oppose state regulations as a form of collective interference. She is opposed to socialism and to all forms of collectivism and the Marxist ideal of taking from each according to ability and providing to each according to need.

Social liberalism or Collectivism: this view holds that the division of social product is best left to impersonal, efficient, decentralized workings of free market. It is based on a number of assumptions including that people act out of enlightened self-interest and that they are not only autonomous agents but also prudent rational agents.

Read

- [Liberalism](#)
- [Collectivism Intro to Objectivism](#)
- [Philosophy of Ayn Rand and Objectivism](#)
- [Collectivism](#)
- [The Unselfish Gene](#)

Conservatism: A Philosophy of Human Imperfection



In contemporary American society many liberals came to argue for more government intervention and their ideas came to be accepted by legislators and by the supreme court, when the court sustained one act of new deal legislation after another, asserting

that individual citizens must be protected against overpowering economic groups and from disasters they have not brought on themselves. More and more laws were passed to provide for old-age and survivors insurance, unemployment insurance, federal control of various financial interests, minimum wages, supervision of agricultural production, and the right of labor unions to organize and bargain collectively. This all amounted to a radical change from the original ideas of European liberals on the role of government.

Despite the metamorphosis in the philosophy of liberalism since the mid-19th century, almost all modern liberals agree that their common objective is enlargement of the individual's opportunity to realize full potentialities. This has become a hallmark of liberalism today. This is an idea consistent with the ideas of John Rawls.

The most widely discussed theory of distributive justice in the past three decades has been that proposed by John Rawls. Rawls proposes the following two principles of justice:

1. each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.
2. social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:
 - a. to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and
 - b. attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

Rawls' ideas are quite supportive of the notion of a welfare state.

1. Why is it that people are thought to have a right to what they have not worked to earn for themselves?
2. Why is it that there is a law that requires those who do work to provide for those who do not work or are unable to work?
3. We find the answers to those questions in the works of those who defend the welfare state.

Robert Goodin passionately and cogently defends the welfare state from current attacks by the new right. He contends that the welfare state finds false friends in those on the old left who would justify it as a hesitant first step toward some larger, ideally just form of society. Reasons for welfare, in contrast, offers a defense of the minimal welfare state substantially independent of any such broader commitments, and at the same time better able to withstand challenges from the new right's moralistic political economy. This defense of the existence of the welfare state is discussed, flanked by criticism of old left and new right arguments that is both acute and devastating.

In the author's view, those possessing discretionary control over resources that they require best justify the welfare state as a device for protecting needy--and hence vulnerable--members of society against the risk of exploitation. Its' task is to protect the interests of those not in a position to protect themselves. Communitarian or egalitarian ideals may lead us to move beyond the welfare state as thus conceived and justified. Moving beyond it, however, does not invalidate the arguments for constantly maintaining at least the minimal protections necessary for vulnerable members of society. There exists special obligations that are voluntary and strong obligations, such as with family, that are non-voluntary. These strong obligations are based upon vulnerabilities of others. Family and others assist the vulnerable through voluntary charity, however, state (welfare) as "backup to the backup" assists the vulnerable and in this manner the vulnerable are dependent on the state. Therefore it is possible to vest that vulnerable person with legal entitlement to assistance.

Today we appear to have reversed associations with many of the ideas originally associated with the terms "liberal" and "conservative".

Liberal	Conservative
Individual Freedom	Social Order Preservation
No government interference	Governmental action
Individuals are self-interested	Social Welfare is primary interest
Laissez-faire	Governmental restrictions

These ideas are now associated with the groups that are bearing the opposite titles so that, for example, liberals are arguing for more government restrictions and provisions and the taxes to support those programs which protect people from themselves and from others. The questions of who gets to say what the laws will be and what the government will do is taken up under the heading of "political philosophy."

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9.3: Introduction to Political Philosophy

Political Philosophy

Social philosophy relates to the question of "who gets what?" once the first question is answered there will be another question: "who says so?" consideration of this question is part of political philosophy. Among other questions under that heading are:

- What is the best form of government?
- Why should individuals obey the law?
- Is taxation legitimate?
- What is the relation between the government and individuals?
- How should the distribution of goods and services be arranged?
- How is the conflict of individual interest with the groups' interest to be resolved?

The state is the agency that enforces the answers to questions of distribution of goods and services. The state has and is the power to enforce the decisions on how life shall be arranged through regulations and enforcement of penalties for violations of those regulations.

1. The state makes laws and commands and enforces the commands
2. The state asserts
 - a. use of force and the
 - b. right to use force

The state is a group of people who claim the right to enforce obedience to their commands within a territory and succeed in getting most of the people in the territory to accept it. There are three things that must be legitimized wherever there is to be a state.

Legitimacy is needed:

1. For the existence of the state itself
 2. For the particular type of government
 3. For the present office holders
- So, first there needs to be a theory that provides for the reasons that there needs to be a government at all.
 - Several of those theories will be offered below.
 - Next, there needs to be a legitimization for the particular type of government, be it democracy, republic, monarchy, etc....
 - Finally, whatever the type of government, the current holders of its various offices must be legitimized.
 - For example, if the government is a monarchy then the current head of government (king, queen, baron, pharaoh...) must provide evidence that the office holder is the proper heir to the throne or position of power due to birth.

Thus evidence of lineage is important. If the government is a democracy then the current holders of offices must demonstrate that they secured the sufficient number of votes in the election to merit holding office.

Read

- [Political Philosophy Methodology](#)
- [Ethical Foundations](#)

Theories of Government

Natural law- Divine Right

This theory is quite old and quite direct and simple: God wants people to be ruled over as God rules over all creation. As humans rule over other animals, they too need to be ruled. That government deserves to exercise power that has the power given to it by the divine being. For example, the king deserves to rule for God wanted him to be the king. When the king dies, his heir is to be ruler. If the kingdom is overthrown and some other person takes power then after some time it may be believed that such a person must deserve to rule because God must have given approval or else God would not have permitted that person to overthrow the previous ruler. Some rulers may go much further and declare themselves to be representatives of the deity or even to be a deity and thus deserve to be obeyed and honored. If a ruler is overthrown it may be viewed as God's will.

Power-Might Makes Right

This too is a theory that is quite old and very simple and direct. It is also still popular in a postmodern world. It is that a government deserves to hold and exercise power if it has the power to enforce its rule over others.

How Power Corrupts



Read Aesop's Fable below for illustration.

Aesop's Fables The Wild Ass and the Lion Translated by Townsend 1887

A Wild Ass and a Lion entered into an alliance so that they might capture the beasts of the forest with greater ease. The Lion agreed to assist the Wild Ass with his strength, while the Wild Ass gave the Lion the benefit of his greater speed. When they had taken as many beasts as their necessities required, the Lion undertook to distribute the prey, and for this purpose divided it into three shares. "I will take the first share," he said, "because I am King: and the second share, as a partner with you in the chase: and the third share (believe me) will be a source of great evil to you, unless you willingly resign it to me, and set off as fast as you can."

Might makes right.

Anarchist

This is a theory associated with many people throughout history. In this view there is little or no justification for a state to impose its wishes upon individuals. There should be no infringement on human autonomy. The highest obligation is to be autonomous and so anarchy is the correct political theory. Individuals have no moral obligation to obey the state.

The Philosophical Nature of Anarchv



📌 Read

- [Anarchism](#)
- [Bibliography of Anarchist Sites](#)

Social Contract Theory

A government holds power by the consent of the governed alone. There is no other basis. When that consent no longer exists there is no longer a justification for that government to continue. People maintain the right to withdraw their consent.

Social Contract Theory



Thomas Hobbes

Hobbes held that humans are by nature equal and that from that equality there proceeds fear. From fear there proceeds war and war presents many problems. To avoid the state of war people surrender some liberty (rights). This surrender or transferring is the contract. There is the possibility that should the contract be breached the government created by the contract is then void and another can be created. Hobbes held that the government created by the contract would have absolute power. For Hobbes humans are so prone to do harm to one another that it is only a choice between anarchy and absolutism. The monster or leviathan is created or consented to in order to avoid anarchy and mutual self-destruction. See link to biography and works below.

Crash Course Philosophy: Thomas Hobbes and Contractarian Theory



Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Swiss political philosopher who held that the citizens of the state form a collective body ruled only by the general will that arises from each and applies to all, resulting in a perfect freedom and equality. See link to biography and works below video.

Political Theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau



Read

- Definition: [Social Contract Theory](#)
- Analysis: [Social Contract Theory](#)
- [Contractarianism](#)
- [Thomas Hobbes](#)
- [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](#)

Meghan Ramsay (QCC, 2003)

Rational beings consent to be governed in order to secure a more ordered and richer form of life than otherwise possible. Although both Hobbes and Rousseau theorize that we should use a social contract model for government, there are some key differences as to why we should use this model and who should be in charge. The first difference is that with Hobbes, people are seen to be inherently at odds with one another. Hobbes asserts that matters are only black and white: there is either anarchy or absolutism. Since people only tend to look out for their own interests and behave in an egoist manner, they must either keep their freedom and deal with the consequence of every man doing for himself or they must surrender power and be led by one ruler who looks out for the best interest of the commonwealth. I would venture to say that even this ruler is egoistical as what is good for him is what is good for the Commonwealth. He remains in power only if the people surrendering power to him are happy. For Hobbes, people must give up their freedoms in order to protect themselves and serve their best interest. For instance, if humans chose anarchy, there would be no laws regarding murder. Everyone would be a potential victim.

So, in order for the egoists to ensure that their safety from murder is at least somewhat ensured, they surrender power to the commonwealth. Rousseau, on the other hand, advocates that people voluntarily give up their freedoms for the good of the whole. Where Hobbes can be seen as an egoist, Rousseau can be seen as a utilitarian. Rousseau believes that the general will of the majority. 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.? Rousseau is attempting to maximize utility. He theorizes that everyone should think of the whole of society and do what is best for society at large, regardless of the consequences or results for the individual. It is this general will that Rousseau believes is the best thing for citizens of the state to abide by.

Unlike Hobbes, for whom government exists to control all members of the society, for Rousseau, the government's responsibility is to pass and enforce legislation that fits into the general will of the population. Additionally, in his text *Leviathan*, Hobbes advocates for a linear monarchy. For Hobbes, the decisions made by the sovereign are completely arbitrary, so long as the people follow the decision the reasoning behind it does not matter. He argues that a monarchy by heredity works best for governing purposes as there is no threat of competition from within society. For Rousseau, monarchy is not an acceptable form of government as the good of all can be easily sacrificed by a monarch with self-interest. Instead of a monarchy that is constant and stable, Rousseau advocates a government that is best suited to the needs of the citizens.

For Rousseau, the leaders are temporary. The citizens entering into the contract are free to constantly review the leaders and replace them when it seems fit for the good of the whole. Rousseau advocates that leadership positions in which talents and skills are needed should be elected by the majority.

Utilitarianism-Principle of Utility

A government has power and deserves to hold and exercise its power as long as it provides for maximum utility. The state's purpose is to provide for the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. As long as it does so it deserves to continue. If it does not do so the government ought to be changed for one that does provide for utility.

Crash Course Philosophy: Utilitarianism



Resource

Utilitarianism Resources

Libertarian

John Locke

Rational beings agree to surrender a small portion of their freedom but not the right to life, property, representation and other goods. Individuals are not to become slaves to the state. John Locke was the British philosopher who outlined the central tenets of empiricism in philosophy and in political theory argued that civil authorities rule only with the consent of those who are governed.

Locke chose to avoid controversy by publishing his political writings anonymously. With the two treatises of civil government (1690) Locke established himself as a political theorist of the highest order. The first treatise is a detailed refutation of the (now-forgotten) monarchist theories of Robert Filmer, but the second treatise of government offers a systematic account of the foundations of political obligation. On Locke's view, all rights begin in the individual property interest created by an investment of labor. The social structure or commonwealth, then, depends for its formation and maintenance on the express consent of those who are governed by its political powers. Majority rule thus becomes the cornerstone of all political order, and dissatisfied citizen's reserve a lasting right to revolution. Similarly, Locke's letter concerning toleration (1689) argued for a broad (though not limitless) acceptance of alternative religious convictions.

John Locke and Liberalism: Private Property



Radical Libertarian: John Hospers

John Hospers, Ph. D., was an early leader in the libertarian movement. He was the libertarian party's first presidential candidate in 1972, and at the time headed the University of Southern California's philosophy department. His book *Libertarianism* was one of three books defining early libertarian philosophy, the other two being Rothbard's *Libertarian Manifesto* and Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. He is professor emeritus in philosophy at the University of Southern California and author of such important philosophical texts as: *meaning and truth in the arts*, *human conduct*, and *an introduction to philosophical analysis*. His numerous philosophical essays are well known for their clear and careful style. In 1972, John Hospers served as the first libertarian party candidate for president. He has served from then until now as a reference point and inspiration for scholars interested in basic questions of liberty. "The only legitimate function of the state is to protect individuals from internal and external threats to their security and property. The least government possible is the best government possible."

OmoniaVinieris (QCC, 2002) on The Libertarian Theory of Government

Libertarianism is the most diplomatic and open-minded political philosophy in the world. The application of the concept of non-coercion is crucial to the libertarian theory of government. Libertarians are passionate opponents of physical coercion because as they are promoters of freedom. They see aggressive and coercive force as a threat to libertarian principles of freedom. The initiation of forceful action is considered to be immoral, especially where government is concerned. The use of force, if permissible by a regime, is deemed to be an infringement upon an individual's right to life, liberty, property, self-governance or belief. Therefore, the libertarian notion of non-coercion adamantly sets restrictions on governmental authority in order to ensure that certain unalienable rights which uphold autonomous principles are not violated.

Although libertarians oppose the initial use of force, the act of exercising force first, there are two types of force that are urged with the aim of upholding one's personal and property rights. Defensive force is acted upon when one's rights are threatened. It is then that an individual uses force to defend himself and his safety. The government, in turn, should also execute the power to protect individuals by means of defensive force. When one's own survival is imperiled, then the choice to forcibly defend one's self is a valid and anticipated option. Retaliatory force is a form of retribution against those who initiated force upon an individual. The judicial systems of most states are sanctioned to penalize those who initiated the force. Whereas coercion and aggression are condemned by libertarians, force that safeguards the survival and justice of individuals is welcomed into non-coercive policy.

Libertarians embrace the idea of minimal governmental intervention. They regard a government that governs least to be one that governs best. Libertarians constantly strive to debilitate the role of government in society. Governments should solely absorb themselves with the moral foundation of preserving and safeguarding individuals' rights and with the interdiction of forceful action. Yet, the truth of the matter is that governmental administrators permit the initiation of force in order to attain political and authoritative recognition from the people. Government is occasionally understood to be an institution of forceful control and that is why libertarians attempt to suppress its authority. Libertarians argue that the government does not possess some special type of supernatural entitlement that justifies the violation of its citizens' rights. In a free society, the government purely functions to defend and retaliate against those who instigate and use force. As we can see, libertarians agree with force that is executed for defensive and retaliatory purposes against those who initiate the force. By no means, however, should the government be the initiator of force.

On the whole, libertarians assert that mutual consent and agreement are peaceful and diplomatic means in which people should opt to deal with each other. The following aspects of freedom roughly encapsulate libertarian doctrine:

- Freedom is life: On the condition that people do not violate the rights of other individuals, they rightfully may live their lives as they wish. Personal and property rights encompass the notion of living happily and freely.
- Freedom is responsibility: People have the freedom of choice which means they are solely accountable for the consequences of their actions.
- Freedom is justice" Force is an acceptable choice if it appropriately serves to defend and retaliate against those who initiate force and infringe upon your rights to live.

Read

- [Locke on Social Order](#)
- [Locke On the Dissolution of Government](#)

Marxism

Property belongs to the state that distributes it for human welfare. The state takes from each, as they are able and gives to each, as there is need. The function of providing justice is that which legitimizes political authority (power). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto*.

Omonia Vinieris (QCC, 2002) on Marxist Theory of Government

Karl Marx's theory of government is best expressed in his book the *Communist Manifesto*. In this book, Marx explains the goals of communism, an evolutionary form of its socialist origin. The law and the state arise out of the development of classes at odds with each other throughout the course of history. Ultimately, socialism will triumph as class conflict comes to an end. In its demise comes along the elimination of private property. At this point there will be no need for law or the state as history will remain in a seamless state of stillness.

Class conflict initially arises from the emergence of property. As each class strives to acquire property, in the ends one eventually overpowers and exploits the other in its struggle. Thus, Marx explains that class struggles are inherently anchored in the manipulation of one class by another. Historical progression throughout the ages is the immediate outcome of class struggle. At this point in time, we are in the capitalist stage of history. Capitalism is an economic system in which individuals or corporations privately own the means of production. This concept of private property is what distinguishes this capitalist phase of history from past eras. However, these relationships between the classes will cease to be congruent as the developing means of production give rise to an imbalance. At this point, a revolution transpires and a new dominant class materializes.

Marx explains that capitalism is the most decisive stage of historical progression because it is in its imminent future that socialism will triumph and all classes will expire from existence. In socialist theory private property is subject to collective control of the state. Class struggle is the driving force behind the sequence of a capitalist shift to socialism. As soon as the conflict between the classes comes to an end, history itself will come to a standstill and perfect bliss will pervade the earth in its socialist state. The classes in discord in the present capitalist stage of history are of two sorts: the property owners who do not work (bourgeoisie), and the property-less workers (proletariat). The proletariat will eventually revolt as the relationship between the two classes fails because capitalism proves to be erratic and unsteady. In due course this revolution will beget the take-over of socialism. Private property will then be demolished by the proletariat. Thus it is acquisition of property that renders the divergent nature of the classes. Socialism would implicate Utopian means of production. The law and the state will serve no purpose in a socialist state because order and equality will prevail.

Philosophically speaking, Marxism falls into the branch of empiricism called dialectal Materialism. This philosophy's focal point is on the senses which recognize peripheral actuality exclusive of emotional intervention. Hegel, Marx's collaborator, helped to define the dialectic aspect of Materialist Philosophy in that ideas are always in motion or in a constant state of change. Change is the continual clash between ideas as we see in struggling classes of history. The emergence of a first thesis conflicts with the emergence of an antithesis. From these opposing ideas springs a resolution called a synthesis. This process repeats itself until one day a final synthesis subdues the two conflicting ideas (socialism).

Read

- Biography: [Karl Marx](#)
- Bibliography: [Links to Karl Marx](#)

[The Political Theory of Karl Marx](#)



Justice Theory

According to this approach a government deserves to hold and exercise power as long as it provides for justice. If it does not do so then it should be altered or overturned for a government that does provide for justice. No justice, no peace. What does justice mean?

Plato's theory of justice involved the idea of the harmony of all parts. When all parts of society are working as they are supposed to do, when they are fulfilling their purpose then there shall be justice in the state.

Crash Course Philosophy: What is Justice?



Plato's Theory of Justice

Plato asserts that functional specialization demands from every social class to specialize itself in the station of life allotted to it. Justice, therefore to Plato is like a manuscript that exists in two copies, and one of these is larger than the other. It exists both in the individual and the society. But it exists on a larger scale and in more visible form in the society. Individually "justice is a 'human virtue' that makes a man self-consistent and good: socially, justice is a social consciousness that makes a society internally harmonious and good."

Justice is thus a sort of specialization. It is simply the will to fulfill the duties of one's station and not to meddle with the duties of another station, and its habitation is, therefore, in the mind of every citizen who does his duties in his appointed place. It is the original principle, laid down at the foundation of the state, "that one man should practice one thing only and that the thing to which his nature was best adopted." True justice to Plato, therefore, consists in the principle of non-interference. Plato as a perfect has considered the state whole in which each individual which is its element, functions not for itself but for the health of the whole. Every element fulfills its appropriate function. Justice in the platonic state would, therefore, be like that harmony of relationship where the planets are held together in the orderly movement. Plato was convinced that a society that is so organized is fit for survival. Where men are out of their natural places, there the co-ordination of parts is destroyed, the society disintegrates and dissolves. Justice, therefore, is the citizen sense of duties.

Plato's Theory of Justice



John Rawls' Theory of Justice

The function of the state is to provide justice as fairness, an arrangement of institutions whereby maximal liberty consistent with equal opportunity and a principle to benefit the worst off is the central principle. (the maxi min principle)

Some criticize Rawls' notion of justice for requiring that the least well-off be cared for and made better and that the view of the least well off is a relative notion or judgment of their situation and not an absolute judgment.

Illustration:

- Let's say that there are 10 people.
- Their income ranges from \$1,000,000 to \$50,000 per year.
- The average income is \$150,000.

Why should we care about the least well off (\$50,000) in the group relative to the others and even least well off compared to the average if that person is making \$50,000/year in a society where \$50,000 provides for a very comfortable life?

Relative to the average the \$50,000 person is negative or down \$100,000 from the average. But still the \$50k might be pretty good in an absolute sense that it provides well for all the basics of life.

Now you can substitute for the annual income:

- Physical abilities
- Type of residence
- Ability to think, do math, speak foreign languages, make music, paint , etc...

Why would justice always require taking care to improve the position of the least well off-relative to the others? Take the [Political Compass Test](#) and then review the analysis of your answers.

Conclusion

So there are a variety of theories on government. There are a variety of political philosophies. Each offers its view on how it is that government is to hold and exercise power over individuals. Each operates within a more general view of how it is that society ought to be regulated. One of the ways in which governments must act is to resolve the conflicts that arise in every society between the interests that individuals have in their own welfare and happiness and the interest that the group as a whole has in its welfare. This will be the subject of the next section.

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9.4: Individual vs. Group Interest and Inequality

Individual vs. Group Interest

So there are a variety of theories on government. There are a variety of political philosophies. Each offers its view on how it is that government is to hold and exercise power over individuals. Each operates within a more general view of how it is that society ought to be regulated. Each has what Plato would term an “ideal model” according to that model government acts. One of the ways in which governments must act is to resolve the conflicts that arise in every society between the interests that individuals have in their own welfare and happiness and the interest that the group as a whole has in its welfare.

In any society there is a natural tension between the interests of individuals and the interest of the group as a whole. There is a conflict between what individuals want and what serves their interests and what is needed for the welfare, safety and security of the entire group. Government needs to moderate that conflict. Depending on the type of view that is operative concerning the nature of the social arrangement and the nature of government, the conflict will be resolved in favor of one or the other sets of interests.

Crash Course Philosophy: Political Ideology in the USA



Examples:

1. Individuals may believe that they have the right to smoke tobacco. The group or society as a whole has an interest in preserving its health and well-being. How is the conflict to be resolved? In different societies there are different resolutions. In those favoring individualism there may be a great amount of freedom and a great reluctance on the part of government to restrict the liberties of individuals even when they are placing the welfare of others in jeopardy. In other societies that favor the common good over that of individuals there is less reluctance on the part of that government to intervene in the personal lives of individuals in order to preserve the common welfare and provide for the common good.
2. Individuals have an interest in preserving their earnings and using them as they see fit. In most countries the government takes a portion of those earnings through taxation and distributes the goods and services purchased with those funds as the government thinks best to provide for the more general good.
3. Individuals may want to ride in their automobiles without wearing a seat belt. Society acts to protect itself from foolish behavior that threatens the common welfare. Government enacts laws requiring the use of seat belts in order to reduce the number of accidents in which the drivers are injured and become so impaired that society must provide for their medical and physical care for the rest of their lives.
4. Individuals have an interest in self-protection, sporting pleasure, or hunting and so want to have guns and handguns. Society has an interest in reducing injuries and deaths caused by the use of such devices as weapons involved in crimes or accidents. In some countries government has acted for the common welfare and has prohibited private ownership of such devices.

There are many other examples of such conflicts. If you consider some of the social topics of greatest interest and concern today you will probably find this basic conflict involved in it in some way. In the USA in 2001 consider the topics of the government’s tax surplus and what is to be done with it or education and whether or not to allow for vouchers for parents to use in selecting a school. Both of these topics involve individual interest against that of the group.

The topics involved with social and political philosophy are far from being uninteresting or unimportant. The theories of philosophers who discuss such topics are far from being of no concern to that of society. The ideas of philosophers on these matters

have led directly or indirectly to revolutions and legislation and many social and political activities in all nations of the world.

A great problem facing the USA and the world at this time that involves the conflict between individual and group interests is the growing enormity of the inequality in wealth and income. Ideas concerning distributive justice and forms of government that would provide for such justice will be involved in the settlement of this conflict.

Inequality

The topics involved with social and political philosophy are far from being uninteresting or unimportant. The theories of philosophers who discuss such topics are far from being of no concern to that of society. The ideas of philosophers on these matters have led directly or indirectly to revolutions and legislation and many social and political activities in all nations of the world. In the coming years there will be more attention given to and perhaps some activity to address the issue of the increasing inequality in wealth and in income between those who have a great deal and the many who have very little. There is perhaps no greater example of the conflict between the interests of the many or the whole of society and the interests of the few individuals who currently enjoy a vastly greater amount of wealth and the influence over social reforms than the vastly larger number of people who have far less wealth and little or no influence over the the agencies of social and economic reform. While many people in the USA indicate that they would prefer a much greater and more equal distribution of goods, services and wealth at the same time they tend to greatly underestimate the degree of the current inequality in both wealth and income. This is true no matter what the political affiliation or leanings. This lack of awareness or ignorance proves to be a major obstacle to meaningful discussions and potential reforms.

By "wealth" what is meant would be the total value of all that a person possesses which would include the value of homes and automobiles, boats, personal possessions, businesses and any savings or stocks and bonds or any other such investments. Wealth is usually not used for daily expenditures or factored into household budgets, but combined with income it comprises the family's total opportunity "to secure a desired stature and standard of living, or pass their class status along to one's children." Moreover, "wealth provides for both short- and long-term financial security, bestows social prestige, and contributes to political power, and can be used to produce more wealth." Hence, wealth possesses a psychological element that awards people the feeling of agency, or the ability to act. The accumulation of wealth grants more options and eliminates restrictions about how one can live life.



Wealth and Inequality in the USA

In 2014 the top 1% of the USA population (330,000,000) possessed 40% of all the wealth in the USA. That would be 3 million people who have as much as 120 million people. The bottom 80% own just 7% of the whole. By 2015 reports indicated that the top 1% own more than the bottom 90%. That would be 3 million people who have as much as 290 million people. The gap is growing each year. That gap between the top 10% and those in the middle is more than 1,000% and the gap between the top 1% and the middle class is 2000%.

Dennis Gilbert asserts that the standard of living of the working and middle classes is dependent upon income and wages, while the rich tend to rely on wealth, distinguishing them from the vast majority of Americans.

Workers in the USA need to labor for a month in order to earn what the typical CEO earns in one hour. Inequality in wealth is not the same as inequality in income, but they are related and similar in many ways. In *Inequality For All*—a 2013 documentary with Robert Reich in which he argued that income inequality is the defining issue for the USA—Reich states that 95% of economic gains went to the top 1% net worth (hnwi) since 2009 when the recovery allegedly started.

The disparity grows greater each year and the economic structures support that continuing. In a special report in the New York Times "By Molding Tax System, Wealthiest Save Billions" by Noam Scheiber and Patricia Cohen December 29, 2015. It is reported that "the very wealthiest families are able to quietly shape tax policy that will allow them to shield their income using maneuvers available only to several thousand Americans"

You can read commentary on the inequality in New York city in a column by Paul Krugman, "Inequality and the City." You can read about how the tremendous accumulation has changed the skyline in New York City "as a new high society climbs in Manhattan, it's a race to the top."

Wealth and Inequality in America



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