

Introduction to Philosophy (HACC) Part 1

- Revised Fall, 2018

How to Study Philosophy

- Attention to reasons and arguments
- Give reasons
- Be prepared to argue
- Defend interpretations rationally
 - Don't "feel," think
- More emphasis on reasoning than "right answer"

Nature of philosophical arguments

- Complex and abstract
 - See things in relationship
 - Seem persuasive and flawed at the same time
- No philosophical idea or value is sacred
- Try to understand the "whole" issue
 - Strong opinion doesn't mean you're "right"
 - Don't "shoot from the hip"

Some Tools & Techniques

- Pencil, highlighter
- Check out technical terms
- Reread as necessary; vary reading speed
- Take breaks to allow unconscious processing

Topic # 1: Relativism and Truth

- Relativism: The Sophists
 - Origins, Character, Ideas
 - Protagoras
 - Thrasymachus
 - Callicles
- Truth
 - Socrates
 - Plato

Origins of the Sophists: Social and political relativism

- Aristocrats
- "New money"
 - Paralleled in "tyrants": strong men who set aside aristocracies
- "Demos": the masses
 - Movement toward right of people to rule themselves

Origins of the Sophists: Cultural relativism

- Myth or Science?
 - Myth: capricious gods disorder
 - Science: unified but impersonal explanation, e.g, Thales (61)
- Trade and War
 - awareness of other cultures

- War → breakdown of self-certainty
- Is our culture really the best?

Character of the Sophists

- “Wise-ists”
- “Sophisticated”
- Travelers: “We’ve seen too much”
- Rejected “narrow-mindedness”
- Teach young men how to “get ahead”
- Winning was everything

Relativism (82-3)

- Knowledge is relative to the observer
 - Individual (problem of conflict)
 - Cultural (problem of the reformer)
- Basic Ideas of the Sophists
 - Good and bad matters of custom
 - Truth subservient to power
 - Truth-claims are really power-claims.

Protagoras (83-87)

- “Man is the measure of all things” (85)
- No claims to authority had any objective truth
 - Is the air cold or warm?
- Live in way that is best for community
 - Conservative, be “conventional”

Moral Realism: Thrasymachus

- Right is defined as the interest of the ruling class (108 middle)
 - We criticize people who rob in a small way, but a great conqueror is praised.
- Moral realism = “Might makes right”
 - It is right to exercise one’s power
 - The “is-ought” fallacy

Does might really make right (109)?

- Do you obey the ruler when he is wrong?
 - The ruler is “just” = “right”
 - To be “right”= act x is “in one’s interest”
 - So, always obey the ruler
 - But what if act x is not in one’s interest?
- Socrates (110): sometimes justice is “in the interest of the stronger,” and sometimes it’s not

Callicles (88-89)

- Why do people make laws?
 - Here Callicles differs from Thrasymachus
- Why does Callicles believe that the strong should rule?
- Superior Individual
- (Gyges Ring: 81)

Socrates & Plato

- Socrates as truth-seeker

- Plato

Socrates as a Teacher

- Dialectic: Question and answer
 - Help student realize truth in one's self
 - Lead through the process
- Irony
 - Literal / hidden: usually opposite
 - Indirection
 - Does this mean what it appears to mean?
- Chief irony ignorance
 - I don't know

The "Divine Sign"

- The Divine Sign
 - "no man is wiser than Socrates": (111; 119-20)
 - Why did the artisans lack true wisdom (113 bot.)?
 - The wisdom attainable by man (113 top)
 - Vs. "superhuman" wisdom
- The Soul = psyche (110)
 - "Physician of the soul" (114)
 - "Wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul"

Plato: What is "real"?

- (Protagoras) Things constantly change
- What is matter?
 - If nucleus = baseball, atomic diameter would be ≈ 2.5 miles
 - Electrons have no size

Plato's problem (pp. 66, 67)

- Parmenides: "what is, is"
 - Nothingness (no-thing-ness) doesn't exist
 - If things change, can they be real?
- Zeno's "dichotomy paradox"
 - to go $\frac{1}{2}$ the distance, you must go $\frac{1}{4} \dots \frac{1}{8}, \frac{1}{16}$, etc. You will never get "there"
 - motion is "nothing"
 - $v = d/t$; how do you calculate motion in an infinitely small period of time?

Plato's solution

- "two-worlds theory": appearance and reality = Becoming/Being
- Forms (133): "essence" of whatever has being
 - by forms we re-cognize what a thing "is"
 - (experienced by pre-incarnate souls)
 - some forms are "essential," others are "accidental"
- The "form" of a thing is what is "real"

Plato's "myths"

- "The Divided Line" (139)
- "the Sun" (141)

- “The Cave” (144)

Topic # 2: Epistemology

- What does it mean to say, “I know x”?
- Rationalism: René Descartes
- Empiricism: John Locke
- Idealism: George Berkeley
- Skeptic Empiricism: David Hume
- Transcendental Idealism: Immanuel Kant
- Pragmatism: Charles S. Pierce

René Descartes (Overview)

- Basic ideas
 - Detachment: from social order & traditions → think for self
 - Refusal to accept authority: religious or philosophical
- Why we need method
- The method of Doubt
- Rationalism: Knowledge based on reason

Building up knowledge

- Innate ideas (251)
 - Not gained by observation or experience
 - A priori: reason, not sensation (opposite of a posteriori—257)
- Coherence theory of truth
 - New ideas evaluated in relation to already established ideas
 - Truth must be rational, logical, consistent
- Knowledge must be immediate

Method & method of doubt

- Must find truth in a particular order
 - Must follow a certain process (reproducible)
 - Start with self-evident ideas → deduce
- Method of doubt:
- Doubt whatever is not clearly and distinctly known (258, 256)
- Clear and distinct knowledge → truth

Doubting everything

- Even the world might be a dream
- (But it seems real) → evil genius
- So doubt everything
- What is the one thing you know when you doubt everything?
- Cogito ergo sum (260-262)

The Epistemological Turn

- Descartes and Rationalism
 - Reason
 - innate ideas
- British empiricism
 - All ideas traced back to sense data
 - “Experience”
 - → “Empirical” science

John Locke

- No innate ideas
- Tabula rasa
- Ideas come from experience
- “Empiricism”
- The mind is a “blank slate” filled by experience.
- Ideas less intense copies of sensations

Correspondence theory of truth (280)

- An idea is true if it corresponds to an actually existing something
- What sensation does “love” correspond to?
- Check truth of an idea: confirmation or verification

Locke’s egocentric predicament (283)

- Must check internal mental reality against “real” sensation...
- ...But that sensation is itself a mental reality.
 - Never experience raw sense data
 - We must be able to verify our perceptions of the external world, but we are “in” our own minds
 - The world we know is our own (“egocentric”) mental construction

George Berkeley (idealism)

- Sensations constantly changing (285); so what is the “thing”?
- Only ideas exist
 - Mental states
 - We know only things as perceived
- If a tree falls in a forest with no one to hear it, does it make a sound?

Esse est percipi (286)

- “To be is to be perceived”
- Yet I know “I” exist
- Therefore, I am perceived by something else
- = God (universal perceiver)

David Hume (Overview)

- Impressions and Ideas
 - Impressions immediate “forcible”
 - Ideas less “forcible and lively”
- Empirical criterion of meaning
- Denial of causality

Empirical criterion of meaning (292)

- (Ideas aren't as intense as perceptions)
 - So what does an idea mean?
- All meaningful ideas must be traced to sense experience
- What sensation is a person pointing to when they say "God"?

Is "cause-and-effect" meaningful?

- We don't perceive a "body," but impressions (295)
 - Imagination fills in the gaps
- Science thought that cause-and-effect was "universal, necessary, and certain"
- But we don't know A always and without exception was followed by B
- All that we know is that one event happens to follow another (296-297)

Kant (Overview)

- Response to Hume's Critique
- Labels for Kant's epistemology
 - Critical epistemology (doesn't take for granted)
 - Formalism (what are the forms)
 - Transcendental idealism
- The structure of knowledge

Response to Hume's critique

- (314, especially last ¶ of quote)
- Hume doubted ability of reason to provide logically certain evidence
- Took experience for granted — never doubted reality of external world or usefulness of reason

Critical epistemology

- Asks: how is knowledge possible?
 - Critical: doesn't take itself for granted
 - Reflects on its own character
- A priori knowledge
 - Prior to experience
 - Even so, it is "triggered" by experience
 - Knowledge of knowledge

Formalism

- Structure ("form") of ideas
- Metaphysics gets the structures of the mind
- (317): ideas "must conform to the mind"
- Process of thinking; not the content of thought
- Pattern of organization

Transcendental idealism

- = “Transcendental ideas”: Not ideas about “things”
- Structure of knowledge
 - Concepts about knowledge in the mind
 - “Transcend” anything we can actually experience, yet make experience possible
- That are products of reason alone...
 - Yet triggered by experience

“Mental grid”

“Mental grid” (2)

The structure of knowledge

- The “mental grid” makes thinking possible (317 bottom)
 - Perceptions “fit in” the “grid”
 - Or, are “filtered through” a lattice
- Two forms of reality (318)
 - Phenomenal: Experience, reality as we perceive it
 - Noumenal: “things in themselves”; “objective reality”

Categories of understanding

- Space is already present before we perceive any objects in space
- Time doesn’t “exist,” but everything happens in the flow of time
- Causality (cause and effect) is a relationship our mind projects upon two events

An American Epistemology

- Charles S. Peirce: pragmatism (425)
- Meanings of words depend on some kind of action
- Differences between the meanings of words are how they test out in experience
 - Sensible effects = consequences
- Context dependent (science vs. religion)
- Does “God” make a “practical difference”?

Review:

“The Epistemological Turn”

Part 2: Do I have a self?

Origins of the concept of “self”

- What makes it “move”?
 - Pneuma (“wind”) and Psyche (“breath”)
 - life-force
- What is beyond-the-physical?
 - Body: Corporeal (from Latin, “corpus”)
 - Spirit: Non-corporeal
- Self-consciousness

Some answers

- Essentialism: the soul or self has an essence
- Materialism: you are your body
- Memory or consciousness
- Bundle theory of the self
- The self is a transcendental idea

Essence in Aristotle (164-5)

- Qualities, Function = “Form”
- The form of a living being is soul (170 bottom)
- Form is in matter
 - Matter (“stuff”) individualizes a thing (“this thing”)
 - Form (=“soul”) determines what (kind of living) thing it is

Hierarchy of Souls (170-1)

- Nutritive/vegetative: take in nutrition, grow, reproduce
- Sensitive/sentient: move in response to sensation
- Rational (deliberation)
- Hierarchy: “the more animated a thing is, the more ‘moves’ it has”
 - Ranked by potentiality

Conclusion of Aristotle

- “Essence” is “soul”
- Human “soul” is what makes any member of the human species human
- “Soul” is the form, joined to the matter
- All humans have the same “soul”

Essentialism (2): Dualism (268-70)

- Descartes: “I think therefore I am”
 - Mind: a substance that thinks
 - Body is “extension”
 - Two “substances”: dualism
- Mind and Body
 - Mind not like a “pilot in a vessel”(=a driver in a car)
 - Rather, mind and body are united

Solution 2: the body

- =Materialism
- Would you agree to be duplicated and killed in order to get \$400 million?
- “Theseus’ ship”
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ship_of_Theseus
 - If a body is constantly changing, is it the same “thing”?
 - (mummies)

Locke, Self as memory (solution 3)

- A “man” is a “thinking or rational being” joined to a body
 - But the body (=“substance”) changes (e.g., after sleep)
- Not continuity of substance, but continuity of consciousness
- =Person (“man” ≠ “person”)
 - “It is the same self now it was then”

- Identity
- “It is self to itself ... as far as the same consciousness can extend to actions past or to come”

The Prince and the Cobbler

- If the soul of a prince enters the body of a cobbler, what would he be?
 - As a man, he would be a cobbler
 - Yet the person of the prince
- Is Socrates waking to blame for what Socrates sleeping did?
- If a sleep-walker doesn't remember murdering another, should he be punished?

Reid

- Can you define “identity”?
 - Is the “conviction of our own continued existence and identity” proof of it?
 - Can a person have “parts”?
- Reid: “memory gives the most irresistible evidence of my being the identical person” = “personal self”
 - Locke: personal identity is “continuity of consciousness”
 - Is there a difference between memory constituting identity, and memory being evidence for identity?

“The Brave Officer Paradox”

- An man who became an officer experienced 3 events
 - flogged at school for robbing an orchard
 - captured a standard as a lieutenant = O1
 - is now a general = O2
- O1: Captures standard, remembers flogging
- O2: Remembers standard, forgets flogging
- Are O1 and O2 the same person?

David Hume: introduction

- What's the “meaning” of “identity”? (empirical criterion: 292)
- I do not have an impression of a body (295)
 - Nothing “holding” me “together”
 - All I “know” of my “body” are individual sensations
- I do not have an impression of a “soul”
 - No single “thing” that makes me “me”
 - All I know are momentary experiences
- Imagination fills in the gaps (=coherence)

Bundle theory of the “self” 292-3

- Have no single impression of “self”
- The “self” is a “bundle” of rapidly changing impressions
- Philosophical Query, 294
- Identity is a mental act

Bundle theory of the “self” (2)

- Do you “observe some real bond [=identity] among [your] perceptions”?
- What connects the “parts” of “the self”?
- If the answer is “nothing,” does that prove that the “self” is not a single, self-identical thing?

Kant's Answer to Hume (319, 320)

- Hume: we don't know the self

- Kant: how do we explain the unity among our separate experiences?
 - There must be some-“thing” uniting separate experiences of “self” together
 - This “self” is a priori

I am a “single Subject”

- The same self has sensations, memory, ...
- Something “brings” it together
- This unity is a priori
- Not experienced, but “already known”

Ethics

- The good is growing the habits which develop good “character”: Aristotle
- The good is doing your duty: Kant
- The good is maximizing pleasure and happiness: Jeremy Bentham & John Stuart Mill

Aristotle: what is “the good”?

- Teleological thinking (174): goal, end
 - The goal (telos) That for which all else is done
 - “Entelechy”: the inner drive that makes a thing become what it is meant to be (170)
- Inadequate goals (176)
 - Pleasure: how does this make you a slave?
 - Making money: need it for something else
 - Honor: what do you need for political success?

Happiness is the goal

- Happiness is reaching one’s “goal” (developing one’s “entelechy”)
 - Happiness is not a means to some other end
 - When you are happy, you do not need anything else
- Eudaimonia: “in a complete life” (173)
 - = “good-spiritedness”

Function, Virtue, Habit, Character

- Function (173, 180 top)
- You are virtuous when you fulfill your function
 - Not simply knowing it, but doing it (180)
- You need to be virtuous consistently = Habit (179)
- Acting habitually creates character
- To be just, act as a just person would act

Virtue is found in “the mean”

- Everything is found in a greater or smaller amount
- Virtue is “the mean between excess or deficiency” (which are vices)
- for humans, the mean is “relative” to each person (174-5) (e.g., Michael Phelps)
- 181 top

Kant's Ethics

- The good will
- Duty
- The Categorical Imperative
- The Kingdom of Ends

The good will (324-5)

- The “rightness” of moral decisions is based on intention, not results
- A good will is a will that wants to obey the law
 - Independent of circumstances
- Actions should be directed by willing
 - Not inclinations (= “instincts”)
 - 325 bottom

Duty

- An intention to act in accordance with “duty” = “deontological” ethics
- Q.: What is “duty”?
- A.: We act in accordance with duty when we act from “respect for the moral law”
 - When we obey the law simply because it is the law
- But what is the moral law?

“The conception of law in itself”

- Formal structure of the law (326, 328 top)
 - What does it mean to call a statement a “law”?
- Universal obligations
 - Not based on experience
 - Based on reason: a priori

The Categorical Imperative (328)

- Act as if the maxim of thy action could be willed to become a universal law of nature
 - “Maxim” = principle, by which you guide your actions
 - Must be universalizable
- Examples
 - Be helped by others, but never help them
 - Always lie if it is to your benefit (e.g., Loan)
 - End my life if that is the only way to improve it

The Kingdom of ends

- Every rational being is an end in himself
 - We use things as means to an end
 - But human beings are not merely a means to an end
 - We are self-legislators (I make laws for myself)
- Humans have unconditional worth
 - Why (329 bottom)?
 - Query, 330

John Rawls (330-1)

- Determine (social) justice by an “original position” of equality
 - Veil of ignorance
- Everyone has an equal right to liberty compatible with liberty for others
- Inequalities such that they are to everyone's advantage

- Esp. for the benefit of the least advantaged

Utilitarianism

- Pleasure is good
- Consequences rather than motives
- Simple Utilitarianism (Jeremy Bentham)
- Refined Utilitarianism (John Stuart Mill)

Simple Utilitarianism

- The greatest happiness principle
- Hedonism (Pleasure determines good)
 - Psychological hedonism (we do seek pleasure)
 - Ethical hedonism (we should seek pleasure)
 - Problem of “is-ought fallacy”

The Principle of utility

- “Utility”: usefulness
 - “The Good” is whatever is useful in achieving the “greatest happiness...”
- “Act always to promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number.”
- Hedonic calculus
 - Hedon
 - Quantify units of pleasure

“Egoistic hook”

- Egoism
 - Everything we do is out of selfishness
 - Psychological egoism (this is distinct from ethical egoism)
- It is in our own self-interest to be concerned about the welfare of others
 - “Enlightened self-interest”
 - Helping others will help me

“Refined Utilitarianism”

- John Stuart Mill
- Not merely quantity, but quality
 - Certain pleasures “better” than others
- The “empirical criterion” (350)
- People do not voluntarily choose the “lower” pleasures (353)

True happiness

- Active involvement with life
 - Not just contentment
 - Higher qualitative pleasures (352, 355)
 - Mental cultivation
- Concern for the whole of society
 - Altruism 354 (against Bentham, who was egoistic)
 - “social feelings of mankind, the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures.”

Education

- Education develops altruism and the “higher pleasures”

- Can all sources of human suffering can be conquered (358)?
- Is the happiness of humanity a proper goal?
- Has the struggle for social reform brought us closer to this goal?

Aristotle (Overview)

- As the basis of Aquinas' "Five Ways" of "proving" God's existence
- Substance, Form
- Matter
- Potentiality and actuality

Form, Essence (164-5)

- What are the specific qualities that make some thing what it is?
- "Form"
 - What a class of things have in common
- Form is in matter
 - Matter ("stuff") individualizes a thing ("this thing")

Form and Matter

- Form is purpose, function
 - To carry out its purpose is to be "actualized"
- Matter
 - Undefined
 - Potential
- Everything is formed matter
 - Form + matter makes an individual thing
 - To be a thing= be a "substance"
 - To be individual = have matter

Potential and Actual

"Proofs" for God's existence according to Thomas Aquinas (Overview)

- Motion (unmoved mover)
- Cause (uncaused cause)
- Necessity (vs. possibility)
- Gradation (Hierarchy)
- Teleological argument

Motion

- Every motion requires some external force to start it moving
 - Motion is from potentiality to actuality
 - Nothing can move itself
 - But what started the series of motions?
- No infinite regress → "unmoved mover"
- Query, 227

Cause

- Every effect has a cause
- Example: 228: cause of “me”
 - “Chicken and egg”; “big bang”
- “Cosmological” argument
- Query, 228
- Uncaused cause

Necessity

- Two classes of being: possible (contingent) and necessary
- No absolute nothing
 - If no space = no motion
 - If no time = no change
 - “Nothing” would always exist (229)
- How do we know that in fact there was at the beginning not-nothing?

Necessity (2)

- The world did not begin with nothing, but with something
- This something had to be necessary
 - A “contingent” being comes from “something else”
 - Otherwise, where did it “come from”?

Gradation, Hierarchy, or degree

- Relative perfection requires absolute perfection: the good/ truth
- All things ordered (“graded”) in a “hierarchy”
- There are “degrees” of better and worse, so there must be a standard of “best”

Teleological argument

- Telos = end, goal
- Non-intelligent creatures do not “plan” their own activities
- However, even so they reach their “end” (goal)
- So, there must be an intelligent being directing them

Problem of evil

- Could we have a meaningful universe without evil?
- Could God have made a world in which rational beings had to be good?
- Would such a world have “gradation”? Would you want to live in a world without “grades” of being?

Hume’s Critique of the argument from design

- Analogy of Cause-and-effect
 - What we customarily experience
 - When making an analogy, must compare exactly similar cases
- Cannot compare “god” with human designers
 - Trial-and-error
 - Imitation
 - ≠ traditional view of God

Hume’s primary arguments

- Nature is too complex and “diverse;” can’t discover its origin by analogy
- Order does not prove that there is design
 - Furthermore, order may be an act of the imagination
- Matter may cause itself
- “We don’t know”

William Paley and the argument from “design”

- If we find a watch, whose “several parts are ... put together for a purpose,” we assume a maker
- Someone/thing had a purpose, which it achieved in making the watch
- We know there is some design

Argument from “design” (2)

- We don’t need to know the identity of the designer
- The design doesn’t have to be perfect
- Our knowledge of design is not explained by...
 - Different combinations of matter
 - Principles of order or natural law
 - Saying we don’t know

Nietzsche & the death of God

- Is God dead?
- Nihilism (nihil): Is a world without objective values worth living in?
- Who are the “herd men”? Religious? Non-religious people?
- Are you willing to be an “overman”? Would you want to live in a world run by “overmen”?
- If there are no values, there why is it good to be an “overman”?