

PART III

Late Medieval to Kant

14th thru 17th Centuries

(Chapters 33 - 45)



Reconsidering Where We Are

We are starting to see a lot of disagreement among the players as to the validity of the arguments put forth by their elders and their contemporaries. Not that this is anything new, but we are also seeing a divergence from previous thinker's foci. So let us pause and take stock of where we are and then where we are going.

So Who Is Right?

It is becoming obvious that just as in religious circles philosophical and scientific adherents can fight like cats and dogs¹ about who is right, or at least *righter*. Unless we take a subjective position at this point, it is hard to determine who is 'right'. Certainly we all have our favorites and there are some thoughts which ring true across all of the thinkers we have examined. But can we declare a winner?

For us today, the last 400 years there seem to follow a specific trend. Does that mean that the post-scholastic modern thinkers won? Maybe not when you take into account that the medieval trend lasted twice that long and the trend that one is based on lasted over a millennia (if not still active today). But does that mean that this latest trend has not still won?

Let us not get stuck there. And so without further ado, and in no particular order, I give you the following for your consideration.

Fire Good....

The Greeks defined the four elements as fire, water, air and earth. We see the world differently now. This is symptomatic of the first struggle we look at: *ideal* versus *real*. Okay, perhaps an oversimplification (what hasn't been, eh?), but the question is *what constitutes reality*, or one way we have put it in the past *is there something or nothing?* What is 'real' has been answered in several ways. Plato felt that what was truly real was something outside of us and our sensual understanding. It was only fully knowable in an intellectual way. The better we understood the closer to reality we came. For Aristotle, the thing in itself contained the reality that we can understand, not some pie in the sky non-sensible idea, so the better we understood the thing the closer we came to the truth.

When we use the words real and ideal, we have a bit of a different take than when most people talk about these things. Ideal things can be *real*. We talked a bit about how that can be during the *nominal* discussion. So perhaps a better set of words for us to think about this with would be *universal* and *particular*, with universal being ideal and particular being real.

For that reason the movement from universal to particular also comes in here. Where reality is located begs the question of are there things which are not known through the senses and only through the intellect?

So what is important about this? It is the answer to what *defines* reality, that is to say, what gives us the basis for understanding what is *real* and how that reality applies to physical objects as well as ideas.

Sunshine On My Shoulder....

¹ That of course would not be in reference to the souls/intellecets in these people being equivalent to those of dogs and cats, or of all animals for that matter.

So, knowing...is it purely an intellectual exercise or do the senses play an important role? As we said above, for Plato matter was bad; for Aristotle it was good.

But we have to look at more than just matter. Can I trust my senses to tell me what is real and what is not real? If there are no universals, then how does one understand universal ideas? If they can be known through sensual observation, is there a need God, or can individual instances understand because of a shared substance? What is the source of universal ideas? Can imperfect senses know them unless there was some perfect source for them?

So what is important about matter versus form? The question is about how we are constructed. Are we constructed in such a manner that we can understand things? Is the intellect alone sufficient to help us understand the world or is it merely the senses which inform the intellect? Basically we ask, what can we trust, our minds, our eyes or does it take both?

The Heart And Soul Of The Matter

Ha, ha. I like that one.

If we are the source of what we know, what is the essence of humanity? If that source lies outside of us, what is the essence of humanity? Is it the 'soul' or something else which approximates that idea? What is the soul? What is its nature? What is its fate?

If there is a soul, what is its source and what is its end. And what does that mean for my behavior? If there is no soul, what is my source and what is my end and what does that mean for my behavior?

The Prime Mover/Cause also jumps into the fray. What is the primary truth? How does that primary truth affect me? Do I share in it or am I separate from it? Does it play into defining me or not. Are we dichotomized into body and soul, matter and spirit? Are we singletons, wholly and completely autonomous?

So what is important about essence? This is another 'how are we constructed' question, but it also takes into account the 'how is the universe constructed' question. Are we sufficiently separate from the universe that we are not slaves to its laws? How much is me and how much is it?

Professional Logician

So where does the argument start? How do we define basic truths? So this is where logic falls in. In a way, the re-introduction of Aristotelian thought was like the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Limited discussion exploded. One of the mines is 'how do we know/think?' Epistemology has always been a part of philosophy, but now it is coming into its own, that is for its own sake. So far we have looked at *why we know* and *how we know something*; now we begin to look at just *how we know*.

In order to do this, most philosophers turn to Logic, establishing the rules for discussing this new learning and thinking. Because of that Logic has seen many flavors and developments, and there are more to come. So stretch your mind backwards. Beginning with the Greeks, discussions of some elements of logic and a focus on methods of inference developed; the Sophists, and later Plato displayed an interest in sentence analysis, truth, and fallacies, but it is not until Aristotle that we see the beginning of a system of logic. His ideas of contraries, affirmative and negative statements, and the syllogistic approach (premise, premise, and conclusion) solidify the understanding of the definition and role of logic.

Aristotle introduced the idea of the interrelationship of the terms within the argument, and the deductive nature of logic but there were other forms. Propositional logic looked less at the terms within the premises and more at the propositions those terms added up to, within the deductive form. This is most often associated with the Stoics, hence the name Stoic Logic. The movement was

then from Aristotle's categories to a more hypothetical basis for logic. This led to many people trying to reconcile the two forms of logic, often to poor or unsatisfactory results.

In the end, Muslims and Scholastics produce a somewhat Neo-Platonized form of Aristotle, but they are really interpretations of Aristotle's logic. What we start to see is logic serving the disciplines for which they are promulgated, like science or math or medicine, as opposed to just philosophy.

We also give a nod to those like the Epicureans who rejected logic.

So what is important about logic? We have been establishing the base ideas from which we can operate and the underlying meanings in everything we say and think. How we accomplish that is relative to the means by which we make those decisions.

Why So Negative?

Though it may not seem that way, *Apophatic* thinking is part and parcel of several of the thinkers we have covered. Does the idea that it is easier to prove what something is not than what it is affect thinking? Is it even a legitimate path? How is not-proving equivalent to proving? Moses Maimonides was our poster child for this but if we look at Anselm's ontological argument, he uses *ad absurdum* to prove his point. Aristotle uses contraries.

What kind of thinking is involved; a priori or a posteriori; deductive or inductive; both or all? So this plays somewhat into the *a priori/a posteriori* or *modal* thinking. What is the best way to think about the world?

So what is important about thinking? Is it merely the optimists versus the pessimists? How we look at the world, our basic attitude toward matter, form, truth, logic or any of the other things we have discussed does make a difference. Is it a matter of one way or the other or does it also take a combination of methods?

So, What Are The Main Points?

Quiz Time.

Thought	Thoughts
What is the reason philosophies develop?	
What were the Greeks mainly concerned with?	
What were the Romans mainly concerned with?	
What were the Apologists mainly concerned with?	
What were the Medievals mainly concerned with?	
What were the Scholastics mainly concerned with?	

What effect does the previous era have on the next?		
What did each group develop in terms of a system in order to support and explain their philosophies?	Greeks	
	Romans	
	Apologists	
	Medievals	
	Scholastics	

Exercise 1: Main Concerns

So What?

Let us examine this. Ultimately, none of these questions exists in a vacuum. Each one impinges somehow on the other. Our ability to think, to perceive, to understand ourselves as separate, as individual yet part of a whole, does that mean that we are different or is that just hubris? What defines us as different than the apes; than God?

This sure is a lot of questions.

Putting It Together

Where are we now? The cusp of the wave we have always been on. Human development and human thought are not separate entities, and both influence and are influenced by the path of civilization. The questions we ask frame the discussions which take place. Sometimes they are the same questions, but the answers are different. That does not mean the same questions do not come up again (and again, and again...).

What is the nature of knowledge and knowing? As the centrality of humanity rises, as well as the 'hard' sciences, what is the basis of truth becomes the central question. So, we actually take this respite because everything we have learned so far is about to be challenged, if not turned upside down outright. Certainly it is still true that without the knowledge which we have, we will be unable to understand what is to come. Our task is to hold onto that idea even when those around us have not.

"...I'm afraid I seem to have strayed somewhat from my original brief. But in a nutshell: sex is more fun than logic. One cannot prove this, but it *is* in the same sense that Mount Everest *is*, or that Alma Cogan *isn't*. Goodnight." **Professional Logician, Monty Python**

Later Than Medieval Philosophy

As per our last discussion, we lovers of wisdom are not in some sort of competition. We each come to contemplate life, mainly our own life, that is, to examine for ourselves, ourselves. Only then can we cast out, by our living of our beliefs like Socrates, for others to benefit. Still, philosophy does begin to reach a kind of ‘publish or perish’ functionality. The promulgation and proliferation of competing ideas (and I do use the word competing) takes on a new level with the expansion of printing and relative ease and safety of movement.

Scholasticism opens the door not only to the Enlightenment to come but also to its own demise.

The Players

Dates	Philosophers	Main Points
1466-1536	Erasmus	<i>Master of Latin and Greek; first to use print; anti-philosophy</i>
1469-1527	Niccolo Machiavelli	<i>Political philosopher;</i>
1472-1529	Wang Yang-Ming	<i>Neo-Confucian; championed Mencius; innate knowing; knowledge and action are one; our mind shapes our world.</i>
1478-1535	Thomas More	<i>Lord Chancellor of England; Utopia</i>

Table 1: Late Medieval Players

The Final Bow

Medieval philosophy sits in the balance between Plato and Aristotle as well as the *ancient* and the *modern* periods. It is the movement from the more theological Platonic thought to Aristotelian thought which was more suited to the rising ‘natural sciences’².

As we discussed before, this does not mean that it is a smooth transition from Plato to Aristotle. Still the Medievals have been put on notice. The run was good but now it is over. The blatant dualism of theological explorations is giving way to the seeming monism of humanism and scientific research. No longer is God and Humanity the focus as much as is Humanity and Nature (of which humanity is part).

A Brief Historical Interlude (The Ebb Of History)

Okay. So a brief mention of some of the historical events which are happening here and may seem to have some bearing on our conversation as well but first a quick timeline.

‘Modern’ Philosophy -- The divisions of the history of modern philosophy are as follows:

- The Renaissance (1453-1690) — from the end of the Middle Ages to the publication of Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*.
- The Enlightenment (1690-1781) — to the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.
- German Philosophy (1781-1831) — to the death of Hegel.
- The Nineteenth Century Philosophy (1820—1900.)

² Not opposed to ‘Natural Philosophy’

So as you can see, it looks like we are on a pretty short road to the present, except for all of the historical markers we will stop at along the way.

Renaissance And Reformation

Aside from the two hundred or so years in between them, we often see these two as one thing. They are not one in the same, nor does one lead necessarily to the other. That said of course there is a connection. But first: the Renaissance was about re-birth and the Reformation was about renewal; the Renaissance hinged on the 're-discovery' of classical (read Greek and Roman) art and writings. The Reformation hinged on the rising call for renewal against abuses in the Church against doctrine.

The call for renaissance was answered by the likes of da Vinci, Gutenberg, and Michelangelo. The call for reformation was answered by the likes of Francis of Assisi, Erasmus and Martin Luther.

When we think of the term 'Renaissance Man'³, we think of a person who did it all; their interests and pursuits were not limited to one subject or area of interest. This is nothing new as we have seen, and even though it is an echo back to the classical period, we understood that these guys exist in every time and place. What we are really talking about are people who have egos large enough to allow them to think that they can be an expert on/conquer any subject or problem.

So what is the difference and why do we care? The Renaissance was a relatively short period contained within the timeframe of the Reformation. The Reformation lasted much longer, and took on different forms depending on the times⁴. We care because both impact the philosophical timeline. The rejection of Scholasticism meant that doctrine was once again called into question. It also meant that the answers to some of life's persistent questions were open to new interpretation. The rejection of Scholasticism also meant an end to the scholastic system of education.

The Rising Tide

The Renaissance produced a new tide of Skepticism, so much so that it earned that name in academic circles (i.e. *Renaissance Skepticism*). Think back to the original Skeptics, at least our introduction to them (*Chapter 24*). The idea that nothing can be known or known for certain plays into the rise in apophatic thinking.

So what? Well, what kinds of discussion do you think will arise from this? Are there those who will embrace this thinking and those who will reject it? Add that to the circles they run in, religious, scientific. Think about each group and then think about their reaction to earlier thinkers. Think about their reaction to contemporary thinkers who might utilize earlier thinking.

Now think about the topics which will be discussed in this new ethos. Add humanism into the mix, shake or stir lightly and you get the picture.

A New Reason?

What kind of world will it be where everything can be called into question? How far has this circle come from our first discussion of people like Pythagoras?

What becomes the basis for fact/truth? Take a moment and think about it. What has the history of philosophy shown us (notice the clever segue produced from the last class)?

It is the rise of science that begins to weaken the Scholastic system. The move from deductive to inductive reasoning. We begin to see the application of knowledge not just for the glory of God

³ No sexism implied....

⁴ And by the way, there was no Counter-Reformation. These reformers saw themselves as reforming *the* Church and should not be confused with the effects of the reforming, which was seen as a separation, and lent itself to the idea that the Roman Church countered their movements.

Against the background of humanistic scholarship, the rise of the new science, and the challenge of skepticism, modern philosophers were preoccupied with philosophical issues in several distinct areas which we should recognize without much effort:

- **Epistemology:** Can human beings achieve any certain knowledge of the world? If so, what are the sources upon which genuine knowledge depends? In particular, how does sense perception operate in service of human knowledge and vice versa?
- **Metaphysics:** What kinds of things ultimately compose the universe? In particular, what are the distinctive features of human nature, and how do they function in relation to each other and the world at large? Does God exist? Is God necessary for what we can observe about the universe?
- **Ethics:** By what standards should human conduct be evaluated? Which actions are morally right, and what motivates us to perform them? Is moral life possible without the support of religious belief?
- **Meta-philosophy:** Does philosophy have a distinctive place in human life generally? What are the proper aims and methods of philosophical inquiry? Is philosophy relevant in the face of 'hard science'?

Although not every philosopher addressed all of these issues and some philosophers had much more to say about some issues than others, our survey of modern philosophy will trace the content of their responses to questions of these basic sorts, which of course sounds a lot like what we have already been doing. Okay. All of that said, let us take a look at some of the players.

Desiderius Erasmus

Erasmus was truly another one of those folks which fits the bill. Considered the greatest scholar of his day he wrote *and published* copious amounts. In the scheme of things he is representative of the movement from the Church-sponsored universities to individual accomplishment, relying on the printers to get his message out. This is not to be confused with or to say that itinerate teachers were not everywhere, but more along the lines that people now came to him as the expert; if they wanted to look smart they hung out with Erasmus.

So start thinking *printing*. The dissemination of ideas does not require the university anymore. More and more people can afford books, and literacy is therefore on the rise (rise, I said, not arrived – the majority of people *saw* Shakespeare's plays, they *never read* them, much to the chagrin of high school students everywhere).

To Erasmus, the philosophers and sages of pre-Christian antiquity were good and worthy of study, but they are far inferior to Christ or any saintly Christian. "*Of the philosophers I should recommend the Platonists because in much of their thinking as well as in their mode of expression they are the closest to the spirit of the prophets and of the gospel.*" (*Enchiridion*, Erasmus)

Eastward Ho!

The Eastern thinkers of this period are not in the same situation. The political and social movements are different than the West. That is not to say that there were not similarities. Political corruption was rampant.

Wang Yang-Ming is perhaps more practical than metaphysical. Wang studied Buddhism and Taoism but finally settled on Neo-Confucianism. He championed the individual's responsibility for investigating their own mind and developing their own knowledge to its potential. What he called the *intuitive faculty*, an innate characteristic of all people, is the one thing an individual has to cling to. Though often obscured, it is hard to obliterate. It is not solely an intellectual function, but is

manifested in sympathetic feeling, true sincerity and commiseration. Wang concluded that a person's original nature is to be used in daily tasks in order to investigate and firmly grasp the truth. This is to be supported by development of the intuitive faculty, development of sincerity of purpose, and guidance of the mind into clear thinking.

Similar to Plato and Aristotle, Wang also concluded that knowledge implies action: that there can be no real knowledge without action. Ethically, the individual should act in the ways that his *intuitive* knowledge of good enables him to do. And in our Prime mover moment for this section, this innate knowledge shows that there is an all-pervading unity that encompasses heaven, earth, and the individual (call it the *logos* if you will).

In advocating a person's responsibility for seeking and following fundamental principles and moral laws, Wang Yang-Ming strongly criticized the prevailing philosophy of rote learning of texts practiced in his day, similar to Roger Bacon. In this and in his emphasizing the strong moral obligation of the individual, he was in conflict with the corrupt philosophical and political circumstances of his own time.

"The mind of the philosopher considers heaven, earth, and all things as one substance. He makes no distinctions between the people of the empire. Whosoever has blood and life is his brother and child. There is no one whom he does not wish to see perfectly at peace, and whom he does not wish to nourish. This is in accordance with his idea that all things are one substance."

Mind, nature, and heaven are one all-pervading unity. Thus, when it comes to knowing them completely, it all amounts to the same thing. But with regard to these three, the actions of men and their strength have degrees, and the regular order should not be overstepped." (The Great Learning, Wang Yang-Ming)

You're A Prince!

Niccolo Machiavelli is like Erasmus in that he is not what we would think of as a philosopher. His best known books, *The Prince*, *Discourses on Livy* and *The Art Of War* are political in nature and deal with the most effective means of securing and maintaining power. It is a political philosophy which emphasizes the prowess of the individual as the reason for success. According to Machiavelli, morality in political life is based on the skill of the actors in terms of their ability to achieve noble ends. In the end it is relative to the amount of success and glory gained.

So morality is more related to the political outcome than the other way around. In the end, bad political decisions produce disquiet and turmoil. Being mean to people in order to further your own ends is bad because it makes people mad.

"As for the rest, for whom it is enough to live securely, they are easily satisfied by making orders and laws that, along with the power of the king, comprehend everyone's security. And once a prince does this, and the people see that he never breaks such laws, they will shortly begin to live securely and contentedly" (The Prince, Machiavelli).

What? There's More?

Whereas Machiavelli is a 'political philosopher', Thomas More is a 'moral philosopher'. To be virtuous is to live according to nature and the dictates of reason. In his work *Utopia* he set out three key principles:

- The soul of a person is immortal which binds us to and makes us aware of God
- God has designed the soul to be happy which helps us to help with the happiness of others

- God has appointed rewards for good and virtuous acts and punishments for vice. These rewards and punishments are distributed after this life which causes us to seek out others and work for the good of all

“As to moral philosophy, they have the same disputes among them as we have here: they examine what are properly good both for the body and the mind, and whether any outward thing can be called truly good, or if that term belong only to the endowments of the soul. They inquire likewise into the nature of virtue and pleasure; but their chief dispute is concerning the happiness of a man, and wherein it consists? Whether in some one thing, or in a great many? They seem, indeed, more inclinable to that opinion that places, if not the whole, yet the chief part of a man's happiness in pleasure; and, what may seem more strange, they make use of arguments even from religion, notwithstanding its severity and roughness, for the support of that opinion so indulgent to pleasure; for they never dispute concerning happiness without fetching some arguments from the principles of religion, as well as from natural reason, since without the former they reckon that all our inquiries after happiness must be but conjectural and defective.” (Utopia, Thomas More)

Putting It Together

How does philosophy change? Does philosophy change? What effects do historical events have on philosophy? Do the questions remain the same, just with changed names to protect the innocent?

What we look at here is a small transitional period. The decline of scholastic thought and the rise of printing are creating a new mix of thinkers. Many do not consider themselves ‘philosophers’ as we have been thinking of them. But what is philosophy; the love of wisdom, the seeking of understanding. Does that mean that any pursuit of knowledge is philosophy? The term natural philosophy for science is a telling statement. We are seeing a transition, recognition that while science seems to be about thinking, there is a certain amount of separation from other ‘philosophy’, such as theology. For the most part, no one during this time is seeing themselves as separate from religious thinking, nor as separate from philosophy in general, though Machiavelli is beginning to show us that trend.

We are certainly seeing the division of the camps though. Morality still plays a hand here, though it seems that sometimes it is the low hand. We can see the changing attitudes toward knowledge, its function and its goal. When we look at Machiavelli and More, do we hear any echoes of earlier thinkers? How is moral thinking changing? What are the roots of that change?

If we no longer dichotomize humans as body and soul, then what effect does that have on thinking? Recall thinkers of the past; what is the function of the soul? We have also looked at the struggle of universals; is there an over-arching set of universals or is it merely a subjective view of who’s right and who’s wrong? (*Bonus*: name that philosophy).

“A majority of the time a majority of the chairs in the world are empty.” **SK**

The Enlightenment

With the questioning of all 'conventional' wisdom, we begin to see a rise in human based intellectualism and rationalism; after all, if the basics are questioned what else can be the source of knowledge? Along those lines, a certain prejudice is present in the titles often bestowed by History. Apparently the participants in the Renaissance were only *renaisséd* not *enlightened*. But that is a rant for another time.

The Players

Dates	Philosophers	Main Points
1561-1626	Frances Bacon	<i>Father of the Inductive method.</i>
1588-1679	Thomas Hobbes	<i>Human as machine; human nature is evil.</i>
1596-1650	Rene Descartes	<i>Certainty is everything, and everything is certain.</i>
1623-1704	John Locke	<i>Knowledge comes from sense perception</i>

Table 2: The Enlightenment Players

The Age Of Enlightenment

At the risk of beating a dead horse, let us begin to explore the rational for this period in the context of this discussion. If everything we know is suspect, both Platonic and Aristotelian, then what is the prime cause/source of/for knowledge? Certainly the sliding scale rise of humanism has produced even more change in the meaning of the term. So, let us take a moment and chart its course and enter into some unfounded pop philo-sociology.

Initially (simplistically?), humanism was a concentration on things human. As time progressed, it came to mean the centrality of individuals to understanding the world. Eventually it would come to mean an emphasis on human so great that it eclipses any other prime cause.

So let us also take a parallel look at the course of development. For this exercise we will use some terms very loosely, like 'Greek', as in, *for the Greeks, humans existed as 'social animals'*. Now we know that that pretty much loosely applies to most Greek philosophy, so do not get excited by any terms we bandy about here. That said, for the Greeks, humans existed as 'social animals'; that is to say, the natural environment for humans was not as individuals, but the group. There is a certain truth in this social order for the Romans as well; think of the reason for the state (again across time, very non-specific to republic or empire); think now of the individual's place in that state.

With some confidence then, we can say that for a long time the individual was only seen in terms of the group. Along come the Medievals. They contend that the individual, while part of the group is also independent of the group. The purpose of the individual is to rise to the ultimate potential of that individual for the enhancement of the group and for individual salvation; from this the whole group benefits. It is the purpose of the group to guide and contain the individual. Still sounds a bit like the Greeks, but the twist is not just the importance of each individual to the success of the group but also the importance of each individual to the success of the individual. What we call Free Will, is the factor which makes the difference in the understanding from earlier groups.

Individual knowledge, understanding and good decisions are imperative to the function of the individual and therefore the group. What can the individual rely upon to help? The struggle becomes one of immanence. What do I believe? What I can see and touch or what I *think* to be possible. Empiricism is the term which applies to both a reliance on sensual observation for learning (i.e. the

scientific method) and as a basis for all human knowledge (i.e. all of our knowledge is sensory based -- where have we heard this kind of stuff before)?

The End Of The Innocence

Paul of Tarsus tells us we should cast off the things and thoughts of childhood and in an ironic twist, so does the Enlightenment. Apparently we keep getting older and discovering that our adolescence lasts longer and longer and there appears to be more and more to throw away.

In reaction to scholasticism and spurred by Renaissance Skepticism, empiricism challenged Aristotle's *metaphysics* so successfully that doubt was cast on the rest of his philosophy too. Not so much on the 'meat' but more on the 'bone'; that is to say more on the prime causes. For instance, many used his scientific method of observation (empirical), and his Nicomachean Ethics remains viable even today because it does not rely on non-material entities such as souls or rights or on a deterministic view of causation as do the more Platonic/Christian/Muslim philosophies.

So Empiricism is that '*well here it is right in front of me, I do not have to look anywhere else*' kind of attitude that while hints of Aristotle, is more similar to the Epicureans. It differs from Aristotle in that it is complete within itself. Aristotle argued that you could not have physics without metaphysics and vice versa. Empiricism relies on the individual and the form and function of that individual, that is to say, how we are built is sufficient to the needs of knowledge. It also implies the knowledge of a thing *within* the thing.

We can see this in Frances Bacon. Bacon used terms we have heard earlier, but like the term *humanism*, he has changed them. *Nature* is the natural phenomena of heat, sound, light, or of any other actual object of the investigations of physical science; *Form* is the inherent laws of these natures.

We can hear the echoes of Aristotle and Aquinas in these thoughts and terms, but we also see the humanistic bent.

Calvin And Hobbes

Just a quick theo-historical note on John Calvin within this philosophical context. Calvin was a Frenchman who fled to Switzerland after some run-ins with theological authorities around 1530. Simplistically understating Calvin's theological thoughts, we focus in on one which he expounded upon in the second book of his major work. There he develops the Augustinian notion of sin and original sin, stating that the theological nature of humans is *evil*. This differs slightly from the earlier more popular notion that the theological nature of humans is good.

'So what', you say (and I must say, you say that a lot). Well take a moment and think about it. Thomas Hobbes, father of modern *materialism*, publisher of a translation of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* and one of the great killjoys of philosophy, certainly did. For Hobbes, human nature is evil and good is a function of society. In a nutshell, human nature is inherently selfish and violent, doomed to endless civil strife ('*war of all against all*') but the state provides stability and security for the people.

Peace and security are more important than liberty and rights so benevolent dictators or some other such strong centralization of power is necessary. Without strong laws and strong enforcement, people will revert to the mud from which they came crawling. The laws of the country (designed to maintain peace and security) are the equivalent of the laws of nature (designed to maintain order).

We can see here a certain amount of that 'here and now' thinking. Everything for Hobbes is based in physical processes. And I mean everything; humans, human history, you name it. This dependence is known as *Materialism*. Hobbes thought about everything and was quite

comprehensive in his decisions about how things worked, of course limited as they were to the physical world. But interestingly enough, he does take on some of those early niggling little discussions we looked at so many chapters before: is there something or nothing? What is motion? There is a substance filling the void between bodies, and interestingly enough, it is God.

All that said, Nature is a mechanism, like a clock. Therefore, the human body is a mechanism and the soul is the cog representing its 'vital' (living) quality. So, the body has a soul, but the driving force is not knowledge or understanding or morality but is tied to the concept of motion. Things happen due to force. The contacting of bodies transmits force from one to the other (passing through that substance which is God). Motion is the effect of this force and for living beings it is manifested in a pain and pleasure response, that is to say, the motion of living beings is due to a force to eschew pain and a force to desire pleasure (we move toward pleasure, away from pain). Human behavior basically comes down to competing motivations of appetite and aversion, all of which is caused by material phenomena.

In the end, I think, his main concern is the problem of social and political order: how human beings can live together in peace and avoid the danger and fear of civil conflict considering that their evil nature will quickly descend them into murderous anarchy. Basically for Hobbes, one cannot avoid the fact that, as said, in the end without a strong arm to govern them, people would degenerate into selfish, ruthless individuals. One might see within this the change from the community centered moral philosophies of the Medievals, but instead of a strong central Papacy, we can see the rise of the nation-state. We can also see this classic question pulling away from Platonic idealism⁵ as well. Though it also differs from realism, it hints of the nominalism, that is universals being part of the thing itself.

Do Not Put Descartes Before The Horse⁶

For what he means to us I really hate to sandwich him here but if you look at the time line Rene Descartes does come before Locke and is a contemporary of Hobbes, so he does deserve a brief introduction. But then, he is French, born near Tours. Everything you think you know from school comes in some way from Descartes.

Descartes is very important to us, in that he really is the formal break with Scholasticism, actively showing that system produces doubt, of which he was certain there was none. This also brought him into conflict with many of the skeptics which had developed causing him to show his certainty principle.

Descartes is often called the *Father of Modern Philosophy*, because he begins to develop a new system, which while completely based in all of our previous thinkers, is based in part on the movement from a *causal* (cause and effect) to a *mechanical* (things work together like a machine) model of how the universe works. I think we shall deal with him more in-depth but for now, in the context we are exploring let us dip in our philosophical toes.

For Descartes, Skepticism and apophatic thinking rule, but only so far as they lead us to certainty. The juxtaposition of these two ideas may take a moment to get your mind around. Doubt is the beginning, and yet certainty is everything. Distrustful of forcing the world to match perceptions. The skepticism which showed the flaws in previous thinking, give way to the certainty of his model.

Descartes differs from Hobbes in that the human soul is not part of the mechanism. Knowledge distinguishes us from the rest of the machines. We are the plane wherein meets the two substances: matter and thought.

⁵ Not the starry-eyed kind, the Form kind.

⁶ One of the oldest jokes in the book...beat only by several unrepeatable ones found scratched on stoa in the Agora about Socrates; not as funny in French.

More on this later.

Locke Your Doors

Now I know that he is a bit out of our time but John Locke is often seen in opposition to Hobbes, especially in the realm of political philosophy. It is not that Locke did not think that man was of evil nature, but more along the lines that, yes he was, but society was to blame.

While he agreed with the mechanical nature of things, he differed on understanding of what was the composition and cause of things. Locke saw particles in everything (harkening back to atomism), with ideas being the particles of the mind. Our senses are bombarded by particles which zoom down our nervous systems to our brain. Consequentially, what we ultimately know are the *sensations* of the things not the thing itself. This mode of perception means that the world *may not be what we perceive it to be*.

Aristotle spoke of substances and accidents, Locke speaks of *primary* and *secondary qualities*. These qualities are properties which are bound up with the thing itself and, per above, are only known to us empirically (through the senses). The primary qualities (think form and operations) are what make up the thing, and to remove them would destroy it. Secondary qualities (think of them as sensible accidents) are produced by the primary ones, and are therefore only understandable through the primary quality.

In a way, Locke is kind of the middle ground between Hobbes and Descartes.

All knowledge derives from experience, though we are able to also combine ideas to form new ones but they are still based in experience. Basically that means that our minds start out as a *Tabula Rasa*, basically a blank slate, until they are filled with sense experience. This, Locke tells us is part of the problem; it is this that allows us to be corrupted by the world around us as well as learn from it. The mind therefore is the central processing ground. It is there that sense data lands and is processed. As said before in not so many words, ideas are the *primary quality of the mind*, that is -- to use the Aristotelian term-- its substance. The mind is really incapable of protecting itself from the barrage of sensory data, but it can form ideas from these particles. It is the mind which combines, relates and abstracts ideas to form other ideas.

Which somehow leads us to his political philosophy. People are all equal and have rights which are built in; the Government has the duty to protect their rights and first and foremost their property rights; it needs three branches of government for 'checks and balances'; there must be a separation of church and state (to protect both); the rule of the majority (*liberalism*)...stop me if any of this seems familiar.

Warning: ultimate simplification of ideas ahead!

All men are created equal; okay this is really where it all starts and is the true segue from the earlier discussion. If everyone starts out as a *tabula rasa*, then we really are on equal footing. Basically if no one mind is better than any other mind, then we must be equal.

Separation of Powers; corruption is the problem (not only corruption as we think of it: money, power, etc., but the corruption of purity of the *tabula rasa*). The only way to protect power is to keep it separate but under check by other power. Separation does not mean killing off the connection and producing a sterile environment for these separate powers to operate within, but more like a levee, which keeps the water from the land so that both can operate effectively for the betterment of all.

Both of these mean that Hobbes' powerful central government is wrong. People, guided correctly can operate fairly well together. The checks and balances of the powers mean that the interests of the individual can be protected from ruthless dictators.

Putting It Together

Scientists? Mathematicians? Theologians? What can we say about these guys? All of the above? Most likely. What about the times in which they live? This is once again (in an increasingly obvious trend) a moment to reflect on all of the thinking which has come before and how it plays into what these thinkers are proffering as well as the ramifications their thinking is having.

The new empirical sciences combine a large number of the earlier thinkers we have covered. Many of the ideas put forth by them have been shifted (via greater understanding of the physical world), extended and combined to produce a very practical vision of the universe. The mechanical nature of the cosmos, of the body, observable 'laws' of motion; all of these combine within these guys to lay out a new path of philosophy.

Church Police: Oh, Lord, we beseech thee. Tell us who croaked the Bishop of Leicester.

[Thunder] [Chanting]

God: The one in the braces, he done it.

[Chanting]

Husband: It's a fair cop, but society is to blame.

Church Police: Right, we'll arrest them instead! (**Monty Python Live At The Hollywood Bowl**)

The American Founding Fathers As Philosophers

Now might be an appropriate time to wander into the realm of historical philosophical conjecture and consider the philosophical nature of the early American fathers. Can we consider them philosophers or were they merely spouting the conventional wisdom of the time (well, of the time right before them)? Were their ideas so radical and new that the American system can in and of itself be considered a *system*? This chapter is designed more to be a vehicle for discussion than an exhaustive journey into American political philosophy.

The Players

Dates	Philosophers	Main Points
1706 -1790	Benjamin Franklin	<i>Diplomat; scientist; moral philosopher</i>
1735 -1826	John Adams	
	Alexander Hamilton	
1743 -1826	Thomas Jefferson	<i>Drafter of the Declaration of Independence;</i>
1752 -1816	Gouverneur Morris	<i>Drafter of the Constitution;</i>

Table 3: The Founding Fathers

The Rise Of The Nation State

Let us take another meander, which is somewhat outside the box (as if anything really is) but only because philosophy has begun to put on so much weight⁷. As you can see, political philosophy is becoming high on everyone's list. The stability of the nation state is replacing the stability of the Roman Church which replaced the stability of the Roman Empire which replaced a whole lot of little guys.

Think about Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine. What was the focus of their political philosophy, that is, why did they develop a political philosophy?

Now think about Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke. What was the focus of their political philosophy?

Locke, Stock And Barrel

So when we look at the Founding Fathers, should we say that they are thieves? Well perhaps that is a bit harsh but we can see from our terse discussion of Locke, that they pretty much just lifted his ideas right from his wallet (in opposition to the English who pretty much stuck with Hobbes).

Part of the argument is the *natural order* of things. Natural Law is seen somewhat different by these guys. We would recognize the concept of the Logos and such giving order to the universe, but remember that at this time they are mainly adhering to the *mechanistic* vision of the universe. Natural Law is revealed by reason, i.e. you look at a clock and you can reason how it works. "The *state of nature* has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges everyone: and reason which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all *equal* and *independent*, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions..." (*The Second Treatise of Government*, book 2, John Locke)

⁷ Once again, thank you Monty Python.

Hobbes and his the-natural-state-for-humans-is-selfish-chaos position argued for the strong central government based in his thought that peace and security were the most important things. That thinking was probably the prompt for Franklin's famous quote: "*They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.*" This is not to say that Locke thought there should be no government...far from it. Locke's thought is summed up in two works:

- *The First Treatise of Government*: a work aimed at refuting the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings which was based in biblical arguments but mainly focused on the fact that people are not naturally free, that is, there is an order to things, and some people do not get to be at the top of the order.
- *The Second Treatise of Government*: this is really the source for Locke's specific thinking on politics. He feels compelled to write this "lest men fall into the dangerous belief that all government in the world is merely the product of force and violence." Something we see in Hobbes' ideology. Government for Locke is a natural progression not born of force and violence. Locke's argues the *natural rights* theory and the *social contract*. Natural rights are those rights which are innate in human beings as created, long before government comes into being. Locke also argues a next step: we have a *right to the means* to survive because that is our nature as God created us. So not only do we have basic, fundamental rights, we each have a right to life and the means to bring that life to fruition, basically be able to live those natural rights.

Government then, is a common agreement that we each have with one another to secure the rights of each individual. We agree to transfer some of our rights to a central government, while individually retaining others (think: the right of justice is turned over to the courts). This is the theory of the social contract. It is the radical nature of these arguments which influence the American and French revolutions.

Basically, a *legitimate* civil government seeks to preserve the life, health, liberty and property of its subjects, as long as this is compatible with the public good (i.e. murder may seem like an individual right, but really is incompatible with the public good). Because it does this, it deserves obedience (i.e. you subvert some rights and subject yourself to the rules). This means that you can spot an illegitimate government by the way it treats those basic rights and therefore the use of rebellion is justified (as well as the assassination of royals) in order to overcome that government which has no right to exist any way.

The Bottom Of The Barrel

Locke differed from Machiavelli and Hobbes in what constituted happiness, but like Aquinas, Locke mirrored Aristotle's dictum that man is a social animal and is happy in a state of social harmony. Unlike Aquinas's belief in revealed, innate knowledge aiding in the salvation of the soul from original sin, Locke believes man's mind comes into this world as blank as a *tabula rasa*. For Locke, knowledge is neither innate, revealed, nor based on some external authority but is subject to uncertainty guided by reason, tolerance and moderation (how Stoic of him). Consequentially, an absolute ruler as proposed by Hobbes is unnecessary, for natural law is based on reason and equality, naturally having a tendency for seeking peace and survival for man.

So the idea of *authority* tied to the idea of *legitimacy* plays heavily in Locke's thinking. Authority comes from the natural law, as said rather than some innate, revealed, nor based on external authority, that is, each person has the right of self-determination and therefore the power over their own life. By social contract though, we agree as a group to how that power will be legitimately exercised over us. So authority comes from each individual by way of the common-think of the

group; this means that the group can decide to arrange itself in anyway the individuals see fit. Ergo what could be considered legitimate in one group may not be for another (and vice versa). Now the hope is that reason, the law of nature as Locke states, will create a common set of 'virtues' for lack of a better word (or at least for lack of a better way to manipulate the conversation) so pretty much any society will set itself up in the same way.

Alternatively Plato if you recall, or at least may have heard, thought that democracy was the lowest form of government. For him the enlightened philosopher king was the way to go, and that the arbitrary and often un-enlightened view of the masses was the path to chaos. The idea of personal authority without reliance on some external standard would be unthinkable.

So what did Plato and Hobbes have in common on political theory?

Does anyone else reflect the American Experiment's thinking other than Locke?

Can Someone Wind The Clock Before You Leave?

In an increasingly tendency to bold and broad statements, most of the founding fathers considered themselves or were considered Deists. *Deism* (from the Latin for God) is the theological system describing God's relationship with the natural world and is reflective of the empirical system. Actually, empiricism really permeates its tenets. Briefly, Deism holds that God is completely transcendent, that is, he does not intervene with the functioning of the natural world in any way, allowing it to run according to the laws of nature that he configured when he created everything. This differs greatly from the immanent God (in Jesus) of the Medievals. Somewhat similar to the idea of knowing God through the Logos (Jesus), humans can only know God through reason and observation. This is not divine reason but human reason and human observation of nature (recall that the thing is knowable in itself through observation). There is no revelation or supernatural phenomenon. These 'facts' of faith are viewed by most deists with caution if not skepticism.

Deism says that there is some higher power responsible for the formation of life and the universe which designed natural processes to govern creation but really spends no time or effort understanding or defining the nature of God. The word Providence is often used to describe this power (we can think of Marcus Aurelius). There is a belief (if I can be so bold as to use that word) that the workings of the universe indicate that we should act well toward one another.

Okay why go through all that? We can see that the 'religious' and 'scientific' thinking are merging, but more in the way that one informs the other – and it provides me a bit of a segue.

Thomas Jefferson

Another little feature of Locke's thought was on religious freedom. Oddly enough this did not extend to Roman Catholicism (definitely unenlightened and since it relied on external authority, illegitimate – but that is for another time), and many of the fathers shared that view. Locke's vision of the separation of Church and State was for the protection of the religious beliefs of the individual. His skepticism precludes the belief in any religious system because basically none can be proved empirically to be the *One True Church*. Jefferson reflects almost directly many of the religious and political thoughts of Locke.

Think about the religious freedom statute he proposed for the Virginia Constitution. He is especially targeting the Episcopal Church in its intertwining with the state government.

The idea of the educated electorate spurs the need for a state sponsored education system. Ignorance is a bad thing and ignorance of how the world works renders one unable to effectively

participate in government, which is established by the individuals to protect their rights. You can see how it all fits together.

Think of the design of the Declaration of Independence. The coercive nature of any entity is considered bad whether it be state or church. Take some time to look at the wording, not just of the pre-ambule but of all of the whole statement. What elements can you pick out which are based in Locke's thought and which do you think are original?

We can definitively place Jefferson into the Locke camp.

John Adams

Where Jefferson was a Democrat, Adams was a Federalist.

When the English offered reconciliation and amnesty to Americans after the declaration of independence, they held out John Adams from that offer.

Benjamin Franklin

If we were to name the true philosopher in the bunch, Franklin would probably fit that bill.

Franklin was the elder statesman and diplomat for the Colonies for over 50 years, with a reputation which long proceeded and often out-stripped his contemporaries in the American movement. His wisdom was more than just *Poor Richard's Almanac*. A natural and moral philosopher, Franklin's influence is strong in these areas. Education he felt, via the reading of books, is directly related to the improvement of the mind which of course is the basis for reason and therefore of understanding. During his times in England, he was friend to David Hume (as a matter of fact Hume stated that Franklin was the 'first American philosopher') and Adam Smith. Immanuel Kant reckoned him as one of the great thinkers of their time.

Franklin had a Hume bent, as opposed to say Jefferson, who was all Locke. Changed "we hold these truths to be sacred and God-given" to the more familiar "we hold these truths to be self-evident". While not anti-religious and not strictly a Deist (he felt like God did have some influence in the world), he saw morality from a somewhat practical and what may be considered utilitarian vantage.

Continually obsessed with self-betterment and practical living, Franklin dedicated his life "to the bold and arduous project of arriving at *Moral Perfection*." (*Autobiography*, Ben Franklin) and social and political service. He creates a list of 13 virtues by which one should live that are, in order: Temperance, Silence, Order, Resolution, Frugality, Industry, Sincerity, Justice, Moderation, Cleanliness, Tranquility, Chastity, and in a late addition, Humility. He sees these as virtues worthy of any religion and necessary to practice, and yet, reaching moral perfection is not necessary, as it might have been for Plato, Aquinas and so many others.

The practice of individual moral responsibility was key to Franklin's thought. What does that mean for a government? Is a government bound by the same 13 virtues as the individual?

Alexander Hamilton

Hamilton is our opposing position. *The Federalist Papers* outlines his view of a strong central government. Let's just say he took a shot at⁸ arguing the structure of the new government. Where should government's power lie? Certainly the principle of social contract was recognized by all, but what was the structure of that social contract. Were the states sufficient enough to provide for and protect the rights of the individual?

How does Hamilton's position differ from Jefferson? Adams?

⁸ Just one of many things he took a shot at....

Morris Enough

Gouverneur Morris may be a name you do not recognize. Okay, I have to be honest, this is the guy I have been holding against my chest in this discussion. Suffice it to say he was a *theistic rationalist*. Now we have not really gotten to rationalism yet, but basically rational theism is a combination of natural religion, Christianity and rationalism (the idea that universals exist innately within the mind), really all governed by rationalism. In this system the primary role of a person's religion is to encourage and support morality, and in opposition to the mechanical view of a totally transcendent God, allows for active intervention by God in workings of the universe (similar to Franklin).

What effect do you think that had in contrast to the Deist principles of the other founders? Are they really that different?

Morris also believed in a strong aristocracy and cast a suspicious eye on democracy.

How does the Constitution reflect the Declaration of Independence? Where do they differ?

A Slave To Fashion

A simple side note to an issue which we have not really covered. What about slavery? There has definitely been an undercurrent of conflict which has been untouched by our discussion. Slavery has been justified in one form or another by the society of every philosophical system we have examined. Several thinkers have weighed in on the subject and it is perhaps a discussion for another time, so we will only brush it here, as the political as well as moral and philosophical implications are becoming more imperative. That said, within just this discussion, if everyone has innate rights, and it is the task of the government to secure and protect those rights for everyone, how can slavery be justified?

Thinking this through, Locke argues that monarchies and the like subjugate the individual to a position of having no power over themselves, most specifically life, liberty and property. One is basically a slave to the 'Lord' (translated: one who has power over life and death), and therefore has no freedom. Locke was against this type of slavery. The slavery he did support was justified it only in the sense that those who take away the rights of others have no rights (hence the whole rebellion and regicide thing being okay). In cases where an aggressor who is illegitimate in power (an oppressor of rights) is defeated in war, the just victor has the option to either kill the aggressor or legitimately enslave him. Not just any aggressor mind you, or just any prisoner of war but only those who were engaged in a systematic and illegitimate effort to violate the rights of others.

It's All Right, It's All Right....

So how does all of this play into the development of the American system? What originality did they add to the thinking of Locke? How much did it influence the early development of the government? How much remained in the years between the Declaration, the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution? How much of the system we know today is really still related to Locke's thinking, or any of the founding fathers for that matter?

Putting It Together

Can we say, or try to say as we did several chapters ago, that a group can be considered philosophers outside of Aristotle's categories? Or in that vein, should they be considered scientists or strictly politicians? Jefferson is a true Renaissance Man, and Franklin should be considered one as well. How much did their attitude toward knowledge, religion and politics rely on Locke and other

similar thinkers? How much did the intervening 70-100 something years between Locke and the Constitution shape the discussion?

Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, Franklin, Morris; each brings a particular nuance to the development of the American democracy. How does each man change or channel the general teachings of the political philosophers which shaped the argument for American independence? How does the shift to political praxis based on political philosophy show in the American system?

We can credit these thinkers with establishing the country. Still the way that Locke permeates our very thinking as a culture is almost startling and probably is startling but only in the way people interpret it. The radical nature of his thought is not that it was so different than anyone else (it wasn't), but more in the radical actions which should be taken place because of it.

"...there never was, nor ever will be a civilized Society without an Aristocracy." **(Gouverneur Morris)**

"It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried."

(Sir Winston Churchill)

Descartes

Transitional times in philosophical thought occur even within historical movements, and Rene Descartes represents that transition. Descartes has been dubbed the “Father of Modern Philosophy, but what does that mean in the context of our study? What did he do that was so different from ‘non-modern’ philosophy? When we look at Descartes, we place him, not on his own (we know better than that) but in the pantheon of thinkers who shifted the thinking of humanity as we search for answers.

He Is

Born a poor black child.

Whaddya Know?

This may begin to sound like a broken record, but what can we know? Everyone so far thinks they have this figured out, but apparently not because here we are, right? This is the question that bugs Descartes the most. The skepticism of the time has called into question the static answers and the reason for those answers, and if Descartes is about anything he is about certainty. Certainty; sounds like another common theme right? We want to know, so what are the means and the end of knowledge? How do we achieve knowledge, not just for knowledge’s sake but for certainty’s sake? Recall Pythagoras and the purpose of his thinking; so what is new in this search?

Descartes also represents the movement to separate epistemology and morality from theology. For Descartes, the very basis of Scholasticism introduces doubt, *ergo* it cannot be certain, *ergo* it is not valid. It teaches us nothing. And if we cannot learn from it, what good is it?

How Did You Come Up With That?

With causality abandoned for mechanism, Descartes sets out to define a fundamental set of principles that one can know as true without *any* doubt. As with his evaluation of Scholasticism, his basic method was to consider *false* any belief that falls prey to even the slightest doubt. This *apophatic* thinking, sometimes referred to as *methodological skepticism*, he calls *hyperbolic doubt* (apparently because it goes waaaaay beyond any normal bolics⁹).

Ultimately he rejects Platonic external Forms and Aristotle’s sense based origin of knowledge and what the Scholastics called *quiddity* (the thing in itself) and backs the mechanical view of nature. He concluded that the senses sometime deceive and *ergo* are unreliable and not certain (putting him at odds of course with the likes of Locke). Mathematics and mechanics were certain because they allowed one to establish a certainty without reference to substantial forms or final causes but only through deductions made from the configuration and motion of parts.

Wait...Where Did I Leave My Keys?

Aristotle held that inquiry begins with wonder and awe. Apophatically, Descartes believes that *doubt* is the foundation of philosophy, but only in the way that all our beliefs based on our sense data can and for that reason probably should be doubted. Descartes creates for himself a type of *tabula rasa*, one that serves to allow him an unprejudiced search for the truth. He sees this wiping

⁹ Ha, ha; a humorous play on the English term *bollocks*, since he was French.

out of previously held beliefs and tenets as placing him in an epistemological free-zone, where all ideas are able to be freely examined without prejudice, and we are free to find the ideas which can truly be called *certain*.

Sounds like a tough assignment for a weekend. Wipe out everything you think you know and start from scratch; but wait, what is that scratch? Well there has to be some reason I believed those things, so let me see if they can be believed. Initially, Descartes arrives at only a single principle: *thought exists*. Thought cannot be separated from me, therefore, I exist.

I Am, I Cried...To No One There....

'*Cogito ergo sum*' (*Discourse on the Method*, part IV): I think therefore I am; everything can be doubted except my own existence, obviously because I am thinking about it. Sounds a bit like a circular argument, or at least some logical fallacy, but recall we are abandoning even Aristotelian logic, because it cannot be trusted. We may re-arrive at the fact that it is legitimate, but for now, "I exist" is the only thing which is impossible to doubt and is, therefore, absolutely certain. Descartes arrived at this conclusion, because if he doubted, then something or someone must be doing the doubting, therefore the very fact that he doubted proved his existence. "The simple meaning of the phrase is that if one is skeptical of existence, that is in and of itself proof that he does exist."¹⁰ But that is not to say that doubt is the whole of it. He also sees the deception of doubt as a means of despair, and further proof of or a rallying cry for if you will, seeking the certain.

From this certainty, Descartes demonstrate the certainty of God's existence and if that is certain, then, God being God, would not deceive us on this certainty. This, in turn, serves to fix the certainty of everything that is clearly and distinctly understood and provides the epistemological foundation Descartes set out to find.

What's The Matter?

The scientific world is establishing facts about the world, based in earlier thinking but also observation. One of those irrefutables is that matter is matter, period and everything material can be reduced to mechanics or what we might call the laws of the universe. Everything is made up of the same substances (atoms, etc. not Aristotelian substances) so there is even equivalence between living and non-living matter. But is that all there is? Remember that vague reference to the seeming monism of the coming thinkers back in Chapter 34? Well that is because Descartes re-introduces a dualism, but it is not the dualism of body and soul as for the Greeks. Descartes posits that there are actually two substances: matter (has body as an extension¹¹), and mind (has thought), each has its laws and they communicate via the pineal gland. Like others of this time he sees human bodies as machines but *not* the soul, that is to say that the soul is not a mechanism of the body.

Okay, then, what does it mean for humans? Descartes concludes that he can be certain that he exists because he thinks (or doubts as the case may be). But in what form does he exist? He perceives his body through the use of the senses; however, these have concluded to be unreliable. So Descartes determines that the only certain knowledge is that he is a *thinking thing*; simply put *thinking* is his *essence* as it is the only thing about him that cannot be doubted. Descartes defines "thought" as "what happens in me such that I am immediately conscious of it, insofar as I am conscious of it". Thinking is thus every activity of a person of which he is immediately conscious. (*The Principles of Philosophy* IX) Humans are conscious; animals on the other hand are machines.

¹⁰ Could not find a decent reference for this, but I liked it. If this is the simplest then the debate rages for the most complex.

¹¹ *Extension* is a developing word used to mean *of the type of*, in a sense; the *extension* of red is the class of red things. See Leibniz.

The Show Must Go On!

Once again, there is equivalence between living and non-living matter and everything material can be reduced to mechanics. So what is unique about humans is thought. The mind is capable of *representing* the world of objects. The mind is a *stage* where ideas are illuminated by the inner light of reason (this is called *Cartesian theater*). Sounds suspiciously like the Cave, but it is different.

Are You Sure?

As stated above, Mathematics is certain knowledge (what cannot be doubted), from which other certain knowledge can be derived (Shades Of Boole). We can arrive at “useful knowledge – by which, knowing the force and action of fire, water, air the stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies that surround us – we might also apply them in the same way to all the uses to which they are suited, and thus render ourselves the lords and possessors of nature.” (*Discourse On Method*)

Is This Just Some Kind Of Movement?

Okay, this one is really just another

one liner for us, but I will stretch it out for my own amusement. Remember that age old question *what is motion*? Descartes has a fascinating theory. If there are no prime causes per se, but mechanisms have movement which is observable and we can see that the planets revolve around the sun, how does that happen? Planets revolve around the sun because it is surrounded by a vortex, kind of like the giant spring in a clock. The planets are basically stuck in a swirling movement and are really drug about by that action.

I only bring that up because of the implications for movement as we have examined it before. What happens to that question?

That's Just Perfect....

Unfortunately for us, Descartes restates his argument for God in several ways. Simply put the arguments are very similar, and are in the vein of God is the perfect thing; existence is one of the perfections; thus God exists *or* the I exist; I conceive of a perfect being; I am imperfect so the idea of a perfect being must come from outside me and therefore God, who therefore exists *or* the whatever I can conceive of which is certain must be certain; I conceive of the existence of God; therefore God exists...you get the idea.

Descartes arrives at the existence of God through simple arguments but remember that whole essence and existence thing? He states that God's existence comes from his essence (“true and immutable essence, nature, or form” to be slightly more exact) and is in fact contained within it. This has sparked many discussions, on which I will not weigh in on or add to. Still it is tantalizing that he hints at the existence = essence arguments of the scholastics.

Thought Exercise: how does the nature of his argument compare to Anselm's? How is it different?

The Soul Of Tact

Descartes conceived the soul as essentially thinking (i.e. conscious) substance, and body as essentially extended substance. The two are thus simply disparate realities, with no vital connection between them. This is significantly marked by his theory of the soul's location in the body. Unlike the Scholastics he confines it to a single point — the pineal gland — from which it is supposed to control the various organs and muscles through the medium of the “animal spirits”, a kind of fluid

circulating through the body. Thus, to say the least, the soul's biological functions are made very remote and indirect, and were in fact later on reduced almost to a nullity.

Putting It Together

Doubt is the start of reason and the mind is the seat of reason. Descartes is a *rationalist* as opposed to an *empiricist*, like Locke. The mind is the only thing certain, so mental constructs are the only certain things we can know. So starts the movement away from sense and experience toward rational explanation. The thing to keep in mind is the fact that this is beginning to take place strictly within the human. God's place is as watchmaker.

Descartes signals the change of the primary aim of philosophical thought from *ontology* to *epistemology* and the Aristotelian dogmatism inherited in philosophy from Scholasticism while simultaneously raising some of the most fundamental problems for future generations of philosophers.

So what else do we hear? A priori and a posteriori; analytic versus synthetic? This struggle of how we know is really part of the tone of the coming periods of philosophy and we will examine it next.

"I have convinced myself that there is nothing at all in the world, no heaven, no earth, no minds, no bodies; have I not then convinced myself that I do not exist? On the contrary: there is no doubt that I existed, if I convinced myself of anything. - But there is some deceiver, in the highest degree powerful and ingenious, who uses all his efforts to deceive me all the time. - Then there is no doubt that I exist, if he is deceiving me; let him deceive me as much as he likes, he can never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I think that I am something. So after every thought and the most careful consideration, I must hold firm to this conclusion: that the proposition *I am, I exist*, must be true, whenever I utter it or conceive it in my mind." **Rene Descartes**

"I cannot forgive Descartes. In all his philosophy he would have been quite willing to dispense with God. But he had to make Him [snap his fingers] to set the world in motion; beyond this, he has no further need of God." **Blaise Pascal** (*Pensées: The Misery of Man without God*, 77) - contemporary of Descartes

The Seventeenth Century

All that thinking took place in a context, and this context is known by several monikers: The Enlightenment, The Age of Reason, among others. Technically started by Descartes' rationalism, this time is marked by a great attempt to see knowledge as *unified*, that is, all inter-related. It is the time of one-stop philosophy/etc.

The Players

Dates	Philosophers	Main Points
1596-1650	Rene Descartes	<i>Rationalist; historical place-holder</i>
1623-1662	Blaise Pascal	<i>Rationalist;</i>
1634-1677	Baruch Spinoza	<i>Rationalist; symbolic thinking</i>
1632-1677	John Locke	<i>Empiricist; historical place-holder</i>
1646-1716	Gottfried Leibniz	<i>Rationalist; best of all worlds; prime principles</i>
1666-1731	Mary Astell	<i>English writer; education of women</i>
1668-1744	Giambattista Vico	<i>Professor of Rhetoric;</i>
1685-1753	Bishop George Berkeley	<i>Empiricist; sense impressions; immaterialism</i>

Table 4: Seventeenth Century Players

Where To Begin?

The Sixteenth Century really was the transition between the medieval/scholastic and the modern philosophical systems making the Seventeenth the beginning of the modern only path.

Theology/Faith ceased to be a basis for philosophy. So what could replace that? Well of course the Empiricists and the Rationalists have the answer to that question.

Physical Sciences: Empiricists point to the physical sciences as the basis for philosophical understanding. Like Aristotle, observation teaches us the basics of what we need to know in order to understand the higher brain function activities like morality and politics.

Mathematics: Rationalists think that mathematics provides the best basis of philosophical exploration. Like Aristotle, the rationalists see logic and morality and such as based in the certain and demonstrable (you know, like theorems and proofs) principles provided by the abstract universal concepts.

So we have to take a moment and ponder the effect of such beliefs.

Pascal

More than just a programming language, and worth far more than this passing reference, Blaise Pascal was a thinker. Located in France he is part of what some call the Continentals, meaning he was not an English thinker, once again reinforcing the English us-against-them insecurity. He helped invent the mechanical calculator, showing that the principles of math contained in the human machine were viable outside of that in a human-made machine.

Obviously in the math-provides-basis-for-thought camp, some might leave him out of the philosophical camp. I place him within our pantheon because he shows the fine line between science and philosophy which comes about from the search for unifying theories. His random phenomena theories (probability theory) have influenced economic and political theory. Isaac

Asimov even uses it in his psycho-historical system contained within his *Foundation Trilogy*, where mathematics can be used to map out (and predict) human activity at a societal level.

Once again we see the tendency away from the medieval/scholastic trend and the placement of understanding within the human to the point that it is predicative. On a personal authorial note, Pascal, in his short life, would not have ultimately seen himself as a humanist. He abandoned (mostly) science for faith, though his unifying tendencies still led him to propose theories while at the same time writing spiritual tracts.

Spinoza

Dutch, Jewish, Stoic, Baruch Spinoza, is placed in the niche of great Rationalists with Descartes, and as a matter of fact started out by expounding upon the philosophy of Descartes (with some minor improvements, of course). As an indication of his genius, after struggling to find an appropriate way to present his rationalistic conviction that the universe is a unitary whole, using the method of deductive reasoning and the precision of the Latin, Spinoza wrote his philosophy in a geometrical form using Euclidean ideas.

This symbolic expression of ideas has a powerful influence on the thinking of mathematics and the thinking of future philosophers.

So along that line he proposed both the necessary existence and the unitary nature of the unique, single substance that comprises all of reality. Spinoza called this unifying principle/being 'god' or 'nature', and he argued that its infinite attributes account for every feature of the universe. This means that (because he is a rationalist) there are universals, and (as a follower of Descartes' rationalism) there are absolutes or certainties. And (because of the rationalist/unitary nature of things) it is absolutely necessary for the two substances best known to us, thought and extension, be paralleled in structure that we, with our similar dual nature (mind and matter/extension), comprehend as the *ideas* and *things* which surround us in our everyday world. From this he posits the possibility of genuine human knowledge, which must be based ultimately on the coordination of these seemingly different contexts, which though they seem different are the same. In other words, the knowledge of one guarantees the correctness of the knowledge of the other.

Because of the importance of the mind, Spinoza develops a philosophy of the mind, from which psychology takes a cue. Among other things, he discusses the mind and emotions, which he sees as cognitive, that is, thought-based. Now this may sound odd, but remember, there are innate ideas and everything flows rationally from the innate ideas, meaning that emotions too follow the unbreakable unitary path.

In a final note on the death of the importance of the university system as noted previously, private circulation of his philosophical treatises earned him quite a reputation throughout Europe (similarly to Erasmus), but Spinoza so treasured his intellectual independence that he declined to teach at the university at Heidelberg, preferring to continue his endeavors alone.

Leibniz

You might remember Gottfried Leibniz from an earlier discussion (*Chapter 1*) we had where we mentioned the *Identity of Indiscernibles*. But we will not start there. Instead, in another nod to computer geeks everywhere, as Pascal made calculating machines possible, Leibniz created the binary system, which made computers possible.

In an odd turn within our skeptical world-view, Gottfried is also our best-of-all-worlds guy, an optimist.

In another seemingly out of place nod to the scholastics, he centers much of his thought on logic. In fact he thinks that logical principles are part of the innate knowledge we have. So once again logic rears its head and like the hydra only produces more heads the more you hack at it.

Not to leave the search for unity behind, Leibniz proffers the idea of *monads*, the ultimate elements of the universe. Monads are “substantial forms of being” (*Monadology*), each monad having *specific* properties like being eternal, not decomposing, *individual*, subject to their own, self-directed laws, (and because they are individual) non-interacting, ergo each one reflecting the *entire universe* in a pre-established harmony. In a ‘no-causal zone’ monads act as the centers of force (substance is force, while space, matter, and motion are merely phenomenal), i.e. they supply the ‘cause’, so in a sense they are the reason we see motion.

Okay, finally that other thing. The two principles we discussed earlier are actually part of a larger set of principles, seven to be exact, known, in true engineering tradition, as ‘The Principles’.

1. **Identity/Contradiction:** Logically, if a proposition is true, then its negation is false and vice versa (duh).
2. **Identity of Indiscernibles:** This is the paring down of something until it is undistinguishable from another thing, that is, all of their properties are identical, meaning that the things themselves are for all practical purposes the same. Another way to look at it is that two things are identical if and only if they share the same and only the same properties.
3. **Sufficient Reason:** The acceptance of a premise because at this point no reasonable argument can be made *against* it. Alternately, there must be a sufficient reason for anything even to exist for it to exist.
4. **Pre-established harmony:** “[T]he appropriate nature of each substance brings it about that what happens to one corresponds to what happens to all the others, without, however, their acting upon one another directly.” (*Discourse on Metaphysics*, XIV) In other words, the effects of something happening happen internally and are not the effect of an outside compulsion.
5. **Continuity:** Nature does not leave gaps.
6. **Optimism:** A thing is the best of all things it could be.
7. **Plenitude:** If this is truly the best of all worlds, then all possibilities exist, even though we mere mortals are unable to comprehend them.

List 1: Leibniz's Principles

These principles guide all thinking, and they show the ‘practical’ side to Leibniz’s thinking, that is, rational thought is very simple and clear, and is therefore better. “Reality cannot be found except in One single source, because of the interconnection of all things with one another....I do not conceive of any reality at all as without genuine unity.” (*Philosophical Writings*)

Vico

Giambattista Vico was an Italian professor whose contributions may not be as large as the others mentioned here, but do require a moment of our attention. He was not as concerned with the big questions and in fact he thought that realms of verifiable truth and human concern share only a slight overlap. Still, as a rationalist, he felt that reasoning is required in equal measure on the questions of both spheres (basically, let God take care of the things

God needs to take care of and let us focus on the rest, using our God given intellect and powers of reason to divine – no pun intended – maybe – to understand what God’s plan is for all of those other things).

His big catch-phrase, *verum esse ipsum factum* (*truth is itself a fact*) was designed to remind all thinkers that there are some basic facts from which we work.

Vico also sought a unified theory of things, but it was more along the lines of human behavior. He explored the convergence of history, from the one side, and the more systematic social sciences, from the other, so that their interpenetration could form a single *science of humanity*.

Berkeley

George Berkeley is a favorite of rationalists everywhere. Not that he was a rationalist, he was every bit a Locke empiricist. He is a favorite because he is empiricism to the extreme, or as some, my daughter included, prefers to think of as *crazy*.

Now we know not to pronounce such verdicts (at least before the evidence is in). So let us take a quick look. Berkeley was a man of the cloth who proposed the idea of immaterialism, or the thinking that if our senses produce all our reality and we can only therefore really know *sensations* of reality, then perhaps the ‘reality’ we perceive through our senses, or at least the abstractions we make based on our sensations really does not need to exist.

Okay, maybe that was a bit obtuse, but we know that empiricists thought that useless ideas were, well useless and therefore unnecessary, the same goes for ideas like ‘matter’. What is the point? We can only perceive things and then only the perception of them not the thing itself, so what need is there of such things (and can we even prove they exist)? All we have proof of is our perception of things.

Simply put, the theory contends that ideas are dependent upon being perceived by minds for their very existence, as shown in the mirror of Descartes’ adage, *esse est percipi* (to be is to be perceived).

Not only does this show some of the difference between rationalism and empiricism but this really makes perfect sense in the empirical model, and does have some bearing on the discussion to come.

Astell

Feminist is a modern word we use to distinguish uppity women from non-uppity women¹². Mary Astell is not a philosopher per se, but she, like the printing press, has some small mention in our journey. The Wikipedia article puts it best so I’ll just steal, er, quote it “Her two most well known books, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interest* (1694) and *A Serious Proposal, Part II* (1697), outline Astell’s plan to establish a new type of institution for women to assist in providing women with both religious and secular education. Astell suggests extending women’s career options beyond mother and nun. Astell wanted all women to have the same opportunity as men to spend eternity in heaven with God, and she believed that for this they needed to be educated and to understand their experiences. The ‘nunnery’ style education she proposed would enable women to live in a protected environment, without the influences of the external patriarchal society.

¹² Ha, ha – as if we could distinguish the two...what? Ouch! Yes ma’am....

Her proposal was never adopted because critics said it seemed ‘too Catholic’ for the English. Later her ideas about women were satirized by the writer Jonathan Swift. Despite this, she was still an intellectual force in London's educated classes.”

So what? Well the thought that women were made the same as men and deserved the same place in heaven was never questioned, but then it was never thought about either. The meaning being that most of this thinking we have been discussing really was not directed at women (*a mind and a soul? That's nice dear*). As I said, with the advent of printing, all sorts of crazy ideas start popping up.

Actually we begin to see a rise in and the development of female intellectuals (as almost normative) during this period, but certainly accepted only in higher, perhaps one should say rarified, circles.

Putting It Together

Publishing brought a wide range of thinkers and cultures together. Science and philosophy become the new bedfellows, science pushing out theology like the ant who calls out ‘roll over’. Still, that does not mean that faith has left the room (it is merely laying on the floor at the side of the bed). Roman Catholicism does not die out with the rejection of scholasticism, and the trend toward faith alone denominations is not hampered by the movement toward intellectualism. Even though we have moved into the ‘modern’ period matters of faith are still discussed and influence/are influenced by the intellectual movements, as we could see if we read any of these thinkers.

Many of the intellectual trends which develop during this century are the foundation for most of the thought we easily recognize. Bound up too is much of the science and religion we have today, which are the expressions of the scholarly developments laid out here.

Perhaps now you get not only a better feel for the concepts like the *Identity of Indiscernibles*, but also their development.

“So, anyway, Descartes goes into a bar and sits down. He’s looking pretty glum so the bartender says, ‘Can I get you anything?’ Descartes replies ‘I think not,’ and disappears.”

Second oldest Descartes joke

The Fight Of The Century

We see, we feel, we know things by accessing them (just watch how a baby learns about things by putting them in her mouth), yet there are things which we mentally perceive which have no solid matter about them, and which we say we *know*. Another way to frame this fight is *what is sufficient to help us to understand and know?* Epistemology is not something new, in fact we have discussed it again and again, every time we talk about ‘how/what do/can we know’.

Here it is but is it a TKO? We have looked at two examples, Empiricism and Rationalism. Being a rationalist, Descartes holds that knowledge can be achieved through reason. Locke as the empiricist maintains that only through experience can a person have knowledge about something. So here we are once again: innate ideas existing prior to concrete experience vs. tabula rasa; a priori versus a posteriori. *Let's get ready to rummmmmmbllllllllle!*

Past Champions

Epistemology is not really a new thing, but it is the major focus of this time. Take a moment and try to classify some of the thinkers we have looked at as either empiricists or rationalists, Locke and Descartes aside, of course.

Thinker	Camp
Pythagoras	
Plato	
Aristotle	
Epicurus	
Stoics	
Augustine	
Aquinas	

Exercise 2: Who Thought What?

And now, on with the fight!

In This Corner, Wearing Visually Stunning Trunks...

The Empiricist: Weighing in on the side of the body and the physical world, Empiricists have amazing footwork that states knowledge is derived from experience (either sensed via the five senses or reasoned via the brain or mind from experience) and that there is no such thing as innate knowledge.

And In This Corner, Wearing Practical Trunks...

The Rationalist: Weighing in on the side of the mind and abstract ideas, Rationalists have an effective jab stating that there *is* innate knowledge and that sensual experience and idea building is flawed and therefore cannot be relied upon to produce valid knowledge.

Round One

First punch thrown by Empiricism to the head:

Kiss It: Compared to Empiricism, Rationalism has one more entity that has to exist along with matter and mind: Innate knowledge. Add to that, innate knowledge is unobservable and inefficacious; that is, it does not *do* anything. The knowledge may sit there, never being used, so if it serves no purpose why would it exist? Using Ockham's Razor (KISS, remember), Empiricism is the better theory.

Rationalism counters with a blow to the solar plexus:

Poor Little Rich Boy: Ah, but if experience is all there is, it cannot accomplish all that we do. Three year olds use language in ways that they are not *explicitly* (read experientially) taught. For example, they form original sentences from words that they haven't heard put together in precisely that way before. Also, they start to understand grammatical rules before they even know what a noun or a verb is. If we can only say what we've heard said by others, how can three year olds speak as well as they do? You have only managed to deliver a *poverty of stimulus* (i.e. there is not enough experiential stimulus to account for the result). You may think that Rationalism is strange, but it does a better job of explaining this problem than Empiricism. In a return Ockham's Razor we ask, "Which theory explains the phenomena better?"

Empiricism, somewhat up against the ropes throws a Rabbit Punch to the torso:

Ultimate Triumph of Science: Much of science is founded on empiricist principles, and would not have advanced without it. If we base our conclusions about the world on empiricism, we can change our theories and improve upon them and see our mistakes. A rationalist seems to have to say that we've discovered innate knowledge and then be embarrassed if they're ever wrong ("Nature abhors a vacuum").

Rationalism blocks:

On What Basis: Locke says that our experiences tell us about the nature of reality, but how can we ever check our experience with what reality really is, in order to know that, if we only understand it from the experience of it, which is based in possibly flawed information? We have to rely on reason to do that.

Empiricism, off the ropes, bobs and weaves:

The Reality of the Physical World: How would you know what the color blue looks like if you were born blind? The only way to come to have the idea of blue is to experience it with your senses.

The Reality of Imagination and Experience: How can we get the *idea* of perfect squareness? We can extrapolate from our experience with crooked and misaligned, sensible squares and use our imagination to straighten out what is crooked and see what perfect squareness is.

Rationalism Throws Two Lefts:

The Reality of Innate Math and Logic: Is it not obvious that mathematical and logical truths are true not because of our five senses, but because of reason's ability to connect ideas which do not necessarily come from experience?

The Reality of Innate Morality: How do we get a sense of what right and wrong are with our five senses? Since we cannot *experience* things like justice, human rights, moral duties, moral good and evil with our five senses, what can the empiricist's ethical theory be based in? Locke says experience can provide us with data to show what is morally right and wrong? How can we understand perfection from imperfection without rational, logical thought?

The Bell Rings.

Round Two

Empiricism opens with a One/Two uppercut combination:

No Real Evidence of Innate Knowledge: If one approaches a problem only rationally, with no external data to support it, and relying only on mistaken internal concepts, then one is bound to fall into error from which one cannot recover. Remember that bruise we gave you earlier? For example, some medieval rationalists claimed that the notion of a vacuum was rationally absurd and hence it was impossible for one to exist. However, empirically we have shown that it is possible. Reason is not the only way to discover the truth about a matter.

Can 500 Frenchmen be wrong?: At least one can for sure! Rationalists claim that there is innate knowledge that gives us fundamental truths about reality, but even among rationalists (e.g., Plato, who believes in reincarnation and Forms and Descartes, who does not believe in either but *does* believe in a soul), there is disagreement about the nature of reality, the self, etc. How can this be, if there is innate knowledge of these things?

Rationalism crying out 'cut me' plows back into the ring swinging:

Imagination Is Not Creativity: According to Empiricism, you can combine things, separate them, and nothing else. By not allowing for flaws in sense experience, you undermine the very skepticism which drives you. With Rationalism, we come to experience with ready-made tools for creativity. Plato would say that we're in touch with abstract, immutable realities, which provide lots of material with which to create.

No Freedom Of Spirit!: By your reasoning, human beings can be controlled and manipulated exceptionally easily because there are no objective measuring sticks, nothing within us which gives us a sense of right or wrong or even of ourselves. If we are nothing other than what we experience, then we can be made to do whatever we're taught. Rationalism allows for an invariable core (call it "human nature") that refuses to be manipulated, which is what makes us unique.

The referee calls time with both fighters hanging on the ropes.

Round Three

Apparently the first two rounds show no clear winner, so a new strategy is called for. Perhaps it is time for the objective judge to add up the points and come to a clear decision.

Point one: So just what is the source of knowledge? *Empiricists* claim that sense experience is the ultimate starting point for all our knowledge. The senses give us all our raw data about the world and this raw data makes up the sum and whole of all knowledge. Perception gives us the building blocks to begin to build a domicile of knowledge and beliefs. So, in its purest form, empiricism holds that sense experience alone is the genesis of all our beliefs and all our knowledge; the senses are the active constructors and reason merely plays the part of a passive operator. *Rationalists* claim that reason is the ultimate starting point for all knowledge. Without some sort of prior existing categories and principles supplied by reason, we couldn't organize and interpret our sense experience in any way. We would be faced (like a two-year old with sensory overload) with just one huge, undifferentiated, cacophony of sensation, a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing¹³. Rationalism, in its purest form, holds that all our rational beliefs, indeed, the entirety of human knowledge, consists in first principles and innate concepts that are (somehow) generated and certified by reason, along with anything logically deducible from these first principles. Reason then, is an active participant and the senses are mere rubes of information.

Oh wait. So the real fight is one of origin, and there really is no other foundation. Locke calls it a blank slate, a place free from prejudices and muddled misconceptions. This clean

¹³ Once again, thank you, Mr. Shakespeare.

room of the mind means that like all good molecules, ideas will bond naturally to the things they can bond too, without some artificial rationalization duct tape trying to force them unnaturally together (especially in a vacuum, ha! Take that one rationalism¹⁴). The machine of the body follows the natural rules and does not stray (as does the mind). This means that everything works as it should.

But then, Descartes also starts with a clean slate, though it is free from the flawed observations and prejudices of muddled perceptions. Thought is the only pure form (as we saw in Avicenna's *Flying Man* in *Chapter 30*), as it is free from faulty external influences. We think correctly because the parts of the machine mean that there can only be certain thoughts which base all other thoughts.

So our origin, our prime mover, our first cause, is questioned by both sides, and the conclusion is that the other side is wrong. If we limit this argument to present thinkers then we know that the idea of origin is humanist based (i.e. internally), for the empiricist in sensation, and for the rationalist in internal abstract principles; if we wander backwards a bit, this distinction is not as clear, as the exercise above shows us. So, is it a question of the origin of the origin? Are the earlier thinkers worried as much about this problem? Some certainly are, though, even they are pretty certain about the boundaries within which the question is asked, whereas these later thinkers are not given to such boundaries.

Regardless, if you think back to the woefully slim (yet appropriate) first discussion of this idea of origin, we posited God and Physics as the prime movers (*Chapter 4*), both being concepts for explaining first origins, with God as the sort of rationalist abstract principle and Physics as the empirical world. In this present historical discussion, is that as true, or should we ask, is it applicable? Has it been totally decided in the physical, that is, within the human and so there is no need for the God (even though the abstracts of rationalism smack of the God)?

If that is true, that there really is no God anymore, then we have to ask the question between the two epistemologies: who decides the origin best. Can reason supply any mental category or first principle at all? Some rationalists have claimed that we are born with several fundamental concepts or categories in our minds ready for use. Examples might be certain categories of space, of time, and of cause and effect. What viable first principle can the physical world give us? Empiricists tell us that it is painfully obvious from the world around us, that the *innate* 'first principles' are easily *observable* and therefore understandable (and similarly are part and parcel of nature), albeit by some experimentation and the like. There does not need to be any categories of innate knowledge because everything is the same, works by the same principles, the same rules. The microcosm and the macrocosm are not only intricately linked they are mirrors of one another (think of the nature of an atom and the nature of the solar system, or a one-celled animal and a human).

This seems to leave behind some of the questions we were originally asking when we posited cause and effect back in *Chapter 4*. Humans seem to naturally think in terms of cause and effect, and this thinking helps to organize our experiences of the world and even our vision of universal concepts. **Okay then, point two: What about cause and effect?** There is implicitly a struggle of how we overcome this problem, especially if we are the origin and the judge of knowledge. Certainly, the mechanistic view of the universe addresses this problem (by abandoning it). But hey, were not the earlier arguments based in the observation that some things seem to cause other things to happen; yet have we also seen arguments that

¹⁴ Referee deducts one point from empiricism for taking a cheap shot outside of a regulation round.

in terms of our raw sense experience, we just see certain things happen before other things, and remember having seen such before-and-after sequences at earlier times and therefore are merely and incorrectly associating them?

Let us go back to the Chapter 4 pool table example to which we have so dearly used, if not over-used: do we *really* know what happened when we saw the ball roll through our field of view? Let us look at it another way. A rock hits a window, and then the window breaks. We assume that the rock broke the window but all we saw was a rock and a window, we did not see a third thing called *causation*. We *believe* it has happened, that is, that the rock hitting the window caused it to break. But this is not *experienced* like the flight of the rock or the shattering of the glass.

Rationalist would say that experience does not seem to force the concept of causation on us, we just use it to *interpret* what we experience. Cause and effect are categories that could never be garnished from our experience and must therefore be *brought to* that experience by our innate mental wiring, allowing us to attribute such a connection (*take a short mental break and chew on that*). For its part, Empiricism does not feel the need to define this third thing, and furthermore, feels that the definition of it is a waste of time. There is no causation, there only is. There is a rock; there is physics which dictates its path because of the force applied to the rock by the lever machine of the arm and the distribution of that force across the window which breaks due to the tensile forces being overcome (though at the time they would be more likely to argue that because of the mechanism of the universe the window just *knows* it should break if something like this happens, but that is a knowledge for another discussion).

Rationalist philosophers counter this by the claim that at the foundations of our knowledge are propositions that are self-evident, or self-evidently true, just like the laws of the universe put forth by the empiricists. However, these innate self-evident propositions have the strange property of being such that, on merely understanding it, and without any further checking or special evidence of any kind, we can just intellectually ‘see’ that it is true. like any surface that is red is colored or the classic, A is greater than B, and B is greater than C, then A is greater than C. It is just obvious. Once these statements are understood, it takes no further sense experience whatsoever to see that they are true. This, of course, makes empiricists apoplectic.

Putting It Together

Is there really a fight? It seems that in many ways, the bases of the ideas are similar, and that it is the conclusions drawn from them which are wildly different. The Empiricists work hard to define a world based on scientific observation, where our God-given gifts of sense and mind come together to understand internally an external pre-defined world. Rationalists work hard to allow the God-given mental gifts to apply meaning on an un-defined world.

So, the final decision?

We can probably say that Descartes did not completely succeed in perfecting the *by reason alone* argument. Still, Rationalism has remained a seductive idea for those attracted to mathematics and to the intricate beauty of unified theories and a strictly ordered world, but it has never been made to work as a practical matter, because there are just too many loopholes. Still it was worth a try.

But Empiricism suffers a like fate. It's easy to see how empiricism has been able to similarly win over many converts. Take a moment and try to identify a belief that you have

that didn't come your way by means of some sense experience — sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste, some sort of interaction with something external. It is somewhat difficult. It's natural, then, to come to believe that the senses are the sole source and ultimate grounding of belief. It is almost the *faith alone* argument.

Hold the presses! If all that is the case, then what is the question? It really boils down to understanding some middle ground. What about those beliefs that cannot be read off sense experience, or proved from any perception that we might be able to have *or* those experiences in life for which we are unable to rationally explain them away? There is a knock at the door, wait a chapter and I'll go answer it.

*"To put it more simply: [Rationalists are] those who joined the [mystics] by abandoning reality—and [Empiricists] those who clung to reality, by abandoning their mind." **Ayn Rand:** For the New Intellectual*

‘Modern’ Philosophy

Modern is one of those terms which is outdated the moment you apply it and for that reason I quote it. When people want to seem progressive they use words like modern and out-of-date¹⁵ and lapse into a kind of historicalism, where either my time is better than your old time or that the good old days were better than today. The same thing happened to art, but that is another lesson. Anyway, we still consider ourselves in the post-modern (see the problem?) philosophical environment, that is, a direct result of the modern period, but we have to keep coming up with new names to describe the ‘period’ which is child-of-yet-separate-from the ‘modern’ period.

Well part of the problem as we are beginning to see is the blurring of lines between what most would call *science* (science, political science, psychology, etc.) and what we still call philosophy. Recall our discussion in Chapter 1, where we talked about the muddled understanding of what constitutes philosophy; well, welcome to its roots.

Alright, let us move on. If Descartes is the father of modern philosophy¹⁶, then there must be some children right?¹⁷

The Players

Dates	Philosophers	Main Points
1689-1755	Montesquieu	<i>French; political philosophy of the separation of powers</i>
1711-1776	David Hume	<i>Scottish; Empiricist; naturalism and material causes; influenced Kant and Adam Smith</i>
1712-1778	Jean-Jacques Rousseau	<i>Swiss; the basis of morality is conscience, not reason</i>
1723-1790	Adam Smith	<i>English; sympathy is the basis for moral action; wealth is not money but added value</i>
1724-1804	Immanuel Kant	<i>German; critical and systematic philosophy; the Categorical Imperative</i>
1744-1803	Johann Herder	<i>German; reconcile sentiment and reason; philology (language)</i>
1748-1832	Jeremy Bentham	<i>English; Utilitarianism</i>
1762-1814	Johann Fichte	<i>German; Idealism; social origin of self-consciousness; bridges Kant and Hegel; practical reason</i>
1770-1831	Georg Wilhelm Hegel	<i>German; rationalist; extends Kant; thesis/antithesis/synthesis; philosophy can save humanity</i>

Table 5: The ‘Modern’ Players

Some Pun On The German Enlightenment

The Enlightenment took place in various forms in various areas; that is to say, that the English and the Continent approached it from different ways to somewhat different results. If we want to look at this in terms of ‘schools’, the Continent can probably be split further into the French, the Germans, and everybody else.

¹⁵ Though, to their credit, they could be talking about milk.

¹⁶ Not sure who the mother is, probably necessity, the mother of so many things.

¹⁷ Though some might consider them bastards, especially students in exams.

So why is this important? Well the German cast on things begins to dominate thinking. It differed from the enlightenment movements in other parts of Europe as Germany did not have the economic, political and religious friction which characterized the other groups. For the Germans the movement lead to a cultural and then national unity and sense of identity, as well as greater freedom of the press and an enhanced judicial system. Overall, the German Enlightenment helped to develop German philosophy, which primarily differed from French philosophy in that Germans rejected empiricism and embraced a kind of mysticism. The Germans really saw this as defining who they were, and many of the writers would provide fodder for later, shall we say less tolerant movements.

This German mystique, if we want to call it that, is the main difference between the Germans and everyone else. There becomes an identification of 'German' with this 'thought'.

Empiricism And The East

Not to seem to digress (any more than we already have) but some time back we asked the question of whether or not someone similar to Aristotle had arisen in the East. We will take a small moment here to re-examine that question. Chinese empirical science, developed by the *School of Principle* group of Neo-Confucianists (especially *Chu Hsi 1130-1200*), is probably closest to European empiricism, though there are some rationalist elements as well. They championed a unified theory path where the universe operated by a single principle which emanated from the *Great Ultimate*, a kind of all-encompassing principle, and that principle operating through the material force explained all phenomena. Humans could understand that principle by studying anything for the human mind is perfectly identical with the Universal Mind or Universal Principle. Because this principle is innate in all things: one's mind, biology, politics, or whatever, empirical study of a particular phenomenon would (to the discerning mind) reveal the principle at work in the universe.

As later in the West, the result was many advances in knowledge and invention (more so than just the curiosities of earlier times). In the end, the comparison once again fails because the focus of the knowledge; while this group is similar to Aristotle (though more 'unified') they are different than the Europeans because of the *integration* of knowledge and empirical study.

The Body Politic

Not surprisingly during the period, as we have seen, there is a rise in what are strictly thought of (historically) as political and moral philosophers. Now, *we know* that any academic end is often the leaf of some basic philosophical thought. Politics and morality are often the result of a basic philosophical view of the world, which give rise to and are often the rational for certain understandings of human interaction and governments (as we saw with Hobbes and Locke). And at this time the discussion of what constitutes government are burgeoning. So know that there are many more political thinkers than are dreamt up in this philosophy session, Horatio.

As a slight aside, for us today (and even during this time) that becomes the thing. Philosophy becomes a way of thinking about living and less of a way of thoughtful living. Politics and morality philosophy become cerebral exercises in theory and political science and ethics become the practicum. Me thinks Aristotle would be aghast and Socrates would reach for a second round of hemlock.

Montesquieu

Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu. I was once asked if philosophers were funny, and I said only when mocking other philosophers. This guy breaks the mold. Extremely witty and droll, he proffers a political philosophy also worthy of mention. In his

Persian Letters he devised a sort of *Screwtape* commentary of how European customs must look to those on the outside. He also manages to, like Thomas More before him, set forth his thoughts in the work such as the inability of humans to attain the goal either of self-knowledge or virtue.

Not to beat a dead horse but like most thinkers at this time God creates nature and its laws and having done so, wanders off playing no further role¹⁸. He does articulate one distinction which most of the other thinkers only imply. There are God-made laws which govern nature (*physical*) and human-made laws which govern conduct (*positive*). Unlike physical laws, which are instituted and sustained by God, positive laws and social institutions are created by fallible human beings who are “subject ... to ignorance and error, [and] hurried away by a thousand impetuous passions” (*The Spirit of the Laws* 1.1).

The key, then, to understanding different laws and social systems is to recognize that they are/should be adapted to a variety of different factors, and cannot be properly understood unless one considers them in this light. Specifically, laws should be adapted “to the people for whom they are framed..., to the nature and principle of each government, ... to the climate of each country, to the quality of its soil, to its situation and extent, to the principal occupation of the natives, whether husbandmen, huntsmen or shepherds: they should have relation to the degree of liberty which the constitution will bear; to the religion of the inhabitants, to their inclinations, riches, numbers, commerce, manners, and customs. In fine, they have relations to each other, as also to their origin, to the intent of the legislator, and to the order of things on which they are established; in all of which different lights they ought to be considered” (*The Spirit of the Laws* 1.3). What this means is that things which are legitimate in one culture may on the surface be incomprehensible to another. Yet, when we consider legal and social systems in relation to these various factors, we will find that many laws and institutions that had seemed puzzling or even perverse are in fact quite comprehensible. Humans and human society are really the yardstick by which we measure the morality of law and actions, and the absolute, immutable and universal physical laws really do not play into morality.

Oh, and did I fail to mention in our little stroll through American political philosophy that this was the guy who saw despotism as a constant danger for any government (not already under the thumb of a despot), and argued that it could best be curtailed by a system in which different bodies exercised executive, legislative, and judicial power, and all those bodies be bound by the rule of law. As is obvious, this structuring of the powers had an enormous influence on the framers of the Constitution.

Rousseau

Eventually, there is a backlash to over-emphasizing the rational aspects or the intellectual aspects of the human. Somewhat complicated and ambiguous, Rousseau's general philosophy tried to grasp an emotional and passionate side of man which he felt was left out of most previous philosophical thinking.

In his early works, Rousseau contended that man is basically good, a ‘noble savage’ when in the ‘state of nature’ which is basically the natural order for animals and for humans *before* the creation of civilization and society. The problem is that good people are made unhappy and corrupted by their experiences in society which he viewed as “artificial” and “corrupt”. Any enhancement or furthering of civilization and society only compounds that unhappiness.

¹⁸ Well, not technically dead, we have not gotten to Nietzsche yet.

Rousseau's essay, *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, argued that the advancement of art and science had not been beneficial to mankind. He proposed that the progress of knowledge had made governments more powerful, and crushed individual liberty. From this he concluded that so-called 'progress' had actually undermined the possibility of sincere friendship, replacing it with jealousy, fear and suspicion.

In a kind of opposition to Montesquieu, one of the primary principles of Rousseau's political philosophy is that politics and morality *should not* be separated. When a state fails to act in a moral fashion, it ceases to function in the proper manner and ceases to exert *genuine authority* (or as Locke would say, legitimate) over the individual. The second important principle is freedom which, in a familiar sounding ring, the state is created to preserve. In opposition to Locke though, he thought that the social contract surrenders the individual's rights to the community in return for protection.

Smith

We all think we know Adam Smith's works and thought. Let us shift them from economic theory to the realm of philosophy. As a moral philosopher, Smith does not see money as the basis of interaction but 'value', in the sense we might use 'value added'. So there is a distribution of 'wealth' based on the 'value' one brings to the production. The 'value' of a commodity (and that is defined not just by the end product) is the amount of labor that it commands, more work is more value.

Simplistically speaking (as if that were something new) everyone gets paid by what they bring to the table, so free competition and free trade are essential; everyone must be able to get to the table. Now, that does not mean that just because you come to the table you get something. Competition works for the common good ("invisible hand of the market" idea), because the value of a commodity will increase either through innovation or volume.

Every commodity deserves reward, and surplus value is a legitimate reward when innovation or volume produces it. In other words, the brains of the operation who do not seem to 'produce' anything, are just as valued and part of that value is the surplus. So everyone works together to produce things from which everyone benefits.

Herder

Johann Herder brings a different kind of view to the table. He felt that pure rationalism produced an unfeeling, cold world. *Abstract* theorizing weakens sentiments (feeling, empathy) *generally*, and hence moral sentiments in particular. The rationalists' theories are wrong, nay implausible even. They bring morality itself into disrepute, because if the *experts* cannot agree, then morality must certainly be a sham, and I may as well ignore it and do as I please. Their reasoning keeps people from recognizing, and working to reinforce, the *real* foundations of morality: not an imaginary theoretical insight of some sort, but a set of *causal* mechanisms for teaching and sustaining moral sentiments. Instead of trying to reconcile this, Herder turns instead to discovering theoretically and then promoting in practice just such a set of *causal* mechanisms.

Along these lines, if one is to teach, then thought is essentially dependent on, and bounded in scope by, language — i.e. one can only think if one has a language, and one can only think what one can express linguistically. Meanings or concepts are to be equated with the *usages of words*. Language and meaning are not bound up in some abstract way as say Aristotle talked about them, but strictly by their use, that is, we use the words we use to get across the meaning we want.

This all comes from Herder's quasi-empiricist theory of concepts. Conceptualization is intimately bound up with (perceptual and affective) sensation. More precisely, sensation is

the source and basis of all our concepts (not the innate concepts of the rationalists), *but* we are able to achieve non-empirical concepts by means of a sort of metaphorical extension from the empirical ones — so that all of our concepts ultimately depend in one way or another on sensation. This is different than pure empiricism, because the mechanism for understanding these rarer concepts is not merely a piling on and extrapolation from existing experience. What this involves is a somewhat rational, linguistic symbology where meaning comes not from the sum of our experiences but also from concepts we can extend from other concepts (like reading Aesop's fables).

Finally we see that Herder is ripe for puns which I have so graciously avoided, but which upon my mentioning it, are now stuck in your head.

Bentham

Bentham's general philosophy is really nothing radical, and like others here, combines some earlier ideas which we have seen. That said, it does articulate ideas which, we shall see, become very popular.

First, human nature is governed by two fundamental motivations: seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. Again, nothing earth-shattering and we have seen it in Hobbes. It really is *all about me* and people really only come together out of selfish self-interest, basically masking the selfishness with 'altruism'. He pooh-poohed earlier thinkers and the ideas of natural rights and such calling such thinking a "perversion of language", "ambiguous," "sentimental" and "figurative", pushing instead a rational reward-punishment kind of system of laws.

The ramifications of that are that moral values are based on the principle of *utility*: every action has to be judged based on how it augments or diminishes happiness, which means that the moral character of an action is relative to the perceived happiness or pain it causes. Again, similar to Epicurus but different. He expressed it as "the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people". Sound familiar?

Hume, Kant, And Hegel

Talk about your horsemen of the Apocalypse (and we will).

Putting It Together

Perhaps it can be argued that original thinking is dead. The big questions are answered by various systems and all we are doing now is haggling over the motes and fighting over the scraps or worse, being reduced to talking about talking. Sort of gives some legitimacy to Marcus Aurelius' divisions, eh?

In the end, what we do see is the foundations of modern society, the industrial revolution, scientific and political progress. The next thinkers really push the epistemological envelope and give some depth and direction to the broad thinking of this time.

So take a moment and go back and reflect over these guys and postulate what each brings to the table. If the rules have been established, what further explanations or understandings are gleaned from further discussion? What effect do you think they have on the thinkers to come?

Hume

Welcome to David Hume, a Scotsman of great ambition who pushed Locke's empiricism to its limits. Okay this is a fairly short lesson and he seems a bit out of place, but what makes him important to us and worthy of some individual mention is that he influences our next denizen Kant (not necessarily in a good way) as well as hammering out some pretty interesting and provocative ideas.

Hume-idity

By way of padding, Hume was of course, precocious as a child, attending university at age twelve. His father died when he was very young and his mother undertook the task of educating all of her children, sensing especially in him (at least according to his autobiography) an extraordinary curiosity, talent and drive. Now, in terms of that, when I called him ambitious earlier, it is because his ambition to be a permanent student tied nicely into his ambition to re-write all of philosophy. But, as sometimes happens with ambition, reality can get in the way. Still he did manage to right his course, abandon useless non-philosophical jobs and begin to publish (sometimes anonymously) influential works of philosophy.

Sure, many of Hume's contemporaries denounced his thinking as reeking of skepticism and atheism, but he awakened Kant from his "dogmatic slumbers". His influence is evident in his close friend Adam Smith's economic and moral philosophy. Jeremy Bentham said that he "caused the scales to fall" from his eyes. Charles Darwin touted Hume as a major influence. So I think we can safely say that while his empiricism is evident, he is a major hitter in many of the thoughts we take for granted. Still, there is debate as to whether that re-writing philosophy ambition ever really reached fruition.

An Exercise In Exercising Futility

Why re-write all of Western philosophy? According to Hume it had reached an all-time low so he set about the arduous and thankless task to correct that by deconstructing it and re-making it in his own image. Starting subtly, he proposed that we "cultivate true metaphysics with some care, in order to destroy the false and adulterate" (*Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 12), that is, what he saw as lies and misleading thinking in current philosophical systems. He appeals first to what many might think of as the normal foundation of philosophy, but what he does next alarms most people. When he elaborates on what 'true metaphysics' is, it turns out not to be the classical understanding of metaphysics, but a new way of looking at what it means to philosophize, and a total abandonment of metaphysics.

First, he attacks rationalism (of course), arguing for an abandoning of the a priori *theoretical* explanations that are supposed to give us insight into the ultimate nature of reality. To him, things like physics are impossible, because they are theoretical and therefore useless. Not surprisingly he wants to replace this 'unintelligible' theorizing with an *empirical* inquiry that answers questions about "the science of human nature".

He ironically does this *didactically* by describing the ways in which philosophy operates, or at least how it has come to operate. He states that there have been two camps of human nature observers, those (and you know who you are) that look on humans as *active creatures*, and those (ditto) who regard humans as *reasonable creatures*. The first see humans as driven by desires and feelings and "influenced...by taste and sentiment," engaging in some activities and avoiding others

according to their *perceived value* (so we can see in here the pain/pleasure camp and its iterations). These are the folks whose metaphysics champion virtue as the greatest human pursuit and who attempt “to excite and regulate our sentiments” in order to “bend our hearts to the love of probity and true honor.” They make us *feel* what they *say* about our feelings, and what they say is so useful and agreeable that ordinary people jump at the notions they put forth. Think of it this way: How did Socrates set about to convince people of what was knowledge?

Alternatively, those who regard humans as *reasonable* focus on our understanding of things and of the ‘big picture’ (universals; we can of course see the rationalists here). This will drive us to act correctly and make good judgments, once we understand the workings of the world (later on virtue is not such a big deal, as it is less of an option and more of a given). These philosophers study human nature “to find those principles, which regulate our understanding, excite our sentiments, and make us approve or blame any particular object, action, or behavior.” They tell us that our innate knowledge is designed to “fix, beyond controversy, the foundations of morals, reasoning, and criticism.” That is, give a solid foundation from which to operate. Universals give the meaning from which we understand the specific instance but they argue from the instance out to the universal (“push on their enquiries to principles more general”) until they arrive at “those original principles, by which, in every science, all human curiosity must be bounded” (*Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 6). This over-puffs up reason and appeals to it in its emphasis on speculation and abstract argument, to the detriment of the true understanding of humans, which is of course, sensible beings. This too appeals to the ego and vanity of humanity.

Wait, he says. So, apparently there is a problem with both of them. Hmmm. What to do...hmmm. Not shy he comes in for the kill. Metaphysics, he boldly contends, has so far been based on wispy sentimentalism or unyielding and cold rationalism and for those reasons should be rejected (per empiricism’s *rule of the useless*), and a new understanding put in its place. As said, he proposes that it is an *empirical inquiry* not an *a priori* one (surprise), making it a genuine alternative to the empty and useless speculations of earlier philosophical approaches. This radically different approach, this “mental geography” or “anatomy of the mind” as he calls it, is an anti-metaphysical alternative to previous, classical ways of theorizing about human nature. We can see how some might find this alternative distasteful; alternately we can see how some might see it as pure genius. We can also see how this has an influence on the perception of philosophy (or at least metaphysics at this time) as purely speculative or fluff.

Come Together, Right Now...Over Me....

Okey-dokey. Impressive. So how does that play out? As we have pointed out before, in this sense philosophy is becoming thought of as less of a science in itself and, as idle speculation, should be replaced by science (non-idle speculation?). Where does that leave thinking and how does one accomplish the task of empirical enquiry? What tools do we have which can get us there? Who will lead us?

First, like any good empiricist, Hume reasserts that all ideas come from perception, induction is not always right, the rational scientific method does not always lead to truth (at least a truth worth worrying about), blah, blah, blah. Okay, good enough. Hume is not satisfied to stay there and begins to look at the ramification of all of that. His conclusion? Well, frankly in the interest of time, the one that jumps out at us is that the human mind is merely a bundle of inter-related mental events. That is to say, for Hume, the mind, is just a *concept*, a convenient way of talking about how we combine perceptions together (think of the *nominalism* of Abelard). The thing we think of a ‘Mind’ is a *set of perceptions or ideas* created *from* perceptions. Our mental life is merely a series of thoughts,

feelings, and sensations. In fact even the understanding of 'self' is an illusion, a collection of perceptions about things which we combine together and think of as our 'self'.

Building on our earlier political discussion think of the self like a republic. Members have an independent life within the republic and the members of the republic change all the time but are (loosely) united by a common constitution. The identity of the republic is provided not by its fleeting and mutable contents but by the *causal* relationship that holds its members together. The self is a story that we construct in order to define what binds these events together. Like the mind then, it is merely a convenient way of thinking about how all of these things come together.

Now, What Caused You To Think That Was True?

So if everything is just floating around, then where does he get off telling us it is a *causal* relationship? That is simple! There really is no question of what would constitute its basis, since empiricism rocks, right? Correct. Well, like our definition of what constitutes metaphysics, we only have to re-think it to make it so. *Experience determines our belief in cause and effect*. In a reflection of the earlier Islamic thinker Algazali (*Chapter 30*), causality is *probability not certainty*. What that means is that the connection between the two events exists in the mind of the observer, not necessarily between the two events. So since I perceived the cue ball rolling toward the other ball, and the other ball starts moving after it is perceived to be touched by the cue ball, my 'mind' puts them together, or should I say I put them together in my 'mind' (woooo, subtle, Hume).

You Want Fries With That?

This associative vision, which is appropriately called *associationism*, becomes the basis for how we operate (human nature). Hume breaks it down further by telling us that thought is governed by two laws of association:

- *Contiguity*: ideas that occur frequently together get associated
- *Resemblance*: anything that is associated to an idea is also automatically associated to any other similar idea (assigning similar behavior to similar things)

We can see how some of the earlier empirical thinking is coming together here. Starting with the tabula rasa, we come to understand how things work by observation. Hume extrapolates the inner workings of that (forgive me) relationship, refining it to just two forms of association. This produces a certain serialization (connectedness and retention) of thought and gives some legitimacy to the earlier empirical thinking, allowing for a flexible, creative association of ideas, unbound by external rules (universals).

What is the side effect of this? Well, again in the empirical vein of no innate or universal laws, since our knowledge is merely a string of associated sensations, there can be no absolute truth: *any belief is as justified as any other*.

So How's That Working For You?

By way of expounding on this, let us take a brief jaunt with Hume's good friend Adam Smith. Remember that competition works for the common good idea? There is some sort of external force, which while not universal or absolute, is universally and absolutely there (c.f. the mechanistic view of the universe). So the 'invisible hand of the market' guides and compels individuals to action. That means that we will by *nature* work toward a common goal, it is just that my way of doing it can be different than yours because of the associative events which we have compiled together into our world view¹⁹.

¹⁹ More on this later.

We can also see it in his idea of value. Wealth and value are *associative* ideas, that is the value of a commodity is commensurate with the amount of labor that it takes to produce it. Wealth is not hard currency, but an associative experience of value, the desire for the commodity whether it be a thing or a person skilled at the production of a thing. These things make no *judgment* as to the actual value of the thing, because no such 'actual' value can be assigned. This is part and parcel of the *laissez-faire* idea imbedded within capitalism.

Putting It Together

Hume wants to throw the final blow in the empiricism/rationalism bout. He wants to show us that empiricism is separate and superior to any previous or current way of thinking. Those other systems have allowed their minds to be distracted by metaphysics. Metaphysics has clouded the issue by leading people down wandering paths not only to intellectual dead-ends but dead-ends with 'No Outlet' signs.

This happened in classic skeptic de-constructural fashion. Locke and Descartes throw out all previous understanding as flawed, not just in the medieval skeptic fashion of doubting the world's explanation over God's but in the very way we think that we know something. Working from Descartes' understanding of the mind as being the first principle, Berkeley continued by even denying the existence of material substances, which he reduced merely to a series of impressions in the mind. This means that, because we can trust nothing but ourselves, *mind* becomes the only substance. Hume finishes the argument by dismantling even the mind itself into its *phenomena*, a loose collection of "impressions and ideas", because really it is all the body and its senses. The end result is that even the idea of a first principle is reduced to a non-argument.

So, if God is not the first principle, and nature is not the first principle and the human self is not the first principle and the human mind is not the first principle, then what are we left with? How does one determine *anything*? Hume seems to be okay with that, and in fact, he relies on it to produce the ultimate relativistic system. Truth is associative.

Another thing we can see is that the mechanistic view of the world is so ingrained now that it, like belief in God before it, has become undistinguishable as a point within the philosophical discussion.

Algernon: Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

Lane: I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

Algernon: I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately – anyone can play accurately--but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

Lane: Yes, sir.

Algernon: And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

The Importance Of Being Ernest, Oscar Wilde

Hegel

Hegel is yet another German philosopher. Wait, you say, he comes later right? Yes, historically we should probably cover Hegel after Kant especially because some of his thoughts come from Kant. Still there is a bookend nature to both Hegel and Hume with Descartes and Locke, and we can perhaps introduce some ideas which might make our examination of Kant a bit easier.

For us, he is the end of the major rationalists, a brief side trip down the path less taken after Kant. Like others, he is worthy of deeper exploration, but do not worry, we will most likely re-visit him briefly after Kant.

What You See Is Not What You Get

Hegel was born in Stuttgart, Germany. Unlike many of his counterparts and contemporaries, his end is not particularly glorious, more in the vein of Epicurus, dying in Berlin of cholera at the age of 61. Still he did reach great heights in publishing and in academia as rector of several universities, the prestigious University of Berlin being the last, though I guess, not the luckiest.

He was well-traveled and well thought of during his lifetime, though there was a decline in his popularity, and similarly his travels, after his death. This may not seem that important but, as with printing in the centuries before, traveling was a means of spreading his influence. Like many before and after him, Hegel's influence waxed and waned within a short period of time. Though he was influential both in philosophy and the emerging sciences, within a generation his thought was opposed, ridiculed, and discarded. Kierkegaard, Marx, and Engels, just to name a few, were deeply influenced by him (for good or for ill). His Idealism was ultimately deemed dangerous by the far-right and radical by the far-left. Certainly, therefore, a man worthy of a deeper look.

One note: Early on I spoke about the use of words within philosophy for which there is basically no English translation. The German word *geist* is one such word. It is here translated *spirit* but might also be translated *mind*, which is an interesting discussion all in its own.

Let's Talk About It...

As said, Hegel is sort of a quandary for this author, because he is really a man of his time yet he is also a sort of a throwback. Like Kant before him (or in our case after him), Hegel seems to be trying to reconcile thought beyond the limits which he feels are developing in other systems. Hume used the didactic or "teaching" method in his philosophical exposition of metaphysics (basically, listen *and you will understand*, unless you are just stupid). In what seems a reluctance to abandon earlier thinking, and perhaps, because he is a teacher, Hegel employs the *dialectical* method, as did the likes of Plato, Aristotle and the Scholastics. Hegel saw the dialectical process as truly the means of first opening meaning and then leading one to deeper understanding and, as we shall see, ultimately becoming the basis for everything.

The dialectical method allows one to see the contradictions within ideas and move past or reconcile them into the true idea, and this movement is central to understanding all of Hegel's thought, a refreshingly simple change, I know. Anyway, recall Aristotle's use of the dialectic in order to teach, peeling apart every idea in the context of a single idea. Think of it as a honing of ideas until the final idea is reached.

This Is Absolutely, Positively The Beginning

Okay, back to our original track²⁰. Speaking of basis, as we saw, Hume took empiricism to its furthest end (at least in our discussion). Well, as I intimated, Hegel does the same thing for rationalism. He reasons that if rationalism is based on innate ideas, and if those ideas guide, inform, and are the boundary of all thinking, then *only the absolute exists* and everything else is an *illusion*. Sounds like a stretch but read it again. Everything we know, he tells us, is based in some absolute, say something similar to the Platonic Form, and if everything we know is a *reflection* of that absolute, which is unbounded by and free of human fallibility, then anything we understand past those absolutes is questionable.

This may appear a bit like the immaterialism of Berkeley, but Berkeley is basing his on the fact that empirical sensory data cannot prove there is a material world out there, whereas Hegel focuses on the innate, universal idea as being unable to prove that material world²¹. Still they both do seem to reach the same conclusion²². Furthermore, Hegel broadens the rationalist view of the absolute, consigning it to both the infinite universe *and* infinite pure mind, not strictly to innate ideas built into the universe, postulating *the Absolute*²³.

Why you may ask, is this idea of the external absolute coming back? As mentioned earlier, the Germans have a mystical side. For Hegel there is a spiritual nature to all reality. But how can one reconcile and meld rationalism and spirituality? Quite handily, apparently. Hegel defines the Absolute²⁴ as *thought that thinks itself*. Think back to Descartes: *I think therefore I am*; recall essence is existence (from Aquinas as well). So, the Absolute must be thinking *and* being together, and vice versa. Think of it this way. There must be some absolutes, because absolutes inform everything we think. If we can rationally conceive of absolutes then they must exist because they inform our rational conceptions of them. If there are absolutes, then they must come from something, sort of the absolute Absolute.

In addition, and this may be where it gets a bit out there, as we understand more of the absolute, the absolute knows more of *itself*. This is where part of the reason for his use of the dialectical comes into play because he felt that its process allows the Absolute to progress towards the Absolute's full self-knowledge (*'God is God only in so far as he knows himself'*²⁵). So, from above, if the Absolute's essence is thinking, then the Absolute must *think*, because if it does not think, then it could not be the Absolute. He hammers everyone for limiting the Absolute to 'remain in effect always in its primitive condition', only being understood by the 'knowing subject' who assigns different meaning based on what has already been provided by the familiar (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 15). This means that it is a dynamic thing, and the dialectical process means that it remains dynamic because it continues to know itself better (in a leap back to Socrates' *know thyself*). This dynamic nature points to a *true* freedom, which is built-in and not earned and is the result of living right (i.e. *correctly*), one might say.

²⁰ And no comments about there even being an original track.

²¹ Like Plato, except that Plato just saw the material world as imperfect compared to the Form; he never questioned the reality of that material world.

²² Okay, so I said that Berkeley was crazy and that Hume at least took empiricism someplace not crazy. Hegel kind of fills both roles for the Rationalists. His arguments are not crazy but how he uses them sometimes can be considered 'fringe-ish' in polite philosophical circles.

²³ This is probably too many footnotes for one paragraph.

²⁴ So I'll add it in this paragraph. This is one of the situations where I will substitute the philosopher's term instead of using the term 'God'. This is not to say that Hegel does not use the term himself, as in "God is not an abstraction but a concrete God." *The Christian Religion: Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, Part 3

²⁵ "God is God only in so far as he knows himself: his self-consciousness is, further, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge of God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge in God" *Philosophy of Spirit*, 564 to be exact.

I Have Conflicting Feelings About This

So, there is something other than nameless, faceless ideas and sensations or merely a physical world. Implied in the nature of the Absolute is the fact that we participate in it. How? How do we understand it exists? How do we come to understand it better? “It is a natural assumption that in philosophy, before we can start to deal with its proper subject-matter, the actual cognition of what truly is, one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded either as the instrument to get a hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers it.” (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 73)

So Hegel begins an epistemological exploration to understand the instrument of understanding or the medium of discovery. He comes up with the idea that knowledge arises from the concept of things in conflict with one another; that is, part of the progress of knowledge is the awareness of conflict within an idea. This, in a sense, is part of the dialectical process. Hegel pushes the idea outward to embrace everything (as he does with the idea of the Absolute). For instance, History is due to the conflict of forces and nations. Reality (natural as well as human history) is the dialectical unfolding of the Absolute.

Logic Is King

Whoa! Where did this come from? We just can’t seem to get away from this, can we? Hume wanted to eliminate metaphysics. Hegel wants to re-fashion it. Sure, there are some flaws, but not nearly the problems which Hume assigns to it (especially, for some reason, those assigned against rationalism). Hegel replies to all doubters that Metaphysics *is logic* (“what is rational is real and what is real is rational”)²⁶. In other words, the rational, deductive process of logic provides, like/through the dialectic, the basis for exploring the Absolute, or to put it another way, the function of Metaphysics.

Philosophy investigates the Absolute through logic. Metaphysics, and logic for that matter, have purpose and validity. Now logic, in the Aristotelian sense of *thesis, thesis, and conclusion* is not necessarily what he is getting at, but he does like the way it sounds. Hegel develops what he called ‘speculative reason’, which is different than other logics, makes it more difficult to follow and leads to some of the, shall we say, less identifiable aspects of his thought. Simply put, what he hoped was, using the dialectic, to develop a synthesis of the two conflicting styles using a slightly different method which involved the *thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis* format.

You Say Potato and I Say Potato...

Of many differences between Kant and Hegel, the use of language stands out²⁷. Kant aimed at a philosophical understanding of the world, turning from the unknowable world of things in themselves to the world as we encounter it, the world of objects, or as he calls them *noumena* and *phenomena*. But to do this, he creates an objective style, one which cannot be influenced by the individual understandings and misunderstandings. One avenue of individual variation is linguistic, and Kant undertook to purify philosophy of this error by using terms drawn “from a dead and learned language.” He accomplishes this by introducing terms that are not part of the living

²⁶ Which may or may not have brought a tear to Aristotle’s eye.

²⁷ This section contains some introduction to some thoughts, which since we have not studied Kant yet may or may not make sense. We will visit them again in the next chapter.

language and hence not, as we discussed in the past, subject to its changes like “the subreption of hypostasized consciousness” or “the euthanasia of pure reason.”²⁸

Hegel is more concerned with the way language is experienced. Language is the means by which we translate and exchange experience. Many of the turns of the argument (mostly in the opening chapters) depend on linguistic factors, very often puns that do not translate into English. He felt that the language itself supplied the meaning.

Ramblings aside, let us begin put it together. Hegel divined that human understanding is furthered by exploring opposites (think back on Aristotle’s Contraries in the Square Of Opposition from *Chapter 2*). Think about it, he invites us: if we explore all of human history, we see a pattern of altercation.²⁹ Progress then, is the result of the conflict of opposites that arise in these moments. Any attempt to state the reality of something new (*thesis*) results in a contradiction (*antithesis*) that can only be resolved at a higher level than either one (*synthesis*). This is a level where both are true, which yields a new *thesis*, for which there exists an *antithesis*, which can be resolved in a *synthesis*, which, well, you get the picture, all the way to the highest level, the Absolute, hence the link between Metaphysics, Logic, Dialectic and the Absolute.

The way this happen, he says, is that a synthesis resolves the two on a *higher plane*, whereas other logics resolve to the same level (he invites us to think about those crazy Frenchmen: ‘revolution’ is opposed by ‘reaction’ and the synthesis is a new social order). This cycle of an entity throwing down the gauntlet, which becomes a thesis and from that an antithesis arises, ending in synthesis, means that continuing the process to the highest level leaves one with the Absolute, the *raison d’être* for everything, rationally and logically arrived upon.

Hmm, I hear you saying, stroking your chin. Is that different than postulating a First Cause or First Principle?

All Is Loss ³⁰

Is there an Absolute? Yes, says Hegel. How do we come to an understanding of the Absolute? Human thought and activity informs us. The process of dialectic, conflict, human history, all of these things bring out the Absolute. The two main human endeavors which make all of this clear? Art and Religion: Art investigates the absolute through forms of beauty and Religion investigates the absolute through symbols (remember that any thesis/antithesis/synthesis eventually leads us to the Absolute, and boy is there conflict in art and religion). These ideas become important flash points for later thinkers, and as we said, led to many of the rejections of his thought or the accepted ideas of the day (as we will see in the likes of Nietzsche and the Existentialists in general).

So what is the problem? If this is so clear, why is humanity in the dumps? Taking a drag on an unfiltered cigarette while sitting at a small bistro table, Hegel contemplates the reality of humanity. The human condition is one of alienation, because the individual sees the self as being distinct, instead of being united with the Absolute. Just look at Hume! There is not even really a self...even further evidence of the alienation caused by such thinkers.

What? Almost 300 years of thinking wasted?!

Never Fear, Underdog Is Here!

Alienation. That is a new word for us in the context of our journey, is it not? But it is a familiar word for our times.

²⁸ They sound even funnier in German.

²⁹ This could be seen as building upon earlier political thinkers, but that is perhaps a discussion for another time.

³⁰ Or, if you prefer, ‘The rest is silence’ *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare

It could be argued that earlier thinkers hinted at this problem. And think about Hegel's world: the Industrial Revolution; the embarkation on the road of scientific discovery, the rise of capitalism, the rise of the empire. There can be considered in these events a certain coldness, or loss of human worth and dignity, a devaluing of the individual in the middle of championing the individual, especially if you consider Smith, Hume, and to an extent as we shall see, Kant. Into this rises a voice: 'Do not worry,' says Hegel. 'All of you who thought that Philosophy is becoming irrelevant and fluffy, well, you just need to take a second look. See? Metaphysics has meaning and not just meaning, efficacy! Life has meaning, and I can show it.'

Recognizing our selves helps us to understand the dialectic, which of course connects us to the Absolute, which leads to greater understanding of self, and so on.

Your Mission Jim, Should You Choose To Accept It....

It is in the very nature of thinking (as per the quote from above) to reach the Absolute, that is, it is the only result of any thinking. True thinking, not the junk that has been served up so far, will bring us to the Absolute and that arrival will set us free. Hegel thought that philosophy had a mission and that mission is to emancipate people from millennia of alienation, bring them face to face (at least in dialogue) with the Absolute and thereby free themselves.

Perhaps a *Mission: Impossible*, but one which bears some small bit of honoring, at least for the effort. Ironically, we can also see the road of things to come.

Putting It Together

Ultimately, both Hume and Hegel represent positions which for most people become untenable in the long run. With his concentration on the Absolute, however, Hegel brings up an interesting point. He renews or at least attempts a renewal of religious thinking which harkens back to Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, the Scholastics and to some degree, Kant. In a way, it is probably part of the reason for the waning of his thought, doomed like Thomas Aquinas before him to rise up and then be relegated to a shelf of thinking which has perhaps been 'out-grown' by the thinking of the time. Often we see the pendulum swing of faith and reason in or at least mirrored in the rise and fall of religious or scientific fervor, and this time is no different than those before it or after it.

Hegel has been saddled with the blame for many of the thinkers that came after him (that whole relegating of God-being-God-only-because-we-think-of-him thing among others). While this author does not feel that was the intention of this particular philosopher, his thought did give impetus to existentialists, Marxists and other such seemingly nefarious characters. History can be a harsh judge and with Hegel's obscure writing style, I am sure you can interpret it any way you want.

When deciding on whether to place Hegel before or after Kant, it came down to what do we need to teach here? Well obviously, when it comes to teaching Hegel he Kant do it!³¹ Hegel presents the grand tradition of German Idealism, full of optimism and certainty; his thought can save the world. Kant did not pave the way for Hegel, but he did provide him with the inspiration to put forth a bold and provocative system, which would perhaps one day bring down Western Civilization as we know it.

With the waning of the Enlightenment (though some argue that it never went away...of course if that is true neither did any other period or system that we have discussed so far) the age-old struggle returns. Go back to *Chapter 8* and look at our overview of Western Philosophy. You can see that we have divided our studies somewhat differently than that table shows, but you can still see the overall themes.

³¹ Oldest Hegel joke.

And one final thought. Conflict and Art as movers of the world. Only the Germans.

Any man who afflicts the human race with ideas must be prepared to see them misunderstood.

H. L. Mencken

G. W. Hegel: Phenomenology Of Spirit (or Mind)

Preface

On scientific knowledge

- ¹ In the case of a philosophical work it seems not only superfluous, but, in view of the nature of philosophy, even inappropriate and misleading to begin, as writers usually do in a preface, by explaining the end the author had in mind, the circumstances which gave rise to the work, and the relation in which the writer takes it to stand to other treatises on the same subject, written by his predecessors or his contemporaries. For whatever it might be suitable to state about philosophy in a preface – say, an historical sketch of the main drift and point of view, the general content and results, a string of desultory assertions and assurances about the truth – this cannot be accepted as the form and manner in which to expound philosophical truth.

Introduction

- ⁷³ It is natural to suppose that, before philosophy enters upon its subject proper — namely, the actual knowledge of what truly is — it is necessary to come first to an understanding concerning knowledge, which is looked upon as the instrument by which to take possession of the Absolute, or as the means through which to get a sight of it. The apprehension seems legitimate, on the one hand that there may be various kinds of knowledge, among which one might be better adapted than another for the attainment of our purpose — and thus a wrong choice is possible: on the other hand again that, since knowing is a faculty of a definite kind and with a determinate range, without the more precise determination of its nature and limits we might take hold on clouds of error instead of the heaven of truth.
- This apprehensiveness is sure to pass even into the conviction that the whole enterprise which sets out to secure for consciousness by

means of knowledge what exists *per se*, is in its very nature absurd; and that between knowledge and the Absolute there lies a boundary which completely cuts off the one from the other. For if knowledge is the instrument by which to get possession of absolute Reality, the suggestion immediately occurs that the application of an instrument to anything does *not* leave it as it is for itself, but rather entails in the process, and has in view, a moulding and alteration of it. Or, again, if knowledge is not an instrument which we actively employ, but a kind of passive medium through which the light of the truth reaches us, then here, too, we do not receive it as it is in itself, but as it is through and in this medium. In either case we employ a means which immediately brings about the very opposite of its own end; or, rather, the absurdity lies in making use of any means at all. It seems indeed open to us to find in the knowledge of the way in which the *instrument* operates, a remedy for this parlous state; for thereby it becomes possible to remove from the result the part which, in our idea of the Absolute received through that instrument, belongs to the instrument, and thus to get the truth in its purity. But this improvement would, as a matter of fact, only bring us back to the point where we were before. If we take away again from a definitely formed thing that which the instrument has done in the shaping of it, then the thing (in this case the Absolute) stands before us once more just as it was previous to all this trouble, which, as we now see, was superfluous. If the Absolute were only to be brought on the whole nearer to us by this agency, without any change being wrought in it, like a bird caught by a limestick, it would certainly scorn a trick of that sort, if it were not in its very nature, and did it not wish to be, beside us from the start. For a trick is what knowledge in such a case would be, since by all its busy toil and trouble it gives itself the air of doing something quite different from bringing about a relation that is merely immediate, and so a waste of time to establish. Or, again, if the examination of knowledge, which we represent as a medium, makes us

acquainted with the law of its refraction, it is likewise useless to eliminate this refraction from the result. For knowledge is not the divergence of the ray, but the ray itself by which the truth comes in contact with us; and if this be removed, the bare direction or the empty place would alone be indicated.

74 Meanwhile, if the fear of falling into error introduces an element of distrust into science, which without any scruples of that sort goes to work and actually does know, it is not easy to understand why, conversely, a distrust should not be placed in this very distrust, and why we should not take care lest the fear of error is not just the initial error. As a matter of fact, this fear presupposes something, indeed a great deal, as truth, and supports its scruples and consequences on what should itself be examined beforehand to see whether it is truth. It starts with ideas of knowledge as an instrument, and as a medium; and presupposes a distinction of ourselves from this knowledge. More especially it takes for granted that the Absolute stands on one side, and that knowledge on the other side, by itself and cut off from the Absolute, is still something real; in other words, that knowledge, which, by being outside the Absolute, is certainly also outside truth, is nevertheless true — a position which, while calling itself fear of error, makes itself known rather as fear of the truth.

75 This conclusion comes from the fact that the Absolute alone is true or that the True is alone absolute. It may be set aside by making the distinction that a knowledge which does not indeed know the Absolute as science wants to do, is none the less true too; and that knowledge in general, though it may possibly be incapable of grasping the Absolute, can still be capable of truth of another kind. But we shall see as we proceed that random talk like this leads in the long run to a confused distinction between the absolute truth and a truth of some other sort, and that “absolute”, “knowledge”, and so on, are words which presuppose a meaning that has first to be got at.

A – CONSCIOUSNESS¹

I: Certainty at the Level of Sense Experience – the “This”, and “Meaning”

1. The Object of Sense Certainty

90 The knowledge, which is at the start or immediately our object, can be nothing else than just that which is immediate knowledge, knowledge of the immediate, of what *is*. We have, in dealing with it, to proceed, too, in an immediate way, to accept what is given, not altering anything in it as it is presented before us, and keeping mere apprehension (*Auffassen*) free from conceptual comprehension (*Begreifen*).

91 The concrete content, which sensuous certainty furnishes, makes this *prima facie* appear to be the richest kind of knowledge, to be even a knowledge of endless wealth – a wealth to which we can as little find any limit when we traverse its *extent* in space and time, where that content is presented before us, as when we take a fragment out of the abundance it offers us and by dividing and dividing seek to penetrate its *intent*. Besides that, it seems to be the truest, the most authentic knowledge: for it has not as yet dropped anything from the object; it has the object before itself in its entirety and completeness. This bare fact of *certainty*, however, is really and admittedly the abstractest and the poorest kind of *truth*. It merely says regarding what it knows: it *is*; and its truth contains solely the *being* of the fact it knows. Consciousness, on its part, in the case of this form of certainty, takes the shape merely of pure Ego. In other words, I in such a case am merely *qua* pure This, and the object likewise is merely *qua* pure This. I, *this* particular conscious I, am certain of *this* fact before me, not because I *qua* consciousness have developed myself in connection with it and in manifold ways set thought to work about it: and not, again, because the fact, the thing, of which I am certain, in virtue of its having a multitude of distinct qualities, was replete with possible modes of relation and a variety of connections with other things. Neither has anything to do with the truth sensuous certainty contains: neither the I nor the thing has here the meaning of a manifold relation with a variety of other things, of

mediation in a variety of ways. The I does not contain or imply a manifold of ideas, the I here does not *think*: nor does the thing mean what has a multiplicity of qualities. Rather, the thing, the fact, *is*; and it *is* merely because it *is*. It *is* – that is the essential point for sense-knowledge, and that bare fact of *being*, that simple immediacy, constitutes its truth. In the same way the certainty *qua relation*, the certainty “of” something, is an immediate pure relation; consciousness is I – nothing more, a pure *this*; the *individual* consciousness knows a pure *this*, or knows what is *individual*.

92 But, when we look closely, there is a good deal more implied in that bare pure being, which constitutes the kernel of this form of certainty, and is given out by it as its truth. A concrete actual certainty of sense is not merely this pure immediacy, but an example, an instance, of that immediacy. Amongst the innumerable distinctions that here come to light, we find in all cases the fundamental difference – viz. that in sense-experience pure being at once breaks up into the two “thises”, as we have called them, one this as I, and one as object. When *we* reflect² on this distinction, it is seen that neither the one nor the other is merely immediate, merely *is* in sense-certainty, but is at the same time *mediated*: I have the certainty through the other, viz. through the actual fact; and this, again, exists in that certainty through an other, viz. through the I.

93 It is not only we who make this distinction of essential truth and particular example, of essence and instance, immediacy and mediation; we *find* it in sense-certainty itself, and it has to be taken up in the form in which it exists there, not as we have just determined it. One of them is put forward in it as existing in simple immediacy, as the essential reality, the *object*. The other, however, is put forward as the non-essential, as *mediated*, something which is not *per se* in the certainty, but there through something else, ego, a state of knowledge which only knows the object because the *object* is, and which can as well be as *not* be. The object, however, is the real truth, is the essential reality; it *is*, quite indifferent to whether it is known or not; it remains and stands even though it is not known, while the knowledge does not exist if the object is not there.

94 We have thus to consider as to the object, whether in point of fact it does exist in sense-certainty itself as such an essential reality as that certainty gives it out to be; whether its meaning and notion, which is to be essential reality, corresponds to the way it is present in that certainty.

We have for that purpose not to reflect about it and ponder what it might be in truth, but to deal with it merely as sense-certainty contains it.

95 Sense-certainty itself has thus to be asked: What is the *This*? If we take it in the two-fold form of its existence, as the *Now* and as the *Here*, the dialectic it has in it will take a form as intelligible as the *This* itself. To the question, What is the *Now*? we reply, for example, the *Now* is night-time. To test the truth of this certainty of sense, a simple experiment is all we need: write that truth down. A truth cannot lose anything by being written down, and just as little by our preserving and keeping it. If we look again at the truth we have written down, look at it *now*, at *this* noon-time, we shall have to say it has turned stale and become out of date.

96 The *Now* that is night is kept fixed, i.e. it is treated as what it is given out to be, as something which *is*; but it proves to be rather a something which is *not*. The *Now* itself no doubt maintains itself, but as what is *not* night; similarly in its relation to the day which the *Now* is at present, it maintains itself as something that is also not day, or as altogether something negative. This self-maintaining *Now* is therefore not something immediate but something mediated; for, *qua* something that remains and preserves itself, it is determined through and *by means* of the fact that something else, namely day and night, is *not*. Thereby it is just as much as ever it was before, *Now*, and in being this simple fact, it is indifferent to what is still associated with it; just as little as night or day is its being, it is just as truly *also* day and night; it is not in the least affected by this otherness through which it is what it is. A simple entity of this sort, which is by and through negation, which is neither this nor that, which is a *not-this*, and with equal indifference this as well as that – a thing of this kind we call a Universal. The Universal is therefore in point of fact the truth of sense-certainty, the true content of sense-experience.

97 It is as a universal, too, that we³ give utterance to sensuous fact. What we say is: “*This*”, i.e. the universal *this*; or we say: “it is”, i.e. being in general. Of course we do not present before our mind in saying, so the universal *this*, or being in general, but we *utter* what is universal; in other words, we do not actually and absolutely say what in this sense-certainty we really *mean*. Language, however, as we see, is the more truthful; in it we ourselves refute directly and at once our own “meaning”; and since universality is the real truth of sense-certainty,

and language merely expresses *this* truth, it is not possible at all for us even to express in words any sensuous existence which we “mean”.

98 The same will be the case when we take the *Here*, the other form of the This. The Here is e.g. the tree.

I turn about and this truth has disappeared and has changed round into its opposite: the Here, is not a tree, but a house. The Here itself does not disappear; it *is* and remains in the disappearance of the house, tree, and so on, and is indifferently house, tree. The This is shown thus again to be *mediated simplicity*, in other words, to be *universality*.

99 *Pure being*, then, remains as the essential element for this sense-certainty, since sense-certainty in its very nature proves the universal to be the truth of its object. But that pure being is not in the form of something immediate, but of something in which the process of negation and mediation is essential. Consequently it is not what we *intend* or “mean” by being, but being with the characteristic that it is an abstraction, the purely universal; and our intended “meaning”, which takes the truth of sense-certainty to be *not* something universal, is alone left standing in contrast to this empty or indifferent Now and Here.

100 If we compare the relation in which knowledge and the object first stood with the relation they have come to assume in this result, it is found to be just the reverse of what first appeared. The object, which professed to be the essential reality, is now the non-essential element of sense-certainty; for the universal, which the object has come to be, is no longer such as the object essentially was to be for sense-certainty. The certainty is now found to lie in the opposite element, namely in knowledge, which formerly was the non-essential factor. Its truth lies in the object as my (*meinem*) object, or lies in the “meaning” (*Meinen*), in what I “mean”; it *is*, because *I* know it. Sense-certainty is thus indeed banished from the object, but it is not yet thereby done away with; it is merely forced back into the I. We have still to see what experience reveals regarding its reality in this sense.

101 The force of its truth thus lies now in the I, in the immediate fact of my seeing, hearing, and so on; the disappearance of the particular Now and Here that we “mean” is prevented by the fact that *I* keep hold on them. The Now is daytime, because *I* see it; the Here is a tree for a similar reason. Sense-certainty, however, goes through, in this connection, the same dialectic process as in the former case. I, *this* I, see the tree, and assert the tree to be the Here; *another* I, however, sees the house and maintains the Here is not a tree but a house. Both truths have

the same authenticity – the immediacy of seeing and the certainty and assurance both have as to their specific way of knowing; but the one certainty disappears in the other.

102 In all this, what does not disappear is the ‘I’ *qua* universal, whose seeing is neither the seeing of this tree nor of this house, but just seeing *simpliciter*[a simple seeing], which is mediated through the negation of this house, etc., and, in being so, is all the same simple and indifferent to what is associated with it, the house, the tree, and so on. I is merely universal, like Now, Here, or This in general. No doubt I “mean” an individual I, but just something as little as I am able to say what I “mean” by Now, Here, so it is impossible in the case of the I too. By saying “this Here”, “this Now”, “an individual thing”, I say all Thises, Heres, Nows, or Individuals. In the same way when I say “I”, “this individual I”, I say quite generally “all I’s”, every one is “I”, this individual I. When philosophy is requested, by way of putting it to a crucial test – a test which it could not possibly sustain – to “deduce”, to “construe”, “to find a priori”, or however it is put, a so-called *this thing*, or *this particular man*,⁴ it is reasonable that the person making this demand should say *what* “this thing”, or *what* “this I”, he means: but to say this is quite impossible.

103 Sense-certainty discovers by experience, therefore, that its essential nature lies neither in the object nor in the I; and that the immediacy peculiar to it is neither an immediacy of the one nor of the other. For, in the case of both, what I “mean” is rather something non-essential; and the object and the I are universals, in which that Now and Here and I, which I “mean”, do not hold out, do not exist. We arrive in this way at the result, that we have to put the *whole*, of sense-certainty as its essential reality, and no longer merely one of its moments, as happened in both cases, where first the object as against the I, and then the I, was to be its true reality. Thus it is only the whole sense-certainty itself which persists therein as immediacy, and in consequence excludes from itself all the opposition which in the foregoing had a place there.

104 This pure immediacy, then, has nothing more to do with the fact of otherness, with Here in the form of a tree passing into a Here that is not a tree, with Now in the sense of day-time changing into a Now that is night-time, or with there being an other I to which something else is object. Its truth stands fast as a self-identical relation making no distinction of essential and non-essential, between I and object, and into which, therefore, in general, no distinction can find its way. *I, this I,*

assert, then, the Here as tree, and do not turn round so that for me Here might become not a tree, and I take no notice of the fact that another I finds the Here as not-tree, or that I myself at some other time take the Here as not-tree, the Now as not-day. I am directly conscious, I intuit and nothing more, I am pure intuition; I *am-seeing, looking*. For myself I stand by the fact, the Now is day-time, or, again, by the fact the Here is tree, and, again, do not compare Here and Now themselves with one another; I take my stand on one immediate relation: the Now is day.

2. The Subject of Sense Certainty

105 Since, then, this certainty wholly refuses to come out if we direct its attention to a Now that is night or an I to whom it is night, we will go to it and let ourselves point out the Now that is asserted. We must let ourselves *point it out* for the truth of this immediate relation is the truth of *this ego* which restricts itself to *a* Now or *a* Here. Were we to examine this truth *afterwards*, or stand at a distance from it, it would have no meaning at all; for that would do away with the immediacy, which is of its essence. We have therefore to enter the same point of time or of space, indicate them, point them out to ourselves, i.e. we must let ourselves take the place of the very same I, the very same This, which is the subject knowing with certainty. Let us, then, see how that immediate is constituted, which is *shown* to us.

106 The Now is pointed out; this Now. “Now”; it has already ceased to be when it is pointed out. The Now that is, is other than the one indicated, and we see that the Now is just this – to be no longer the very time when it is. The Now as it is shown to us is one that *has been*, and that is its truth; it does not have the truth of being, of something that *is*. No doubt this is true, that it *has* been; but what has been is in point of fact not genuinely real, it is *not*, and the point in question concerned what is, concerned being.

107 In thus pointing out the Now we see then merely a process which takes the following course: *First* I point out the Now, and it is asserted to be the truth. I point it out, however, as something that *has been*, or as something cancelled and done away with. I thus annul and pass beyond that first truth and in the *second* place I now assert as the second truth that it *has* been, that it is superseded. But, *thirdly*, what *has* been is *not*; I then supersede, cancel, its having been, the fact of its being *annulled*, the second truth, negate thereby the negation of the Now and return in

so doing to the first position: that *Now is*. The Now and pointing out the Now are thus so constituted that neither the one nor the other is an immediate simple fact, but a process with diverse moments in it. A *This* is set up; it is, however, rather an *other* that is set up; the *This* is superseded: and this otherness, this cancelling of the former, is itself again annulled, and so turned back to the first. But this first, reflected thus into itself, is not exactly the same as it was to begin with, namely something immediate: rather it is a something reflected into-self, a simple entity which remains in its otherness, what it is: a Now which is any number of Nows. And that is the Genuinely true Now; the Now is simple day-time which has many Nows within it – hours. A Now of that sort, again – an hour – is similarly many minutes; and this Now – a minute – in the same way many Nows and so on. Showing, indicating, pointing out [the Now] is thus itself the very process which expresses what the Now in truth really is: namely a result, or a plurality of Nows all taken together. And the pointing, out is the way of getting to know, of *experiencing*, that *Now is a universal*.

108 The Here pointed out, which I keep hold of, is likewise a *this* Here which, in fact, is not *this Here*, but a Before and Behind, an Above and Below, a Right and Left. The Above is itself likewise this manifold otherness – above, below, etc. The Here, which was to be pointed out, disappears in other Heres, and these disappear similarly. What is pointed out, held fast, and is permanent is a negative This, which only is so when the Heres are taken as they should be, but therein cancel one another; it is a simple complex of many Heres. The Here that is “meant” would be the point. But it is not: rather, when it is pointed out as *being*, as having existence, that very act of pointing out proves to be not immediate knowledge, but a process, a movement from the Here “meant” through a plurality of Heres to the universal Here, which is a simple plurality of Heres, just as day is a simple plurality of Nows.

3. The Concrete Experience of Sense Certainty

109 It is clear from all this that the dialectic process involved in sense-certainty is nothing else than the mere history of its process – of its experience; and sense-certainty itself is nothing else than simply this history. The naïve consciousness, too, for that reason, is of itself always coming to this result, which is the real truth in this case, and is always having experience of it: but is always forgetting it again and beginning

the process all over. It is therefore astonishing when, in defiance of this experience, it is announced as “universal experience” – nay, even as a philosophical doctrine, the outcome, in fact, of skepticism – that the reality or being of external things in the sense of “Thises”, particular sense objects, has absolute validity and truth for consciousness. One who makes such an assertion really does not know what he is saying, does not know that he is stating the opposite of what he wants to say. The truth for consciousness of a “This” of sense is said to be universal experience; but the very opposite is universal experience. Every consciousness of itself cancels again, as soon as made, such a truth as e.g. the Here is a tree, or the Now is noon, and expresses the very opposite: the Here is not a tree but a house. And similarly it straightway cancels again the assertion which here annuls the first, and which is also just such an assertion of a sensuous This. And in all sense-certainty what we find by experience is in truth merely, as we have seen, that “This” is a universal, the very opposite of what that assertion maintained to be universal experience.

We may be permitted here, in this appeal to universal experience, to anticipate⁵ with a reference to the practical sphere. In this connection we may answer those who thus insist on the truth and certainty of the reality of objects of sense, by saying that they had better be sent back to the most elementary school of wisdom, the ancient Eleusinian mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus; they have not yet learnt the inner secret of the eating of bread and the drinking of wine. For one who is initiated into these mysteries not only comes to doubt the being of things of sense, but gets into a state of despair about it altogether; and in dealing with them he partly himself brings about the nothingness of those things, partly he sees these bring about their own nothingness. Even animals are not shut off from this wisdom, but show they are deeply initiated into it. For they do not stand stock still before things of sense as if these were things *per se*, with being in themselves: they despair of this reality altogether, and in complete assurance of the nothingness of things they fall to without more ado and eat them up. And all nature proclaims, as animals do, these open secrets, these mysteries revealed to all, which teach what the truth of things of sense is.

110 Those who put forward such assertions really themselves say, if we bear in mind what we remarked before, the direct opposite of what they mean: a fact which is perhaps best able to bring them to reflect on the nature of the certainty of sense-experience. They speak of the

“existence” of external objects, which can be more precisely characterized as actual, absolutely particular, wholly personal, individual things, each of them not like anything or anyone else; this is the existence which they say has absolute certainty and truth. They “mean” this bit of paper I am writing on, or rather *have* written on: but they do not say what they “mean”. If they really wanted to *say* this bit of paper which they “mean”, and they wanted to *say* so, that is impossible, because the This of sense, which is “meant”, cannot be reached by language, which belongs to consciousness, i.e. to what is inherently universal. In the very attempt to say it, it would, therefore, crumble in their hands; those who have begun to describe it would not be able to finish doing so: they would have to hand it over to others, who would themselves in the last resort have to confess to speaking about a thing that has no being. They mean, then, doubtless this bit of paper here, which is quite different from that bit over there; but they speak of actual things, external or sensible objects, absolutely individual, real, and so on; that is, they say about them what is simply universal. Consequently what is called unspeakable is nothing else than what is untrue, irrational, something barely and simply meant.

If nothing is said of a thing except that it is an actual thing, an external object, this only makes it the most universal of all possible things, and thereby we express its likeness, its identity, with everything, rather than its difference from everything else. When I say “an individual thing”, I at once state it to be really quite a universal, for everything is an individual thing; and in the same way “this thing” is everything and anything we like. More precisely, as this bit of paper, each and every paper is a “this bit of paper”, and I have thus said all the while what is universal. If I want, however, to help out speech – which has the divine nature of directly turning the mere “meaning” right round about, making it into something else, and so not letting it ever come the length of words at all – by pointing out this bit of paper, then I get the experience of what is, in point of fact, the real truth of sense-certainty. I point it out as a Here, which is a Here of other Heres, or is in itself simply many Heres together, i.e. is a universal. I take it up then, as in truth it is; and instead of knowing something immediate, I “take” something “truly”, I *per-ceive* (*wahrnehme, per-cipio*^[6]).

Translation From Harper Torchbooks' edition of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), from University of Idaho, Department of Philosophy by Jean McIntire.

1. In addition to the works mentioned on p. 40 (note), the reader may be referred to the analysis of Sensation and Perception in Plato's *Theaetetus*, and to Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, Chaps. II, V, VIII and XIX.
2. i.e. For the purposes of philosophical analysis.
3. i.e. the naïve consciousness here analyzed.
4. Cf. Encyclo. § 250.
5. Cf. Analysis of *Desire*, p. 220 ff.
6. [Literally: I through-seize, that is to understand or to know, etc. but in a very deep way]

Thought Point	Points of Thought
What is Hegel talking about?	
What is Sense-Certainty?	
What is the object of Sense-Certainty?	
What is the subject of Sense-Certainty?	
How does the dialectic figure in all of this?	
What is knowledge?	
What is truth?	
What is the Absolute?	
Compare and Contrast Hume and Hegel based on these passages; take a moment to defend both systems.	

Kant

What do you get when you cross science with metaphysic? If Hume and Hegel are bookends, Immanuel Kant is the guy who tries to referee the previous empirical/rationalist bout (*Chapter 39*). This was a massive undertaking, as you can imagine and I will tell you up front that we have not done multiple chapters on an individual in a while, but this guy requires, nay it is imperative that we do so³².

Why? What about Kant is so important? Kant is mostly remembered for his moral philosophy but that is really an end result of his thinking. Like so many before him, it is mainly because of how he arrived at those moral conclusions, and what the ramification of that thinking has on all thinking which follows it that concerns us the most. If Descartes is the father of modern philosophy, Kant is the father of modern thinking. This is a difficult set of chapters because trying to succinctly summarize Kant's influence on modern philosophy is like trying to summarize Newton's influence on science. But that is no reason to let it stop us. Just like Newton, not everything is applicable for answering all questions but it changes thinking such that these and larger truths may be explored. In his Copernican Revolution Kant attempts to explain the relation of the mind to the world around us, or better, how the relation between the mind and the world affects us and our place in it. It is difficult to itemize those changes in a simple summary, but as we have so often in the past, let us attempt to identify some of the main parts.

Kant Be

Though it may seem an odd opening statement, let us start by saying that Kant was German. Remember the earlier remark about Continental philosophers? Well this plays into that. Kant is part of the movement away from English empirical thinkers toward German idealist thinkers, which will eventually be fought – and won? – by the English Idealists (like as opposed to German Idealists like Kant and Hegel). If you have ever seen what VW calls ‘German Engineering’³³, then you have a sense of these guys. Rational and Practical, yet with a mystical sense of great purpose.

Biographically, Kant is also a fascinating individual. Though born German, he shared Scots roots³⁴ through his grandfather Cant. Later, as master of his own fate, he changed his name from Emanuel Cant to Immanuel Kant. He was brought up in a strict religious home and never really traveled that far from where he was born in Königsberg. Not that he really had to; it was after all the capital of Prussia, and he was the king of German philosophy. And of course, also not surprisingly, Kant showed a great intelligence at an early age, enrolling at the University of Königsberg at the age of 16 never to leave. Kant spent his long life in the pursuit of the necessary and important task of recapturing what he felt was being lost: a pure and practical understanding of thinking and of the end result of such correct thinking. He sums up his own journey quite nicely: “All the interests of my reason, speculative as well as practical, combine in the three following questions: 1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope?” (*Critique of Pure Reason*)

In this milieu, Kant becomes *the man*, the Plato of his age. Everyone wants to be Kant; everyone wants to understand Kant; everyone wants to have Kant’s approval; unfortunately for us they all want to write like him too.

³² Pun early and often; you’ll see.

³³ Not to be confused with or associated with Eugenics.

³⁴ The land of many thinkers, including David Hume

Ideally, We Would Start Here

But let us not get bogged down in particulars, at least not yet. Idealism is one word of several which we have brought up without much fanfare or explanation as I have conveniently ‘forgotten’ to do so. That will change in this chapter. Idealism is not just a dreamy expression or naiveté, but the thinking that ideals are really where it is at. The term ‘German Idealism’ has its origin in the Enlightenment as implemented by the Germans, as opposed to the English and French Enlightenments, which emphasized sensation over reason (meaning most had become empiricists and skeptics and not rationalists – science is a powerful force)³⁵. As somewhat mentioned earlier, the situation in Germany was just the opposite. Though rational thought was given precedence over empirical sense data, it produced not a rationalism but an idealism which both echoed and influenced a lot of German thinking to come.

Idealism is not rationalism. Rationalism places all meaning in the mind, and pretty much discounts sense data. Kant felt somewhat differently about what role rationality played. Not as bound to the rational as most at the time, he advanced what he called a ‘transcendental idealism’. We will talk more about this, but basically, the individual is the seat for the understanding of the thing *as it appears to us*, that is, it *transcends* the thing as it is. Alright, I know, but hopefully it will make more sense. Kant really wants to simplify everything (as Hegel will attempt to do with the dialectic), perhaps in what can be considered the most complex way ever.

What it means is that the human mind shapes all sensory experience *and* thought. The mind has an active role in producing our conception of reality by acting as a filter, an organizer, and an augments. So Kant’s Idealism springs from the fact that he believes that a thing-in-itself (remember? What the scholastics called *quiddity*) exists ...but it is unknowable to us. All we can *know* is the *appearance* of the thing. This means that the ‘empirical world’ is my *representation* of things in themselves – or *ideals* (in other words like Hume, Kant concedes that empirical data is all we can know about the world *and*, unlike Hume, the object still exists in itself independent of my perceptions). That means that things like space, time and causal relationships are not aspects of reality in itself but are *imposed* on it by us as a means of ordering what is real, or at least what we perceive to be real (*somewhat* similar to Hume’s association idea, but different in that the mind is the determinate of what it all means, regardless of the thing in itself or of our perceptions). For Kant, *a priori* knowledge is transcendental, or based on the *form* of all possible experience, while *a posteriori* knowledge is empirical, based on the *content* of experience.

100% Pure

Taking our cue from the above section, and in a totally new procedure, let us take a moment up front and attempt to understand what Kant is trying to accomplish before we jump in. Reason and Experience with a heaping dose of spirituality...that is what Kant is made of. Kant wrote many things, but his pivotal work, *A Critique of Pure Reason* (and the *Critique of Pure Reason for Dummies*: the *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic*) stands out as the one that most focus on. And for good reason; therein Kant manages to come up with that unified theory of knowledge which so many have sought. He ties philosophy (metaphysics), mathematics, and science back together, showing that how we think (or our judgments, as he called them) in any situation is based on a ‘simple’ process.

Kant wrote several Critiques and Critiques of Pure and Practical things, but what did he mean by ‘pure’³⁶? Pure refers to the thing in itself, that is, without any empirical content rattling around to

³⁵ But wait, you ask, what about Descartes? Let us just say briefly that he lost out.

³⁶ Once again, nothing to do with Eugenics.

muddy the waters³⁷. As we have talked about before³⁸, the idea that we understand something *a priori* means that the thing which we postulate, the thesis, is contained already within the thing; ‘Aristotle is a man’, for instance. We would know that ‘Aristotle is a fish’ is wrong because the substance fish just is not part of Aristotle (the substance man), mainly because that understanding (of his ‘manliness’³⁹) exists *before* experience (hence the *a priori*) because we have established the meaning of the substance which constitutes what it means to be a man *outside* of our own experience. The judgment is *analytic* because it is arrived at by *analyzing* the generalities of the subject not by experiencing the individual subject (thinking about things which possibly not external characteristics of a thing, but which we ‘know’ are just part of it). We have often seen this in the contradiction means of establishing a truth (‘Aristotle is not a man’ = absurd, therefore ‘Aristotle is a man’)⁴⁰. He also allows that we can understand things *a posteriori*, meaning that we synthesize things together (often using experience), after the fact (so to speak), but that knowledge falls under that category of *practical*.

So, in an attempt to stop slogging through, this paragraph will take a stab at summing all previous thinking up, which from an Aristotelian point of view says there can be distinguished two kinds of ‘judgments’:

1. **Analytic judgment:** those *a priori* understandings which are judgments based exclusively upon an analysis of the subject without use of experience/sense-data. For example, ‘The angles of a triangle always add up to 180 degrees’.
2. **Synthetic judgment:** *a posteriori* judgments that are based on a synthesis or a compilation of different facts which come to us through experience. For example, ‘the earth goes around the sun’.

Nice but, Kant disagrees. What analysis (by itself) will lead you to understanding a triangle? Certainly, a triangle has 3 sides, no matter how many you may want to give it; that is *a priori* (rationalism). And what amount experience alone tells you that something with three sides is a ‘triangle’ (empiricism)? So that brings up the rub for Kant; there must be a third way of thinking about things. He assigns this to math. *Mathematical thinking* (three sides always add up to 180 degrees = triangle) he says is composed of *analytic synthetic* judgments or as he puts it “*synthetic a priori*” (a one-two combo: knowing that it has only three angles and experience with measuring many different iterations of triangles). Think about it: spout out one of those theorems which you memorized in Geometry. They are *a priori* in that they exist without piecing together facts and yet our understanding of them is based on a compilation of other *a priori* facts and *a posteriori* experience which confirms it. It seems therefore, that there are three kinds of thinking, *synthetic*, *analytic* and *synthetic-analytic*, or Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics in that order.

Remember that earlier quote from the bio section? Kant divides those three questions up the same way: “The first question is merely speculative....The second question is purely practical....The third question...is at once practical and speculative....” (*Critique of Pure Reason*) In the end it is a view that some things are just obvious to us, some things come to

³⁷ So things involving reason are ‘pure’ when dealing with innate ideas and are ‘practical’ when dealing with things like ethics.

³⁸ Really, we have.

³⁹ *From our legal dept:* no assertions as to the quality of ‘manliness’ aside from the ‘quality of manliness’ attributable to the man Aristotle is in any way implied or should in any way be construed.

⁴⁰ Once again, way too many footnotes for one paragraph, but since we are here, quick – what kind of thinking is that?

us through experience yet some things seem to be a combination of the two, but with an extra twist – they are things which we can know but can prove neither through experience or some rational argument.

Kant expends a lot of effort distinguishing what kinds of judgments fall under each category (analytic or synthetic *and as a priori* or *a posteriori*). Through this process he came to believe that *synthetic a priori* judgments are everything which is noble and right about humanity because they produced the greatest of human thoughts; this is because they happen only when the mind gives structure and meaning to the conditions of its own experience (sense-data or innate idea), that is, makes its own judgment about them. The human mind becomes the mediator in a way that either experience or innate universals by themselves can allow.

Kant Take It Any More

Think of it this way. *A priori* means it is fixed and there is not much we can do about it. *A posteriori*? Well that is pretty much determined too, right? I mean, we cannot make our eyes see something that is not there, nor deny the overwhelming evidence of something. So he pretty much agrees with both the rationalists and the empiricists on these points. But, *synthetic a priori*, well, that is where we come into play because *we* bind the two together, within ourselves and give them new meaning, beyond just the bare facts. Here is where things begin to sound a bit familiar again. This is the subject calling the shots. We are not so much the creators of our world, but it is we who *impose* the forms of space and time upon all possible sensation using mathematics, and it is we who give meaning to all scientific knowledge as experience governed by traditional notions of substance and causality through the application of pure concepts of the understanding to all possible experience (whew!). In a slap at Hume's idea of mind and self, Kant places all meaning within the subject as the agent of the *rational imposition of order* on *a posteriori* experience and upon all *a priori* understandings as has been previously postulated. In addition, he adds one more clarification on the idea of universals, in opposition to the rationalists. Those universal principles hold only for the world *as we know it* (experience it), and since metaphysical propositions like God, or Truth, or Beauty seek a truth beyond all experience, they cannot be established within the bounds of reason alone, which Descartes thought (double whew!).

After reading that, you are probably in a stupor; after reading Hume, Kant awoke from his "dogmatic slumber" (*Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic*), obviously in a cold sweat, chilled and troubled by Hume's skepticism. Being a bit rich for his blood, like other things, Kant sees the need for skepticism but shifts its focus. This is the meaning of that phrase and we see it in his thinking. He is no longer satisfied to dogmatically and unquestioningly accept what is laid before him as might an empirical scientist or accept blindly untested universals. Taking his cue from earlier thinkers and their heavy emphasis on epistemology (and this is a cue for Hegel) he thought that once we understand the sources and limits of human knowledge (which recent trends in skepticism ultimately questioned, but pretty much stopped on) we can then continue on to ask fruitful metaphysical questions.

For this reason, Kant soundly rejects Hume. But, Kant, influenced by the works of Hume, held that we could only know what we experience (its appearance to us), and that we could never know that which is beyond experience (the thing in itself). But what does that do to universals? Kant spends some time with this, kind of saying that skepticism, similarly to the way the Medievals viewed it, causes us to ask questions without necessarily ruling out things we cannot know (as Berkeley might do). So Metaphysics can still exist, but we can only know it as we can know it, not as

the thing in itself, but only as our mind can grasp the thing. This somewhat flies in the face of earlier rational and empirical thinkers, who put everything in one basket (us), by saying that something can exist outside and independent of us and our ability to rationally or empirically prove it. So, including what we said above, Kant rules out the possibility that we could prove God but does not rule out the existence of God⁴¹.

I Now Pronounce You Husband And Wife

So Kant perceived problems with the rational-only and the empirical-only camps. Each by themselves does not answer the whole question of knowledge, and in a sense because they are mutually exclusive, have pretty lame attempts at explaining the aspects of the other which appear in each system. So, as a kind of philosophical Justice of the Peace, Kant marries the Empirical to the Rational.

Reason is important. Perception is important. Kant wants to pull them together, but like any good marriage keep distinctions between them. So, as the two become one, they retain their individuality. He is not going to attempt a synthesis of the two. "All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason." "But although all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it arises from experience. For it is quite possible that even our empirical experience is a compound of that which we receive through impressions, and of that which our own faculty of knowledge (incited only by sensuous impressions), supplies from itself, a supplement which we do not distinguish from that raw material, until long practice has roused our attention and rendered us capable of separating one from the other." (*Critique of Pure Reason*) Yes, marry them and they will produce distinct children on their own.

Kantegories

Kant tries to explain this opposites-attract relationship by proposing the ideas of Categories. Categories, as we know from Aristotle, are the means of identifying 'those things which can be the predicate or subject in a statement or an argument' (*Chapter 17*). Kant thinks this is a pretty good way to look at things, except that in another shift of accepted wisdom states that a category is really just a 'pure concept' of the mind, that is, it has no direct relation to the perception of the thing. Hopefully the subtle distinction is becoming clear. For Kant, the category, which helps us to understand the thing, is an innate concept but is not part of the thing perceived or even its perception, as would be the case for Aristotle.

What you ask? Categories are the "are concepts of an object in general" (*Critique of Pure Reason*), that is, they are mental characteristics which belong to it in general regardless of whether it has been experienced or not. Another way to put it is, like Aristotle's categories, they are a way of classifying something by things which belong to it. Unlike Aristotle's categories, they have little to do with the 10 categories Aristotle lays out, because those are general empirical definitions based on observation of the particular thing. Kant gives them directly to the object regardless of our ability to observe them or not. Confused? I know I am.

Put it this way: the Categories of Aristotle and Kant are the *general properties* that belong to all things without encompassing the particular nature of any instance of the thing. As said, Kant agreed with Aristotle's decision to categorize, but said that his list was imperfect because "he had no guiding principle, he merely picked them up as they occurred to him" (*Critique of Pure Reason*). Ouch.

⁴¹ Or even something as mundane as a triangle.

Kant, through what I am sure was a much more rigorous vetting process including both empirical and rational means, revamped the categories to be four in number: *Quantity*, *Quality*, *Relation*, and *Modality*. He felt that these characteristics really covered all the bases. He also connected them with the judgments mentioned above from the fact that he equated understanding an object with the verbal ability of humans to describe the object (“Our ability to judge is equivalent to our ability to think”, *Critique of Pure Reason*). This does not mean our judgments are always correct or that we understand everything about the object because the Categories are *generalities* which do not provide knowledge of individual, particular objects.

Think about the discussions of universals we have had before. There have been a range of ideas from the Forms to nominalism. Kant threads the needle on this. It is not that these categories cannot be experienced in the instance of the object; as a matter of fact, every particular object *must have* Categories if it is to be sensually experienced (because that is how we perceive it/understand it). Here comes the nod to both the empirical and the rational. We understand things through the sense data, and those sense data are pre-defined but inherent. Each instance of an object must possess Categories as its characteristics because Categories are *predicates* of an object in general, making them an innate assumption or presupposition.

Furthermore, by its contrary, an object in general does not have all of the Categories as predicates at one time. For example, a general object cannot have the qualitative Categories of reality and negation at the same time. Similarly, an object in general cannot have both unity and plurality as quantitative predicates at once. The types of Modality exclude each other. Therefore, a general object cannot simultaneously have the Categories of possibility and impossibility and existence and non-existence as qualities at the same time.

Kant Get The Words Out

Categories are therefore the things we can say about an object but they are both rational and empirical things. Anything that we experience is located by our mind in space and time and is classified by our mind within those categories. For this reason, space and time pre-exist, but only in our mind (they are not universals per se – an interesting intro to Einstein). This means that knowledge is in our mind, and therefore everything that we know is in our mind (space, time, objects).

So, in a nod to nominalism, the Categories are only a list of that which can be said of every object, that is, they are related only to human language. Here we can see his idea of the middleman come to a kind of fruition. We hang between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*. In making a verbal statement about an object, a speaker makes a judgment (the fruit is an apple). A general object, that is, every object (apple), has attributes that are contained in Kant's list of Categories. In a judgment, or verbal statement, the Categories are the predicates that can be asserted of every object *and* all objects (if we can say apples, then apple must have the quantity category).

In summary, *a priori* knowledge includes the four categories of *Quantity* (unity, plurality, totality), *Quality* (reality, negation, limitation), *Relation* (substance-and-accident, cause-and-effect, reciprocity), and *Modality* (possibility, existence, necessity). The *qualia* of an object (color, smell – what Aristotle might call accidents or qualify as secondary substance), are the *a posteriori* knowledge of the object and are not in the object but in our mind, they are

manufactured by the perceptive subsystem of our mind (different than Aristotle where they are secondary to the substance but still part of it).

And Now A Word From Our Sponsor...

Some of the words we have used before and some we have not used yet probably need to be put into some sort of context. Words like sense or perception really are becoming to mean the same thing, and as a matter of fact I probably fail to keep consistent with them myself. It is important to see that the words, if similar probably mean the same thing, unless some specific instruction to the contrary is made.

And for some serious product placement we have a couple of words to define so as to allow us to continue: *Noumena* (the thing in itself – not to be confused with *nominal*) and *Phenomena* (the appearance of the thing) – a word we recognize from Hegel's later-than-Kant works. May not sound like much to the untrained ear, but we hear the difference, especially in an empirical discussion. The idea of *noumena* flouts Hume's idea of nothing in itself, but the idea of phenomena kind of goes with Hegel's idea that all we can really know is not the thing itself but what we perceive of the thing.

And now back to our program to see how Kant thinks of these things.

This Is Above My Head

Kant wants to understand what thinking is and how we go about doing it so he takes on the epistemological arguments which have been brewing for centuries and looks at what we think about. In other words, is there something or nothing? Wait hasn't this been settled by science already? As the line is still somewhat blurred, science and philosophy push questions back and forth like '*what are space and time?*' We saw from Augustine the idea of time as being something, but we really have not had a satisfying discussion of space. Kant looked at the other thinkers at the time and came to a conclusion: it is possible to demonstrate the *empirical* reality of space and time. All well and good; but what does it mean? I cannot touch time or space so how can you prove their empirical reality? It is possible because I can show you that they exist but their elusive nature, this empirical reality, involves *transcendental* ideals. Space and time are forms of human intuition, that is, I just know that they exist, and the way they can be proved valid is in the way they appear to us (the *phenomena*) and not as things in themselves (the *noumena*). "Natural science (physics) contains in itself synthetic judgments *a priori*, as principles. Space then is a necessary representation *a priori*, which serves for the foundation of all external intuitions." (*Critique of Pure Reason*)

What we need to take away from this is that space and time, rather than being real *things-in-themselves* (*noumena*) or something we can sense, are the very forms of intuition by which we must perceive objects (*phenomena*). They are neither to be considered properties that we may attribute to objects in perceiving them (categories), nor substantial entities of themselves (*noumena*). They are in that sense subjective, and yet (like categories) necessary preconditions of any given object insofar as this object is an appearance (*phenomena*) and not a *thing-in-itself* (*noumena*). Space, time and causality transcend both the things themselves and my rational perceptions.

As Humans we by necessity perceive objects as located in space and in time (think of walking down a corridor or through a room). This integral element of experience is part of what it means for a human to think about an object, to perceive and understand it as something both spatial and temporal. Kant argues for these several claims in the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, devoted to the inquiry of the *a priori* conditions of human sensibility (the faculty by which humans apprehend objects) and the following section, the *Transcendental Logic*, which concerns itself with the manner in which objects are dealt with in thought.

In the end, the transcendental idea ties together how we know and what we know by having knowledge originate in perceived phenomena which have been organized by categories.

Making Lemonade From Lemons

Still, Kant seems to take contrary positions. On one hand, all our concepts derive from some *a priori* knowledge (*transcendental idealism*) yet on the other, one cannot 'infer' the existence of objects as Descartes does because all we know is their appearance (*phenomena*), not the thing in itself (*noumena*).

Not to worry, there is not conflict he says. This is because, as an idealist (i.e. neither a rationalist nor an empiricist) he leans toward the rational and makes 'intuition' the primary decision maker. A *priori* knowledge is indispensable to perception because without it we could not make sense of the data we receive. But he does not abandon sense-data. Experience involves the *processing* of sense-data (applying *a priori* categories to perceptions) by some means. That means is the human mind, making the human mind an active originator of experience rather than just a passive recipient of perception (and transcendental to either the universal or the empirical). We know this because sense input must be processed, i.e. recognized, or it would just be noise. Therefore, knowledge depends on the structure of the mind, which is contrary to Hume in that there has to be some means of processing data *outside* of *a priori* categories and *a posteriori* experience. It is this process of 'recognizing' perceptions that generates and defines consciousness (the self), not merely thinking on its own (as it is for Descartes).

Neither An Empiricist Nor A Rationalist Be...⁴²

Kant is creating our modern thought world. No longer are we pigeon-holed into theological, empirical or rational justification of ideas alone. We are instead bound by our very nature as rational beings to think of the noumenal realm *as if* the speculative principles were true regardless of whether or not they are. By the very character of human reason, we are *required* to imagine our own existence as substantial beings. This also has other ramifications as we will see. The absence of any proof of this 'truth' makes it impossible for us to verify them, but it can in no way diminish the depth of our belief that they are.

So if we look back at some of the recent thinkers we see how Kant discounts them without abandoning them. Leibniz, for instance, who was a rationalist by nature thought that all empirical propositions can be shown to be logically necessary. Kant says yes, but only in a way that we cannot prove. Hume the empiricist thought that the only reason we knew anything was because the 'mind' collected things together and we cannot be sure of their 'reality'. Kant says yes, but only because we can make sense of them through a transcendental understanding of the sense data (not the thing itself). Kant says that sense-data is just not enough to explain everything we understand and know and how we come to understand and know them. So, for Kant, things which we take for granted like Physics are valid (things we can only prove mathematically to understand the experimental data) while Hume claimed it is not. We can see how that turned out.

Putting It Together

Okay, rather long and perhaps a bit hard to swallow but we are really running into the understanding of modern thought. Idealism argues that reality is dependent upon the mind rather

⁴² *Have only zeal, for the ideal!* With all apologies to Shakespeare, Bizet and Gilligan's Island

than independent of it and that the properties of objects have no standing independent of mind's perception of them. We witness here a sort of final nail in the coffin as to the source of knowledge as constructed by the empiricists and the rationalists. Kant 'settles' it by enforcing the mind as the 'decider' amidst all of the different types of data presented to us. Science, Math, and Metaphysical questions do not come from or are decided by some external abstraction, but come from within the human, and are decided by the human based on understanding what we can and cannot know, and that is certainly not limited to flawed human perception or improvable innate ideas.

The world is what it is and we merely pass through it. *What* we know of it we organize both internally and externally, with each a compliment to the other. *How* we know is relative to the type of knowledge, or better yet the *realm* of knowledge; nothing is 'wrong' within its sphere, which perhaps provides that spoon full of sugar for empiricists and rationalists.

Kant is our original think-out-of-the-box guy. He is not satisfied with the present arguments, rattled out of a blind, dogmatic drifting by what he perceives to be their, well, their complete 'wrongness'. There is perhaps what we might call a certain 'common sense' to his thought, but we must put that in the context of what we know now – Kant's thinking.

"Immanuel doesn't pun, he Kant" **Oscar Wilde**

The Kant Zone

"It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity." (*Opening monologue, The Twilight Zone*) A place of Space and Time...and Causality. Okay, that and a few other things. Some of this may sound familiar, like we are beating a dead philosopher, but the idea is to keep these basic principles in mind through all of the tendrils of Kant's thought.

A Kuick Review

Kant essentially creates an entire school of thought out of the blue, or at least determined a way of thinking which seems radically different than anything before it. Operating for his entire life in relative isolation (but not obscurity) in Königsberg, he devoted his time to studying the works of other philosophers and formulating his own assumptions about the world, which, as we have mentioned, he finally released as the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The *Critique* is a response to his contemporaries like Descartes, Hume, and Leibniz and their arguments about perception and reality, based similarly to them on a rethinking of everything. Attacking their question of innate knowledge versus experience, Kant, while leaning toward the rational, proposes a marriage of the two, that all people are born with an innate sense of raw experience and this inborn sense relies on innate Categories, which while part of our understanding of the thing are not part of its substance (differing him from Aristotle). In so doing, he cemented his bust high within the pantheon of philosophers, and knocked the Enlightenment down a few notches to usher in the Golden Age of German Idealism.

Recall that last chapter we introduced Kant's ideas which combine Rationalism and Empiricism through a 'transcendental' method dubbed *transcendental idealism*. Whereas the Enlightenment had been built around the idea that man can *discover* the laws of nature with his mind, Kant countered that it is the mind that *gives* those laws to nature. Contained within that notion is the idea that things exist in and of themselves, and that we can perceive them as well as understand general things about them. The one drawback is that we cannot know them *within themselves* only *within ourselves*. There are *noumena* (things in themselves) and *phenomena* (the things as they appear to us) and these are separate but known to us through our senses, our innate understandings and through a combination of the two. Kant calls these things, synthetic, analytic, and synthetic *a priori* (or synthetic analytic) and these pretty much correspond to the disciplines of metaphysics, science, and mathematics.

At the same time, Kant's re-working of skepticism embodies the German Enlightenment's suspicions about empiricism and yet, while the German Enlightenment leaned heavily toward the Rational, Kant was not totally captivated by it as it lacked as certain...reality. Kant proposes that we all are born with our own ideas and perceptions of the *real* world but we pull it all together. As such, we can never know what is real and what is essentially the result of our perception of that real world. In other words, reality is in the eyes of the beholder.

This means that things like space, time, and causality are templates by which we order our understandings and perceptions and are therefore constructs of our mind and not substantially related to or part of the things we construct using them. However, because nothing really exists separate from its 'existence' as a result of our personal perception of the thing, then perceptions and observations of the world cannot be trusted. As a result, empirical evidence

alone cannot be trusted either. By stating that only a select few universal truths in the world were valid, Kant effectively trashes the premise of the entire French Enlightenment, but at the same time, by limiting the reach of the rational and postulating the existence of things outside of our mind's ability to categorize them he refutes the English and the Germans too.

The Latest Phenom

Kant presents a world that is perceived and ordered by the mind but is outside of it (as opposed to say, Berkeley or Hegel for example). Take a moment and put that into perspective. It is not merely a figment of the mind, or merely a construct of the mind, nor is it merely defined as the senses construct it. Kant presents a world in which we operate and impose meaning but which we are ultimately unable to truly 'know'. He believes that our understanding of objects will always be skewed by our limited capacity to understand, either physically or mentally ("Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing can ever be made" *Idea for a General History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose, prop.6*) but he refutes the contemporary 'all-or-none' skepticism by holding firmly to the fact that our limited capability to know it does not mean that the world does not exist outside of what we think of as the world.

In many ways he is pretty much in line with the thinking of the time and with the thinking of earlier philosophers: we experience the world as we perceive it through our (human) nature; we cannot know how things are in themselves; we cannot know the objects of the world, but only our perceptions of such objects. Still there is an ideal which guides our perceptions and understandings but even they only really give us a glimpse of the real thing. So, the way we think (*what can I know*) is a conglomeration of all of the common sense understandings of humanity. I think and I perceive, but I do not always get it right. Compound this with the fact that every individual had different perceptions and mental abilities; apparently it is a miracle we can ever agree on anything.

Think about it this way: you are walking along at dusk and in the distance you see silhouette, a rocket you conclude. As you get closer, you change your mind it is really a tree. A few steps further, you say, no, it is a person. Eventually you come upon it and, squinting in the near-dark you see that it is merely a sign-post. Another person, on the same route may make different conclusions along the way based in their own experience. If they have never seen a rocket, they may think of it as a tower, and so on and so forth.

These things, these *phenomena* or how the things themselves (the *noumena*) appear to us, are 'constructs' which sit between the mind and the reality of what they are. Think of it like Plato's Cave. Phenomena exist only insofar as the mind perceives them as ideas. Unlike Plato, the ultimate reality (the noumena, the thing-in-itself) cannot be experienced even by the human mind. That is to say, since the mind cannot hold the thing in itself but only our perception of it (and ordering of it by categories), even the Form of the thing lies beyond us, we are almost stuck only with the shadows on the wall (of our mind). But never fear! As we said, *A priori* knowledge includes the categories of quantity (*unity, plurality, totality*), categories of quality (*reality, negation, limitation*), categories of relation (*substance-and-accident, cause-and-effect, reciprocity*), and categories of modality (*possibility, existence, necessity*). Anything that we experience is located by our mind in space and time and is classified by our mind within those categories (so unlike Plato's cave, these appearances are governed by universal laws and are not merely a reflection or shadow of the universal). So rationally we have universal categories by which we measure our empirical perceptions.

Ultimately using empirical data we design our world, or at least a representation of it based in the categories within each thing that our mind applies to it. This is the meaning of “transcendental” that “rational insight” is connected to, but does not immediately arise from, empirical experience.

Okay. So that takes care of the empirical and the rational (the *a posteriori* and the *a priori*), but that leaves one other unanswered question: what about things like *space*, *time*, and *cause*? And of course when we begin to look at these, we fall back into the something or nothing question. Kant sees these things as related as well, but in typical Kant fashion, skews the thinking about them. Causality is a *relation* among *phenomena* (or if you will appearances or representations), not between them and something else. In other words, it is an association of phenomena together, not between the thing itself and some other thing itself. How is that? Are not the phenomena of a cue ball and the phenomena of an eight ball telling us of the interaction of the things in themselves? Or at least do we not perceive the interaction of the things themselves through their phenomena?

Can You Give Me Some Space?

Ah. You⁴³ forget what phenomena are, says Kant. They are the appearance of the thing. This means that things like Cause, and Space and Time are not phenomena or universals but are *constructs* from that place in the middle – the mind. We think that something like cause must exist because we see evidence of something like it through the phenomena around us, but it is not part of the thing itself or even of the phenomena, nor is it a ridged universal. We rationally know to call it Cause, but we do not have any empirical evidence of Cause as a thing in itself (or as a universal for that matter). It would be like saying that the plus sign in an equation stands for something in itself. It does not. But it is also not merely a space-holder. Our mind gives it meaning in the context of the numbers around it; when we see it we *know* to add the two numbers together.

Space, Cause, and Time pre-exist, but only in our mind. They do not exist outside of our mind, like a Form and they do not exist *in* anything outside of our mind or in any thing-in-itself. If that is clear then, we can see them somewhat like Einstein sees time: it exists but only in relationship to a thing as we perceive it; the closer you get to a massive body the more the time and space which relate to that object ‘bend’. Because of this ‘bend’ the application of time to the object while on the object is different than the application of time to the object while orbiting the object. In that sense then, we experience time differently. So it is for us in Kant’s world. Space, time, and cause are intrinsic to the individual experiencing the phenomena and trying to make sense of it than of the thing itself.

Experience involves *processing* sense-data not just the mere experiencing of it (as Locke would contend), that is, we apply *a priori* categories to perceptions. Perceptual input must be processed, i.e. recognized or understood as *something*, or it would just be noise. This means that knowledge is solely in our mind, and therefore everything that we know is in our mind (space, time, objects). The *qualia* of an object (color, smell or its accidents if you will) are not in the object but in our mind, they are manufactured by the perceptive subsystem of our mind and we apply these pre-existing mental filters to the object.

So what we have is an *active participation* by the *individual* in the process of gaining knowledge. Kant has shown that empirical data by itself is really useless. Kant says this

⁴³ Well, at least the author.

means that there is a ‘primacy’ to *intuition*. Intuition is not ESP or some sort of feeling we get (though that is what the word has come to mean), but an immediate cognition of an object, not something ‘inferred’ or determined by a previous cognition of the same object (Hume, basically). Think of it as pure, untaught, noninferential knowledge. So space *is*, because we *know it is*; it is the direct internal perception of something that is a truth, independent of any reasoning or empirical processing, that is, we know it to be true before we research it or logic it out. What this says is that *a priori* knowledge is indispensable to perception. At the same time, one also cannot “infer” the existence of those perceived objects (as Descartes does). Not just an active participant, the human mind is an active *originator* of experience rather than just a passive recipient of perception.

As a short aside, we are beginning to hear that a lot more about time and space, though really we have glossed over that. Atomism has (Leucippus and Democritus *Chapter 9*) resurged and Newton has scientifically proposed the reality of motion and space. An interesting side path might be an exploration of the meaning of all that on philosophical thinking about those things.

Excuse Me, Is That Polyester?

With the mind firmly seated as the center of all knowledge⁴⁴, Kant begins to explore what knowing means. Empirical data (*a posteriori*) is meaningless without the mind to organize it and innate universals (*a priori*), while the *primary* means of ordering are not the *active* means of ordering. The mind is the thing that has the power to combine the two (synthetic *a priori*). As we said, Kant argued that the propositions of mathematics and physics (but not those of metaphysics and science) are *synthetic a priori*, in the sense that they are about objects of *possible* experience (synthetic) but at the same time knowable prior to, or independent of experience (*a priori*), thus making them also *necessarily true*, rather than merely contingently true (remember that whole *necessity* thing?⁴⁵).

Synthetic *a priori* are true because they must be true, or at least as true as we will ever be able to know. So how does one arrive at these necessarily true things? And why are they not known to everyone? Let us take on the second question first. This is because we are individuals, and as such every one of us is different, has different means of applying the innate to the empirical and we all live in different situations. The same holds true for the individual person as for individual objects, there may be universals which define some phenomena as that ‘thing’ but it is the categories which help us to distinguish individual things.

As for the first question, it is the act of synthesizing using analysis which provides the truth. Mathematics is synthetic *and a priori* because it deals with space and time, both of which are forms of human sensibility that *condition* whatever is perceived through the senses. Similarly, physics is synthetic and *a priori* because in its *ordering* of experience it uses concepts (categories) whose function is to prescribe the general form that sensible experience must take. Think of it this way: Math is creative thinking because it takes concepts within us of things having place around us and linear measurements to be made

⁴⁴ This is probably the moment to spend some time on this idea outside of the discussion. The answer to ‘what is knowledge?’ is that it is the thing which we have within us which is the result of taking in, organizing, analyzing, and innately categorizing perceptions, and, contrarily, is the thing which, independent of external things (in-themselves and innate universals), is the result of giving meaning and order from and to those external things.

⁴⁵ Okay, maybe you don’t; something which *must be true*; *Chapter 20, Chapter 30, Chapter 32....*

about those things, that is, something like I'm here but I walk over there and that takes a measurable amount of time. I put here and there in spatial terms and my movement from here to there in temporal terms. Physics is creative thinking because I take the observable world around me and give it universal application, like, if I take a piece of wood and shape it by certain principles, I will always come out with a wing which, because of those principles, will fly.

So, one more time, the types of epistemological propositions (ways of thinking):

- **Empirical (*a posteriori*) Propositions:** their truth depends on perception (empirical data)
 - Example: "A whale is a mammal"
- **Rational (*a priori*) Propositions:** their truth does not depend on perception (relies purely on thought)
 - Example: "God exists"
- **Analytic Propositions:** the predicate is *logically* contained in the subject (its negation would be a waste of good brain power – as opposed to Aristotle, where it is proof)
 - Examples: "Everything has a size", "The sun is round"
 - The truth, or knowledge gained, is *self-evident* once the concept or object is analyzed (that something as a size or shape is dependent upon a category which is in relation only to the object itself and does not tell us anything which is not already a part of the object, which analysis alone will discover naturally)
 - Ergo it does not produce new Knowledge
- **Synthetic Propositions:** their truth is not self-evident
 - Examples: "This room is large", "The sun is approximately 93 million miles from the earth"
 - Truth is based on experience of the world (it is synthetic because of the concept of being located within space, that is, that the sun is a certain distance from the earth goes beyond or adds to the concept of the sun itself)
 - Ergo it produces new Knowledge

The synthetic is the rationale for why Kant gives precedent to the rational. The mind is the center of all understanding. It is the place of not only piecing together the obvious but also of generating the un-obvious. The creative mind (you know, the one that came up with polyester⁴⁶) pulls together the obvious and the un-obvious to produce a new idea, which does not fall into the category of the obvious or the un-obvious⁴⁷. The synthetic is intuitive and not self-evident and the *a priori* is evident but not dependent upon sense-data which means they fall under the realm of the mind as the active interpreter, creating new knowledge that is unattainable without the mind.

But we have to step beyond the normal forms of knowledge, because they do not provide the full amount of participation by the individual mind. So what are those things which increase knowledge but are more reliable than just empirical data? We can point to the reliable, rational things which we impose upon reality in order to give it meaning, something which is taking off just like science, but does not rely solely on empirical sense data.

⁴⁶ From our legal department: no claims for or against said materials are made nor as to the minds which developed said products.

⁴⁷ Not obvious in the 'duh' sense but more like what is real versus what can be understood but is not intuitively obvious.

Mathematical propositions depend on intuition (they apply *a priori* concepts to space and time, which are also *a priori*). Intuition is of a “spatial” kind in geometry (judgments of geometry are about the structure of space) and of a “temporal” kind in arithmetic (judgments of arithmetic are about the structure of time). Physics is made of synthetic *a posteriori* (empirical) propositions but also uses synthetic *a priori* propositions (e.g., that one event causes another event), which apply *a priori* concepts such as causality and each category implies a corresponding principle of Physics. For example, by using a strobe light (empirical *a posteriori* experimentation) I can prove that an object pushed down a metered range moves in increments along that range, that is over time and within space, caused by the pushing hand (*a priori* concepts)⁴⁸.

Kant Get A Grip On It

Still the thing is, well, proving any of this. Can we really increase our knowledge independently of experience? It seems very logical that $2 + 2 = 4$. For that reason, whenever I see two things and two more things I can conclude that I have four things. This may be true for apples but what about two apples and two oranges? I do not end up with four of either; four fruits yes, but not four apples or oranges. What we do ‘know’ involves a kind of rational ‘seeing’ or grasping of the truth (necessity) of the proposition before us. We know we do not have four apples but four fruits. The negative is implied, that is, I ‘know’ I do not have four apples so I shift the conclusions to become fruit. I still necessarily have four things, and the fact that they are not four apples does not change that. My apparent insight into the necessity of a claim justifies my belief in it.

I can make the same claim for classical logic: “If all Greeks are men, and Aristotle is a Greek, then it follows that Aristotle is a man”. Once I consider the meaning of the relevant terms, I seem able to ‘see’, in a direct and purely rational way, that if the second premise of this conditional is true, then the conclusion must also be true.

Synthetic *a priori* allows us to increase our knowledge independently of experience because it is transcendental. Synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible because knowledge basically consists of the categorizing of perceptions. Leibniz (rationalist similarly to Aristotle, if he had vocalized it) thought that all propositions are analytic, even empirical ones, that is, all empirical propositions can be shown to be logically necessary. Hume (empiricist), on the other hand, thought that only analytic *a priori* and synthetic empirical (*a posteriori*) existed and that synthetic *a priori* propositions (and therefore physics) were impossible.

Kant counters with his explanation of the basis for the truth of synthetic *a priori*. Synthetic *a priori* judgments are true not because of experience (which can justify our belief in them, but are not necessarily based in experience) but because the predicate is logically contained within the subject. It is proven true via a ‘transcendental argument’, which is a set of methods to use the mind's own functioning to increase the mind's own knowledge. Example: “There are objects that exist in space and time outside of me”. The ‘proof’ of this is that it would not be possible to be aware of myself as existing without presupposing the existence of something permanent outside of me to distinguish myself from, sort of like

⁴⁸ In an un-discussed aside, the coolest thing is that all propositions of Physics constitute synthetic *a posteriori* (empirical) judgments: they are indefinitely revisable. That is to say, Newtonian physics is not supplanted by Einsteinian physics.

Descartes' rational. We know things because they are "The amount of energy is always conserved" "The angles of a triangle always add up to 180 degrees".

Psyche! Or I Get The Idea

When we use the word psychology, remember that we are years before Freud. Psychology in this sense is more similar to Aristotle's use (*Chapter 16*), looking at what is our essential nature, that is, how do we work, so to speak. As we have seen, according to Kant the senses perceive objects (particulars – resulting in *phenomena*) and thought handles concepts (universals – the categories). The final cog of understanding is the synthetic propositions we just discussed that are the application of a universal concept to a particular object. All of these concepts add up to make us who we are.

The idea of a concept is multilayered. *A posteriori* or empirical concepts (things abstracted from perceived objects), *a priori* concepts or categories (things not abstracted from objects, but still applicable to objects), and *ideas* (neither abstracted from nor applicable to objects). These three forms of knowledge are totally dependent on our mind; we are powerhouses of understanding, of creating knowledge. This knowledge is not restricted to just me. In a type of answer to Hume's denial of the self, where we share in collective association of ideas, Kant has universal meaning arising from particular meaning done by the self/mind. Through Synthetic *a priori* propositions we apply the categories (a specific kind of concept) to the perceived objects (phenomena). This means that the *subjective* universe of perceived objects is transformed into the *objective* universe of causally-linked physical objects within space and time by the application of categories to perception. This second step, so to speak is one of the unique aspects of the human psychology.

This ability of the mind to use both sense data and categories transforms a chaotic senseless universe of disconnected events into an ordered, meaningful universe of connected events, in a greater sense than Hume's associative idea, because it is not merely the fact that one concept is standing next to another, but that we decide that the one concept goes with the other or not. The primacy of rationality means that we are *thinking* beings, and it is the thinking being which creates this ordered, meaningful reality (by means of the categories).

So, *within ourselves* we hold not only internal understandings provided by either external truth of individual objects or external truth of unconscious universals but the very means of thinking about and giving meaning to the world. We are the engines of meaning. Ideas are due to an availability of an unlimited series of deductive inference (like the incessant three year old that questions each answer you give: why? why? why?). The rational animal of Aristotle shines through here. This deductive questioning leads us to understanding ourselves. Kant tells us that there are really only three defining Ideas:

Idea Category	Question	Basic Question
<i>Psychology</i>	What is the soul?	Who am I?
<i>Cosmology</i>	What is the world?	Where am I?
<i>Theology</i>	What is God?	Why am I here?

Table 6: Kant's Ideas

These questions are the thinking of metaphysics; the 'how do we know' question comes from beyond experience and cannot be applied to experience. The rational Categories can only be applied to perceptions not ideas. To put it simply, these concepts take place outside of perception (metaphysically) and there are no categories for the soul or for God. Human thinking (science, logic, physics, etc.) is bound up in these ideas and all thinking is designed to help us to understand and

give meaning to 'us'. In the end, all of these things take place within us. We are the means and the control over all meaning and knowledge of the world, so all of these questions surround, depend upon and apply to us.

Just like the physical (phenomenal) world can be known and the categories can be known these metaphysical things can also be known. It must be, per the synthetic *a priori*, because we can think them.

Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary, How Do Your Antinomies Grow? Or Aren't Those Some Lovely Antinomies?

Kant's reasoning for the above is based in what he called *antinomies*. This metaphysical thinking, because it is not physics, does not have the same epistemological rules as physics, and to try to use one with the other is where all of the problems come from. The application of categories to non-perceived (abstract) ideas leads to an *antinomy* (a thesis and its antithesis that can both be proven true). Basically it is a contradiction existing between two apparently unquestionable propositions (what we might call a *paradox*⁴⁹). This seems to be Kant's strong point, taking two seemingly disparate ideas and wedging them together, like say empiricism and rationalism.

Okay maybe that does not make sense. But think about the idea of necessity for Kant. Metaphysics falls under the necessary column, but remember from above that just because it is necessary does not mean that it is 'provable'. Simply the two 'worlds' of thought, one of the physical world around us and the other on the things which are not physical, involve the human mind but in different capacities. Obviously we are able to conceive of both black holes and God, but why? How? Especially when trying to apply the same reasoning to God as you do to a black hole. This kind of thinking will only lead to the 'paradox' of faith and science. Kant says to let that go. The two cannot be 'reconciled', that is Science cannot 'prove' God any more than theology can 'prove' the creation story, nor can science 'disprove' God any more than theology can 'disprove' black holes. They are only effective within their own realms.

We can look at it this way. If I live my whole life in Huntsville, Alabama and you, your whole life in New York City, then we have different perspectives for interpreting the world. But if we are both thrown into the desert outside of Las Vegas⁵⁰, then we will apply those same 'prejudices', if you will, to mesas. Where you may see a skyscraper in the distance, I see a rocket. In this realm though, neither of us is 'wrong', and eventually we will place the correct category on the phenomenal object.

Putting It Together

Okay, another massive missive and in the end it boils down to the fact that Kant tells us the way to think about the world is to imagine that everything we think has meaning, be it right or wrong in the end. Meaning is flexible and revisable; meaning is creative and uniquely human. The path to knowledge may be somewhat mundane but the effect of and the increasing of knowledge is most wonderful and exciting.

The world had become a place where all was knowable through science. All mysteries were merely unknown scientific phenomena which awaited observation and understanding. Kant does not disagree that the world is fully knowable (except for those pesky things-in-themselves), but that it is not the world which imposes understanding upon us but we who impose understanding upon

⁴⁹ As opposed to two doctors (a pair of docs) OR where one can tie two boats (a pair of docks).

⁵⁰ Perhaps for reasons of *Fear and Loathing*, but then that is food for thought in another session; in addition, a case perhaps in which of what happens in Vegas not staying in Vegas.

the world. We do this because of the way we come to know, through both sense and reason, and the unique human ability to synthesize the rational with the empirical.

For this reason things like Black Holes and God can be part of the conversation, as easily as rocks and robots. We are the Engines of Meaning.

“Humanity has advanced, when it has advanced, not because it has been sober, responsible and cautious, but because it has been playful, rebellious, and immature.” **Tom Robbins**, *Still Life with Woodpecker*

“Against this theory, which grants empirical reality to time, but denies to it absolute and transcendental reality, I have heard from intelligent men an objection so unanimously urged, that I conclude that it must naturally present itself to every reader to whom these considerations are novel.” **Immanuel Kant**, *Critique Of Pure Reason*

Kant: The Morality Play

All right, you (rightly) ask, if Kant is mainly thought of as a moral philosopher what does all of that have to do with the price of tea in China? Why wander through all of that? Well because that is how he understood the person: by the *way* we know. Remember the whole “What can I know...What ought I to do...What may I hope?” progression thing? Now that we have a handle on the basics of Kantian philosophy, the how and what can we know, let us take a stroll through the thought for which he is most often thought of.⁵¹

The Story So Far....

Metaphysics makes a comeback under Kant, but this is not your father’s metaphysics. No longer does he allow the world to be reduced to mere sense perception which leads to the nullification of all things not empirical, he also wants to avoid the growing sentimentalism. He wants to lay out the boundaries of metaphysics as well, in order to give meaning to ‘what must I do’, and ‘what may I hope’.

But first, once again, a quick review of what we have hopefully learned so far. Kant starts by defining the distinction between synthetic (new) and analytic (true but merely discoverable) knowledge, as well as *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge. This allowed him to distinguish the means and types of human thinking. Once he had a handle on this he used it to define the three types of knowledge Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics which correspond to the three types of thinking empirical (sensual, *a posteriori*), synthetic (rational, *a priori*), and synthetic *a priori* (a combination regulated by the mind). This to answer the question ‘what can I know?’

Kant makes these distinctions because he feels that an explanation of creative knowledge is lacking (or unaccounted for) in other systems. According to Kant, previous thinkers approach the problem from a narrow viewpoint, seeing mathematics as analytic *a priori* knowledge (using what we innately know to analyze in order to understand) and science as synthetic *a posteriori* knowledge (understanding built from perceptions as they come to us) both of which produce no new or definite knowledge ($2+2=4$ and a fish is a fish is a fish whether we understand that or not, meaning that knowledge is merely an *uncovering* or *discovering* of what already is). This kind of thinking also eliminates the possibility for metaphysics – two strikes against it.

So he proposes the third type of knowledge. This is a knowledge that does not spring solely from experience or innate forms, and is not merely uncovered but *created*. Kant delegates mathematics as the third realm and shows specifically how geometry discovers the universal laws of space, and algebra discovers the universal laws of time (think in terms of linear time), which provide the basic concepts by which we order and expand knowledge. These concepts are not external universals or perceivable *noumena*, but internal concepts for collecting and ordering universals and phenomena⁵². Space and time are ‘pure intuitions’, concepts within us, which allow for perception, that is, they give the *context* for all empirical data, so for that reason they are separate concepts, that is, they cannot be in the thing (*noumena*), its phenomena or part of the categories which help us to understand perceptions. In other words, while they are *a priori* and therefore universal, they are only *mental* concepts. Ultimately, our mental ability to combine the empirical with the innate

⁵¹ As we have already covered the thought for which he is least often thought of, in that it is ingrained in so many of the things we think.

⁵² And only universals (categories) and phenomena because noumena are unknowable.

only gives us knowledge of appearances (phenomena) and not things-in-themselves (noumena), much like Plato said in his analogy of the cave.

The world exists outside of us and in combination with us gives rise to knowledge within us (*how* as well as *what* I can know). So *noumena*, via our sense-perception of them (i.e. *phenomena*), are given context in space and time in a causal relationship, which in turn give rise to *judgments of perception* within us (which are subjective), which create concepts that become *judgments of experience* (which are objective)⁵³. This means that the particular and the universal, like the subjective and the objective are related (through the vehicle which is us) and because we can subjectively understand it, it must have universal application. As Kant puts it, “The objective validity of the judgment of experience signifies nothing else than its necessary universal validity.... And, conversely, if we have reason to hold a judgment to be necessarily universally valid (which never rests on perception but on the pure concept of understanding under which the perception is subsumed), we must consider it to be objective also....” (*Prolegomena*, sect. 18) So, unlike Plato's cave, appearances are governed by universal laws, and in the end they are really all that we can know about things⁵⁴. We are the engines of meaning, through our ability to sculpt meaning from perception and universal ideas; the world is run by universal laws and we *discover* these laws through the process of science.

Having established the foundation for knowledge and what can be known, by default Kant assigns things like Space, Time, and Cause, the Categories as universal traits of all conscious entities. Barring ultimate brain damage of some sort, everyone has this function of the mind, though we share it to different results perhaps. Still, the categories, like *Unity*, from which we devise the understanding of the thing as a whole (like the phone is different that the desk it sits upon make *objective* science even possible (that is, it is not just the mere individual input, association, or correlation of the sense data)).

Something From Something

Something we have to take a moment and understand here is the categorization Kant does. The statement of how the mind works, and the application of that to everyone is important. Hume's association infers a certain hap-hazard means of coming to knowledge and coming to *shared* knowledge. Kant wants to pull things together for a more rational, shared functioning.

Because things within the human mind are similar regardless of the application, just as understanding requires Categories, reason requires Ideas (the basis for the use of the word idealism) – which we can translate as *ideals*. And for the person there are three ideas: the idea of the realm of the subjective (psychology), the idea of realm of objective (cosmology), and the idea of realm of the possible (theology). Part of who we are is the striving to understand, or at least continue to better our understanding of these things. The interior and the exterior reflect one another. Meaning runs in parallel operations. Science and math are two forms of thinking and one cannot replace the other. People fail to see this and so one problem that develops with the different types of thinking and the ability to apply the one to the other Kant calls *antinomies* – thesis/antithesis pairs that both appear to be true, things like “There are in the world causes through freedom” and “There is no freedom, but all is Nature.” (*Prolegomena*, 80) Kant explains the problem but says that the split between noumena (where freedom may lie) and phenomena (where necessity rules) solves such dilemmas.

⁵³ This is not necessarily a linear progression as we might think about it. This should never be considered a process in time but as merely having time (like space) applied to it – but more on that thinking later.

⁵⁴ Author Discussion: In a way he avoids Plato's prejudice against material things and against limited knowledge by placing true knowledge of the thing beyond our reach, so to speak, and giving precedence to the human intellect as the sole ground of meaning. Thoughts?

"if natural necessity is referred merely to appearances and freedom to things in themselves, no contradiction arises if we at the same time admit both kinds of causality, however difficult or impossible it may be to make the latter kind conceivable." (*Prolegomena*, 84)

Seeming paradoxes are handled by seeing each idea within its realm, which still allows for each to be true and true across the board. Though it may not seem like it, universal truths are possible because of the universal operations of the mind and we all share that mind (the movement from particular/subjective to the universal/objective). That is to say, because the mind works by and can conceive of universals, they must by necessity (possibly) be (per the earlier synthetic, analytic, and synthetic *a priori* argument). Literally, who we are, our psychology, is a being which makes sense of the world. We give the meaning and context to all the sense data and universals. Still we are the sum of these things, limited by what we know, but not confined to what we know or is handed to us by innate ideas or perceptions. We can create new knowledge as we learn; we learn universals from particulars; we can understand that there are things which science and math cannot prove, but they too are universals. This brings us to where we are today. As Kant set out to try to understand how and what we can know (reason) in *Critique*, he sets out to define morality (or what must I do?), that other timeless philosophical question, in *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Is That Really Necessary?

Kant holds that our actions *must* be guided by these same universals which guide our thoughts, or else like sensory data, all actions would just be noise, indefinable and undistinguishable, or as Hume would say, mere associations and therefore relative. According to Kant though, humans are uniquely created in the midst of creation, and just as Jesus is able to sum up God's Law in a single commandment, all human actions (morality) can be summed up in one ultimate commandment of reason, or *imperative*. As its name implies, this imperative is the origin and source from which all duties and obligations spring. For Kant, for something to be an imperative its very suggestion declares a certain action (or inaction) to be *necessary*, that is to say, there is a difference between stating 'the couch is soft' and 'killing is wrong'. Remember that whole necessary argument? In most cases, necessary means *it must be so*, but it is the *it*⁵⁵ which is often under advisement. "A categorical imperative would be one which represented an action as objectively necessary in itself, without reference to any other purpose." (*The Metaphysics of Morals*) Aristotle had logical necessity (true and only true), Epicurus had ontological necessity (imperative to life), Avicenna had the sense it must be in order for things to be so (logical causation). Ultimately for them all, God was *the* necessary, and his existence is his essence and vice versa, so for them the necessary emanated from God. Remember most of that? Anyway, you get the picture.

Kant is starting from a different playing field. This is not the time of Augustine or Aristotle but the time of Locke and Descartes. God is not the reason for action. Everything takes place within *me* (and this is the foundation of his thought), so any behavior creation or modification must also take place within me. But how? Using *reason*. But remember, in keeping with the primacy of reason, Kant places morality within metaphysics, and as such relies on the different kind of thinking. The antinomies people keep blathering on about only

⁵⁵ Not related to a certain 'is' as uttered by a certain president.

cause problems because they result from thinking incorrectly, that is, applying the wrong type of thinking to the problem.

One thing we know is that Reason means Universals. From Plato's Forms to Descartes' Innate ideas, we are talking about objective universals which imply their necessity. The only difference is that for Kant, necessity implies possibility but not proof. That is okay because some things are improvable using non-analytic thinking. But that still does not seem like a stable foundation to set your morality on, does it?

We Have Other Means Of...Persvation....

So he proposes that there are two types of imperatives (necessary actions): *Hypothetical* and *Categorical*. A *hypothetical* imperative compels action: if I am hungry, I *must* eat. A *categorical* imperative, on the other hand, denotes an absolute, unconditional requirement that is the last word in all circumstances, both required and justified as an end in itself: *do not* kill. The former is true, that if I do not eat I will die, but it does not compel me to eat right now, I could wait until later, so while I must eat it can often wait. The latter holds a deeper compulsion. It must be done right now. I cannot shoot you and then decide to take it back later, nor can I *not* shoot you now and then come back and shoot you later.

These two types of action are based in Kant's thought. Things must be, but they can also possibly not be. Ultimately for Kant, in the end, morality is about action. We can sit around all day talking about the weather but eventually we must either open the umbrella or not. We must be compelled to act. Hume's relativism means that nobody has to act, and there is no universal compunction to act in concert. Kant hammered the popular moral philosophy of his day, believing that it could not rise above the level of hypothetical imperatives because it did not really address the true universal issues and merely dwelt on relativistic feelings. This may not seem like much but it really defines Kant's moral philosophy.

Look at it this way. We have not really covered this (think of it as a bit of pre-figuring) but an utilitarian (like Epicurus, Bentham, or John Stuart Mill) says that murder is wrong because it does not maximize good for the greatest number of people. This is irrelevant to someone who kills to maximize the positive outcome for themselves. Kant on the other hand, addresses both. Think about a food riot. Hypothetically, we should all share the little food there is (the best for the most) but if I kill you then there is more for more people (well perhaps, really for me), so murder gets me a better outcome. So in theory, sharing is the best way, but in reality if you (or your family) are starving, then you are likely to do something contrary to that (as history shows us or else we would not have a phrase like 'food riot'). The ethereal, subjective nature of the hypothetical means that some will follow it but others will not because there is no enforceability. Consequently, Kant argued, hypothetical moral systems do not persuade anyone to act morally and are unable to be regarded as bases for moral judgments. The hypothetical imperatives on which they are based rely too heavily on subjective considerations and that ultimately leads to inaction, because face it if everyone is right, then no one is wrong and no final judgment may be made.

This is the difference from than Hume's fatalistic relativism of association. Oddly enough, Kant's solution is to develop a *deontological* (not based within us – the being) moral system, using the force of the categorical imperative to compel morality on us as beings. But really it is not odd, because it is more of a concentration on human nature, one which has meaning rather than being merely associative. We are the center of meaning, we give value to the things we learn, but we are rational beings who are able to understand things beyond us

(meta-physics). So first he concludes because of rational universals that there is an absolute good. We know this as we know anything, because the existence of metaphysical morality is as evident as the existence of physical objects (or at least our belief in their existence because of our knowledge of phenomena).

The Golden Compelled Action

So this rational Categorical Imperative for good moral actions, universal in scope and application is basically defined as any actions that one would want *as* universal laws. As usual, we can see the Kantian combining of things here. There is a universal (somewhat external) rule which we must follow, but it is our reason which understands it as such, and it is we who must put it into practice. So while it is deontological, reason is the final authority for morality, that is, the building of ethical systems and the carrying out of moral actions. We must choose an action as if the principle guiding that action were to become a universal law⁵⁶.

This sounds like a tall order but all we have to do is think about an action as if everyone acted in such a way. I have a piece of paper in my hand. My choice seems disconnected from morality: throw it on the ground or walk a few steps to throw it in a trashcan. But what if everyone threw it on the ground? What if everyone threw it in the trash? Now you may see some problems with this argument but hold on to them for now because in addition, he adds a restriction worthy of Aquinas that *humans are ends not means*. In a way each qualifies the other. Moral actions are for the betterment of all, so there is never a point when a moral action can overcome or become greater than the humans involved. As in our earlier utilitarian case, you cannot shoot someone to distribute their share to the rest of the crowd. While sharing is great, shooting someone is not. Both standards apply.

Simplistic yes, but in a sense that is its appeal. We are universally compelled to act by reason. Our actions are ones which will only be good, because of the nature of the actions, and will only promote the good of ourselves and others. And we must do them. We have no choice, because by their very nature, in opposition to those hypothetical actions, they are immediately and perpetually necessary.

The Denouement

Others argue that it is the rigidness of Kant's thinking which causes the whole argument to fall apart. For example, Kant would say that if truth telling is desirable and universal, then there is never a time when you can tell a lie, so if the Nazis came to your door and asked you if you were hiding any Jews upstairs, you would be obligated, because of the compelled nature of the categorical imperative, to say yes. Now wait a minute you say, does that not conflict with the second part of the equation? No because the Jews you are exposing are not the means of your statement. That is to say, you are not treating them as a means to tell the truth.

Now what you are doing is turning Jews over to Nazis so that they can kill them. 'Aha!' you say, 'got you there Kant', "ran rings around you logically." (Monty Python, *The Penguin Sketch*) Not so fast, Kant replies, because we each are all compelled to act morally, and for that reason, the Nazis should not use that information to kill the Jews hiding up in your attic,

⁵⁶ To be exact, "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." (*Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*)

or “listen to the argument, you git.” As a matter of fact if, before you told them where the Jews were, you were to ask them why, they would be compelled to tell you ‘to kill them’ as opposed to ‘re-educate them’, at which point you could proceed to argue with them about the merits of not killing, and if they did not eventually pistol whip you, end up never getting around to answering their questions.

What all this really means is that we are each responsible to act, and to act morally, based in universal rules. But, in the end we are *only* responsible for our own actions, not the actions of others, because they are the master of their own conscience. We can teach and admonish but in the end it is up to the individual to act. If you tell the truth to the Nazis, then basically your conscience is clear on that point. If they fail to act morally then they are to be held responsible and culpable against the universal standard (on which you can make your own decisions based on the Nuremburg trials).

Morality is the free exercise of reason, and why one acts is as important as how one acts. If you choose not to lie, you must do so in a way that prevents you from lying. If the Nazis are ‘just following orders’ then they have abrogated reason and responsibility and cannot in any way see their actions as moral, nor claim they have no responsibility for them (go back and look at Locke’s arguments on this point – *Chapter 35*). We make good moral decisions based on simple criteria, and good moral decisions are necessarily good because we make them, based in rational universals.

The Finale: Deus Ex Machina

Before we leave, and in terms often associated with this discussion, let us take a moment and briefly but insufficiently (as well as woefully missing out on his political philosophy) look at Kant’s ideas on God. If cause is an internal principle, and moral decisions are really rationally compelled, then did God even fit into this picture?

Kant’s ‘moral argument’ argument for God rests in his belief in the relationship between people’s leading of a virtuous moral life and the satisfaction of that person’s desire for happiness⁵⁷. This to his notion of ‘the highest good’ as the object for the moral use of human reason (‘practical’ as opposed to ‘pure’ – something else we really did not get into, but as opposed to ‘theoretical’/‘pure’). This “practical use of reason” (*Critique*) consists in the exercise of our will to choose actions in light of — and only in light of — their morality⁵⁸. Kant did not fool himself thinking that everyone would act morally because they ‘had to’. Instead his argument is that we should and must act morally and that those moral decisions have a universal basis (when we make them) which cannot be circumvented or denied, whether we adhere to them or not and following them is proportionate to our happiness. Morality in that light is not a really good premise for God (as some Medievals might contend – that we know God through the things around us, like the Law – which compels us to act morally).

When it comes to arguments for God, Kant makes what may seem to the untrained eye a strange statement, one that would easily open him up to criticism: “I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith.” (*Critique*, Preface) But we know that what he is saying is that God falls outside of the realm of previous thinking, and they way Kant defines knowledge⁵⁹. To Kant, all previous proofs of God are flawed because of their approach (they

⁵⁷ Sound familiar?

⁵⁸ Sound familiar, part 2?

⁵⁹ And it really flies in the face of folks like Descartes and Hume, where faith becomes almost a dirty word.

attempt to either apply an idea to experience, as if it were a category, as with Medievals above are doing or appeal solely to reason which also cannot know the thing-in-itself). Looking at a beautiful sunset is not an impetus for postulating God, especially as we are not really seeing the sunset at all but only a flawed perception of it based on limited intellect.

We also cannot tie Cause and God together, because cause is merely an intellectual conception. Most of Kant's arguments about God fall into this negative vein. In the end, the only 'evidence' of God is that there is no justice (a reward proportional to individual virtue – or the no good deed goes unpunished ideology) in this world, so therefore there must be an afterlife.

Putting It Together

So in the end, what are we looking at here (besides the belaboring of a series of points)? Basically, Kant first argues from the primacy of rationality over sensibility and sentimentalism. Yet even rationality, like empiricism is limited (we cannot know the thing-in-itself, either empirically or rationally). Just as Reason is the basis for science (in juxtaposition to the empiricists), Reason is the basis for moral action and that any action undertaken out of convenience or obedience cannot be considered moral, even if it is the right thing to do. Rather, the morality of an action depends on the *motivation* for the action. Hence, if an individual arrives at the conclusion that a certain action is right and pursues that course of action as a result, then that behavior is moral, because it must be (as it follows the simple rules and compels action).

This fights off Hume's association-ism because ethics is based on norms of universal validity, instead of on individual whim. History is interpreted as a rational process; and in place of the mechanical conception of the world, an organic or dynamic view is substituted. Nature was seen to be spiritual, as well as solid (*spatial*), and had a sense that there is an end to things (a *teleological* interpretation). The ultimate point is that these and all the other ideas of Kant's which we have discussed continued to influence philosophers—especially German philosophers—long after his death. Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche all borrow significantly from Kant's line of thinking, and we, especially in societal terms, do too.

As a final, final note, one (well this one at least) cannot help wondering if Kant changed his name from Cant in a symbolic gesture of his rejection of Hume and the embracing of his Germanic nature.

Mrs. Big Nose: [*straining to hear Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*] Oh, it's blessed are the MEEK! Oh, I'm glad they're getting somethin', they have a 'ell of a time. **Monty Python, *Life Of Brian***

Immanuel Kant: Introduction to *Critique Of Pure Reason*

INTRODUCTION

I. OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PURE AND EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE

THAT all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt. For how is it possible that the faculty of cognition should be awakened into exercise otherwise than by means of objects which affect our senses, and partly of themselves produce representations, partly rouse our powers of understanding into activity, to compare, to connect, or to separate these, and so to convert the raw material of our sensuous impressions into a knowledge of objects, which is called experience? In respect of time, therefore, no knowledge of ours is antecedent to experience, but begins with it.

But, though all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience. For, on the contrary, it is quite possible that our empirical knowledge is a compound of that which we receive through impressions, and that which the faculty of cognition supplies from itself (sensuous impressions giving merely the *occasion*), an addition which we cannot distinguish from the original element given by sense, till long practice has made us attentive to, and skilful in separating it. It is, therefore, a question which requires close investigation, and is not to be answered at first sight—whether there exists a knowledge altogether independent of experience, and even of all sensuous impressions? Knowledge of this kind is called *a priori*, in contradistinction to empirical knowledge, which has its sources *a posteriori*, that is, in experience.

But the expression, "*a priori*," is not as yet definite enough, adequately to indicate the whole meaning of the question above started. For, in speaking of knowledge which has its sources in experience, we are wont to say that this or that may be known *a priori*, because we do not derive this knowledge immediately from experience, but from a general rule, which, however, we

have itself borrowed from experience. Thus, if a man undermined his house, we say, "he might know *a priori* that it would have fallen"; that is, he needed not to have waited for the experience that it did actually fall. But still, *a priori*, he could not know even this much. For, that bodies are heavy, and, consequently, that they fall when their supports are taken away, must have been known to him previously, by means of experience.

By the term "knowledge *a priori*," therefore, we shall in the sequel understand, not such as is independent of this or that kind of experience, but such as is absolutely so of *all* experience. Opposed to this is empirical knowledge, or that which is possible only *a posteriori*, that is, through experience. Knowledge *a priori* is either pure or impure. Pure knowledge *a priori* is that with which no empirical element is mixed up. For example, the proposition, "Every change has a cause," is a proposition *a priori*, but impure, because change is a conception which can only be derived from experience.

II. THE HUMAN INTELLECT, EVEN IN AN UNPHILOSOPHICAL STATE, IS IN POSSESSION OF CERTAIN COGNITIONS *A PRIORI*

The question now is as to a *criterion*, by which we may securely distinguish a pure from an empirical cognition. Experience no doubt teaches us that this or that object is constituted in such and such a manner, but not that it could not possibly exist otherwise. Now, in the first place, if we have a proposition which contains the idea of necessity in its very conception, it is a judgment *a priori*; if, moreover, it is not derived from any other proposition, unless from one equally involving the idea of necessity, it is absolutely *a priori*. Secondly, an empirical judgment never exhibits strict and absolute, but only assumed and comparative, universality (by induction); therefore, the most, we can say is— so far as we have hitherto observed, there is no exception to this or that rule. If, on the other hand, a judgment carries with it strict and absolute universality, that is, admits of no possible exception, it is not derived from experience, but is valid absolutely *a priori*.

Empirical universality is, therefore, only an arbitrary extension of validity, from that which may be predicated of a proposition valid in most cases, to that which is asserted of a proposition which holds good in all; as, for example, in the affirmation, "all bodies are heavy." When, on the contrary, strict universality characterizes a judgment, it necessarily indicates another peculiar source of knowledge, namely, a faculty of cognition *a priori*. Necessity and strict universality, therefore, are infallible tests for distinguishing pure from empirical knowledge, and are inseparably connected with each other. But as in the use of these criteria the empirical limitation is sometimes more easily detected than the contingency of the judgment, or the unlimited universality which we attach to a judgment is often a more convincing proof than its necessity, it may be advisable to use the criteria separately, each being by itself infallible.

Now, that in the sphere of human cognition, we have judgments which are necessary, and in the strictest sense universal, consequently pure *a priori*, it will be an easy matter to show. If we desire an example from the sciences, we need only take any proposition in mathematics. If we cast our eyes upon the commonest operations of the understanding, the proposition, "every change must have a cause," will amply serve our purpose. In the latter case, indeed, the conception of a cause so plainly involves the conception of a necessity of connection with an effect, and of a strict universality of the law, that the very notion of a cause would entirely disappear, were we to derive it, like Hume, from a frequent association of what happens with that which precedes, and the habit thence originating of connecting representations—the necessity inherent in the judgment being therefore merely subjective. Besides, without seeking for such examples of principles existing *a priori* in cognition, we might easily show that such principles are the indispensable basis of the possibility of experience itself, and consequently prove their existence *a priori*. For whence could our experience itself acquire certainty, if all the rules on which it depends were themselves empirical, and consequently fortuitous? No one, therefore, can admit the validity of the use of such rules as first principles. But, for the present, we may content ourselves with having established the fact, that we do possess and exercise a faculty of pure *a priori* cognition; and, secondly, with having pointed out the proper tests of such cognition, namely, universality and necessity.

Not only in judgments, however, but even in conceptions, is an *a priori* origin manifest. For example, if we take away by degrees from our conceptions of a body all that can be referred to mere sensuous experience—color, hardness or softness, weight, even impenetrability—the body will then

vanish; but the space which it occupied still remains, and this it is utterly impossible to annihilate in thought. Again, if we take away, in like manner, from our empirical conception of any object, corporeal or incorporeal, all properties which mere experience has taught us to connect with it, still we cannot think away those through which we cogitate it as substance, or adhering to substance, although our conception of substance is more determined than that of an object. Compelled, therefore, by that necessity with which the conception of substance forces itself upon us, we must confess that it has its seat in our faculty of cognition *a priori*.

III. PHILOSOPHY STANDS IN NEED OF A SCIENCE WHICH SHALL DETERMINE THE POSSIBILITY, PRINCIPLES, AND EXTENT OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE *A PRIORI*

Of far more importance than all that has been above said, is the consideration that certain of our cognitions rise completely above the sphere of all possible experience, and by means of conceptions, to which there exists in the whole extent of experience no corresponding object, seem to extend the range of our judgments beyond its bounds. And just in this transcendental or supersensible sphere, where experience affords us neither instruction nor guidance, lie the investigations of *Reason*, which, on account of their importance, we consider far preferable to, and as having a far more elevated aim than, all that the understanding can achieve within the sphere of sensuous phenomena. So high a value do we set upon these investigations, that, even at the risk of error, we persist in following them out, and permit neither doubt nor disregard nor indifference to restrain us from the pursuit. These unavoidable problems of mere pure reason are GOD, FREEDOM (of will) and IMMORTALITY. The science which, with all its preliminaries, has for its especial object the solution of these problems is named metaphysics—a science which is at the very outset dogmatic, that is, it confidently takes upon itself the execution of this task without any previous investigation of the ability or inability of reason for such an undertaking.

Now the safe ground of experience being thus abandoned, it seems nevertheless natural that we should hesitate to erect a building with the cognitions we possess, without knowing whence they come, and on the strength of principles, the origin of which is undiscovered. Instead of thus trying to build without a foundation, it is rather to be expected that we should long ago have put the question, how the understanding can arrive at these *a priori* cognitions, and what is the extent, validity, and worth which they may

possess? We say, this is natural enough, meaning by the word natural that which is consistent with a just and reasonable way of thinking; but if we understand by the term, that which usually happens?, nothing indeed could be more natural and more comprehensible than that this investigation should be left long un-attempted. For one part of our pure knowledge, the science of mathematics, has been long firmly established, and thus leads us to form flattering expectations with regard to others, though these may be of quite a different nature. Besides, when we get beyond the bounds of experience, we are of course safe from opposition in that quarter; and the charm of widening the range of our knowledge is so great, that unless we are brought to a standstill by some evident contradiction, we hurry on un-doubtingly in our course. This, however, may be avoided, if we are sufficiently cautious in the construction of our fictions, which are not the less fictions on that account.

Mathematical science affords us a brilliant example, how far, independently of all experience, we may carry our *a priori* knowledge. It is true that the mathematician occupies himself with objects and cognitions only in so far as they can be represented by means of intuition. But this circumstance is easily overlooked, because the said intuition can itself be given *a priori*, and therefore is hardly to be distinguished from a mere pure conception. Deceived by such a proof of the power of reason, we can perceive no limits to the extension of our knowledge. The light dove cleaving in free flight the thin air, whose resistance it feels, might imagine that her movements would be far more free and rapid in airless space. Just in the same way did Plato, abandoning the world of sense because of the narrow limits it sets to the understanding, venture upon the wings of ideas beyond it, into the void space of pure intellect. He did not reflect that he made no real progress by all his efforts; for he met with no resistance which might serve him for a support, as it were, whereon to rest, and on which he might apply his powers, in order to let the intellect acquire momentum for its progress. It is, indeed, the common fate of human reason in speculation, to finish the imposing edifice of thought as rapidly as possible, and then for the first time to begin to examine whether the foundation is a solid one or no. Arrived at this point, all sorts of excuses are sought after, in order to console us for its want of stability, or rather, indeed, to enable us to dispense altogether with so late and dangerous an investigation. But what frees us during the process of building from all apprehension or suspicion, and flatters us into the belief of its solidity, is this. A great part, perhaps the greatest part, of the business of our reason consists in the analysis of the conceptions which we already possess of objects. By this means we gain a multitude of cognitions, which although really nothing more

than elucidations or explanations of that which (though in a confused manner) was already thought in our conceptions, are, at least in respect of their form, prized as new introspections; while, so far as regards their matter or content, we have really made no addition to our conceptions, but only uninvolved them. But as this process does furnish real *a priori* knowledge,' which has a sure progress and useful results, reason, deceived by this, slips in, without being itself aware of it, assertions of a quite different kind; in which, to given conceptions it adds others, *a priori* indeed, but entirely foreign to them, without our knowing how it arrives at these, and, indeed, without such a question ever suggesting itself. I shall therefore at once proceed to examine the difference between these two modes of knowledge.

IV. OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANALYTICAL AND SYNTHETIC JUDGMENTS

In all judgments where in the relation of a subject to the predicate is cogitated (I mention affirmative judgments only here; the application to negative will be very easy), this relation is possible in two different ways. Either the predicate B belongs to the subject A, as somewhat which is contained (though covertly) in the conception A; or the predicate B lies completely out of the conception A, although it stands in connection with it. In the first instance, I term the judgment analytical, in the second, synthetic. Analytical judgments (affirmative) are therefore those in which the connection of the predicate with the subject is cogitated through identity; those in which this connection is cogitated without identity are called synthetic judgments. The former may be called *explicative*, the latter *augmentative* judgments; because the former add in the predicate nothing to the conception of the subject, but only analyze it into its constituent conceptions, which were thought already in the subject, although in a confused manner; the latter add to our conceptions of the subject a predicate which was not contained in it, and which no analysis could ever have discovered therein. For example, when I say, "all bodies are extended," this is an analytical judgment. For I need not go beyond the conception of *body* in order to find extension connected with it, but merely analyze the conception, that is, become conscious of the manifold properties which I think in that conception, in order to discover this predicate in it: it is therefore an analytical judgment. On the other hand, when I say, "all bodies are heavy," the predicate is something totally different from that which I think in the mere conception

of a body. By the addition of such a predicate, therefore; it becomes a synthetic judgment.

Judgments of experience, as such, are always synthetic. For it would be absurd to think of grounding an analytical judgment on experience, because, in forming such a judgment, I need not go out of the sphere of my conceptions, and therefore recourse to the testimony of experience is quite unnecessary. That "bodies are extended" is not an empirical judgment, but a proposition which stands firm *a priori*. For before addressing myself to experience, I already have in my conception all the requisite conditions for the judgment, and I have only to extract the predicate from the conception, according to the principle of contradiction, and thereby at the same time become conscious of the necessity of the judgment, a necessity which I could never learn from experience. On the other hand, though at first I do not at all include the predicate of weight in my conception of body in general, that conception still indicates an object of experience, a part of the totality of experience, to which I can still add other parts; and this I do when I recognize by observation that bodies are heavy. I can cognize beforehand by analysis the conception of body through the characteristics of extension, impenetrability, shape, etc., all which are cogitated in this conception. But now I extend my knowledge, and looking back on experience from which I had derived this conception of body, I find weight at all times connected with the above characteristics, and therefore I synthetically add to my conceptions this as a predicate, and say, "all bodies are heavy." Thus it is experience upon which rests the possibility of the synthesis of the predicate of weight with the conception of body, because both conceptions, although the one is not contained in the other, still belong to one another (only contingently, however), as parts of a whole, namely, of experience, which is itself a synthesis of intuitions.

But to synthetic judgments *a priori*, such aid is entirely wanting. If I go out of and beyond the conception A, in order to recognize another B as connected with it, what foundation have I to rest on, whereby to render the synthesis possible? I have here no longer the advantage of looking out in the sphere of experience for what I want. Let us take, for example, the proposition, "everything that happens has a cause." In the conception of *something that happens*, I indeed think an existence which a certain time antecedes, and from this I can derive analytical judgments. But the conception of a cause lies quite out of the above conception, and indicates something entirely different from "that which happens," and is consequently not contained in that conception. How then am I able to assert concerning the

general conception—"that which happens"—something entirely different from that conception, and to recognize the conception of cause although not contained in it, yet as belonging to it, and even necessarily? what is here the unknown = X, upon which the understanding rests when it believes it has found, out of the conception A a foreign predicate B, which it nevertheless considers to be connected with it? It cannot be experience, because the principle adduced annexes the two representations, cause and effect, to the representation existence, not only with universality, which experience cannot give, but also with the expression of necessity, therefore completely *a priori* and from pure conceptions. Upon such synthetic, that is augmentative propositions, depends the whole aim of our speculative knowledge *a priori*; for although analytical judgments are indeed highly important and necessary, they are so, only to arrive at that clearness of conceptions which is requisite for a sure and extended synthesis, and this alone is a real acquisition.

V. IN ALL THEORETICAL SCIENCES OF REASON, SYNTHETIC JUDGMENTS A PRIORI ARE CONTAINED AS PRINCIPLE

¹ Mathematical judgments are always synthetic. Hitherto this fact, though incontestably true and very important in its consequences, seems to have escaped the analysts of the human mind, nay, to be in complete opposition to all their conjectures. For as it was found that mathematical conclusions all proceed according to the principle of contradiction (which the nature of every apodictic certainty requires), people became persuaded that the fundamental principles of the science also were recognized and admitted in the same way. But the notion is fallacious; for although a synthetic proposition can certainly be discerned by means of the principle of contradiction, this is possible only when another synthetic proposition precedes, from which the latter is deduced, but never of itself.

Before all, be it observed, that proper mathematical propositions are always judgments *a priori*, and not empirical, because they carry along with them the conception of necessity, which cannot be given by experience. If this be demurred to, it matters not; I will then limit my assertion to *pure* mathematics, the very conception of which implies, that it consists of knowledge altogether non-empirical and *a priori*.

We might, indeed, at first suppose that the proposition, $7+5=12$, is a merely analytical proposition, following (according to the principle of contradiction) from the conception of a sum of seven and five. But if we

regard it more narrowly, we find that our conception of the sum of seven and five contains nothing more than the uniting of both sums into one, whereby it cannot at all be cogitated what this single number is which embraces both. The conception of twelve is by no means obtained by merely cogitating the union of seven and five; and we may analyze our conception of such a possible sum as long as we will, still we shall never discover in it the notion of twelve. We must go beyond these conceptions, and have recourse to an intuition which corresponds to one of the two — our five fingers, for example, or like Segner in his "Arithmetic," five points, and so by degrees add the units contained in the five given in the intuition to the conception of seven. For I first take the number 7, and, for the conception of 5 calling in the aid of the fingers of my hand as objects of intuition, I add the units, which I before took together to make up the number 5, gradually now, by means of the material image my hand, to the number 7, and by this process I at length see the number 12 arise. That 7 should be added to 5, I have certainly cogitated in my conception of a sum=7+5, but not that this sum was equal to 12. Arithmetical propositions are therefore always synthetic, of which we may become more clearly convinced by trying large numbers. For it will thus become quite evident, that turn and twist our conceptions as we may, it is impossible, without having recourse to intuition, to arrive at the sum total or product by means of the mere analysis of our conceptions. Just as little is any principle of pure geometry analytical. "A straight line between two points is the shortest," is a synthetic proposition. For my conception of *straight* contains no notion of *quantity*, but is merely *qualitative*. The conception of the *shortest* is therefore wholly an addition, and by no analysis can it be extracted from our conception of a straight line. Intuition must therefore here lend its aid, by means of which, and thus only, our synthesis is possible.

Some few principles pre-posed by geometricians are, indeed, really analytical, and depend on the principle of contradiction. They serve, however, like identical propositions, as links in the chain of method, not as principles— for example, $a=a$, the whole is equal to itself, or $(a+i) > a$, the whole is greater than its part. And yet even these principles themselves, though they derive their validity from pure conceptions, are only admitted in mathematics because they can be presented in intuition. What causes us here commonly to believe that the predicate of such apodictic judgments is already contained in our conception, and that the judgment is therefore analytical, is merely the equivocal nature of the

expression. We must join in thought a certain predicate to a given conception, and this necessity cleaves already to the conception. But the question is, not what we must join in thought to the given conception, but what we really think therein, though only obscurely, and then it becomes manifest, that the predicate pertains to these conceptions, necessarily indeed, yet not as thought in the conception itself, but by virtue of an intuition, which must be added to the conception.

2 The science of Natural Philosophy (Physics) contains in itself synthetic judgments *a priori*, as principles. I shall adduce two propositions. For instance, the proposition, "in all changes of the material world, the quantity of matter remains unchanged"; or, that, "in all communication of motion, action and reaction must always be equal." In both of these, not only is the necessity, and therefore their origin *a priori* clear, but also that they are synthetic propositions. For in the conception of matter, I do not cogitate its permanency, but merely its presence in space, which it fills. I therefore really go out of and beyond the conception of matter, in order to think on to it something *a priori*, which I did not think in it. The proposition is therefore not analytical, but synthetic, and nevertheless conceived *a priori*; and so it is with regard to the other propositions of the pure part of natural philosophy.

3 As to Metaphysics, even if we look upon it merely as an attempted science, yet, from the nature of human reason, an indispensable one, we find that it must contain synthetic propositions *a priori*. It is not merely the duty of metaphysics to dissect, and thereby analytically to illustrate the conceptions which we form *a priori* of things; but we seek to widen the range of our *a priori* knowledge. For this purpose, we must avail ourselves of such principles as add something to the original conception— something not identical with, nor contained in it, and, by means of synthetic judgments *a priori*, leave far behind us the limits of experience; for example, in the proposition, "the world must have a beginning," and such like. Thus metaphysics, according to the proper aim of the science, consists merely of synthetic propositions *a priori*.

VI. THE UNIVERSAL PROBLEM OF PURE REASON

It is extremely advantageous to be able to bring a number of investigations under the formula of a single problem. For in this manner we not only facilitate our own labor, inasmuch as we define it clearly to ourselves, but also

render it more easy for others to decide whether we have done justice to our undertaking. The proper problem of pure reason, then, is contained in the question, "How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?"

That metaphysical science has hitherto remained in so vacillating a state of uncertainty and contradiction, is only to be attributed to the fact, that this great problem, and perhaps even the difference between analytical and synthetic judgments, did not sooner suggest itself to philosophers. Upon the solution of this problem, or upon sufficient proof of the impossibility of synthetic knowledge *a priori*, depends the existence or downfall of the science of metaphysics. Among philosophers, David Hume came the nearest of all to this problem; yet it never acquired in his mind sufficient precision, nor did he regard the question in its universality. On the contrary, he stopped short at the synthetic proposition of the connection of an effect with its cause (*principium causalitatis*), insisting that such proposition *a priori* was impossible. According to his conclusions, then, all that we term metaphysical science is a mere delusion, arising from the fancied insight of reason into that which is in truth borrowed from experience, and to which habit has given the appearance of necessity. Against this assertion, destructive to all pure philosophy, he would have been guarded, had he had our problem before his eyes in its universality. For he would then have perceived that, according to his own argument, there likewise could not be any pure mathematical science, which assuredly cannot exist without synthetic propositions *a priori*—an absurdity from which his good understanding must have saved him.

In the solution of the above problem is at the same time comprehended the possibility of the use of pure reason in the foundation and construction of all sciences which contain theoretical knowledge *a priori* of objects, that is to say, the answer to the following questions:

How is pure mathematical science possible?

How is pure natural science possible?

Respecting these sciences, as they do certainly exist, it may with propriety be asked, *how* they are possible?—for that they must be possible, is shown by the fact of their really existing.' But as to metaphysics, the miserable progress it has hitherto made, and the fact that of no one system yet brought forward, as far as regards its true aim, can it be said that this science really exists, leaves any one at liberty to doubt with reason the very possibility of its existence.

Yet, in a certain sense, this kind of knowledge must unquestionably be looked upon as *given*; in other words, metaphysics must be considered as really existing, if not as a science, nevertheless as a natural disposition of the human mind (*metaphysica naturalis*). For human reason, without any instigations imputable to the mere vanity of great knowledge, unceasingly progresses, urged on by its own feeling of need, toward such questions as cannot be answered by any empirical application of reason, or principles derived therefrom; and so there has ever really existed in every man some system of metaphysics. It will always exist, so soon as reason awakes to the exercise of its power of speculation. And now the question arises—How is metaphysics, as a natural disposition, possible? In other words, how, from the nature of universal human reason, do those questions arise which pure reason proposes to itself, and which it is impelled by its own feeling of need to answer as well as it can? But as in all the attempts hitherto made to answer the questions which reason is prompted by its very nature to propose to itself, for example, whether the world had a beginning, or has existed from eternity, it has always met with unavoidable contradictions, we must not rest satisfied with the mere natural disposition of the mind to metaphysics, that is, with the existence of the faculty of pure reason, whence, indeed, some sort of metaphysical system always arises; but it must be possible to arrive at certainty in regard to the question whether we know or do not know the things of which metaphysics treats. We must be able to arrive at a decision on the subjects of its questions, or on the ability or inability of reason to form any judgment respecting them; and therefore either to extend with confidence the bounds of our pure reason, or to set strictly defined and safe limits to its action. This last question, which arises out of the above universal problem, would properly run thus: How is metaphysics possible as a science?

Thus the critique of reason leads at last, naturally and necessarily, to science; and, on the other hand, the dogmatic use of reason without criticism leads to groundless assertions, against which others equally specious can always be set, thus ending unavoidably in skepticism.

Besides, this science cannot be of great and formidable prolixity, because it has not to do with objects of reason, the variety of which is inexhaustible, but merely with reason herself and her problems: problems which arise out of her own bosom, and are not proposed to her by the nature of outward things, but by her own nature. And when once reason has previously become able completely to understand her own power in regard to objects which she meets with in experience, it will be easy to determine securely the extent and limits of her attempted application to objects beyond the confines of experience.

We may and must, therefore, regard the attempts hitherto made to establish metaphysical science dogmatically as nonexistent. For what of analysis, that is, mere dissection of conceptions, is contained in one or other, is not the aim of, but only a preparation for metaphysics proper, which has for its object the extension, by means of synthesis, of our *a priori* knowledge. And for this purpose, mere analysis is of course useless, because it only shows what is contained in these conceptions, but not how we arrive, *a priori*, at them; and this it is her duty to show, in order to be able afterward to determine their valid use in regard to all objects of experience, to all knowledge in general. But little self-denial, indeed, is needed to give up these pretensions, seeing the undeniable, and in the dogmatic mode of procedure, inevitable contradictions of Reason with herself, have long since ruined the reputation of every system of metaphysics that has appeared up to this time. It will require more firmness to remain undeterred by difficulty from within, and opposition from without, from endeavoring, by a method quite opposed to all those hitherto followed, to further the growth and fruitfulness of a science indispensable to human reason—a science from which every branch it has borne may be cut away, but whose roots remain indestructible.

VII. IDEA AND DIVISION OF A PARTICULAR SCIENCE, UNDER THE NAME OF A "CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON"

From all that has been said, there results the idea of a particular science, which may be called the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For reason is the faculty which furnishes us with the principles of knowledge *a priori*. Hence, pure reason is the faculty which contains the principles of cognizing anything absolutely *a priori*. An Organon of pure reason would be a compendium of those principles according to which alone all pure cognitions *a priori* can be obtained. The completely extended application of such an organon would afford us a system of pure reason. As this, however, is demanding a great deal, and it is yet doubtful whether any extension of our knowledge be here possible, or if so, in what cases, we can regard a science of the mere criticism of pure reason, its sources and limits, as the *propædeutic* to a system of pure reason. Such a science must not be called a Doctrine, but only a Critique of pure Reason; and its use, in regard to speculation, would be only negative, not to enlarge the bounds of, but to purify our reason, and to shield it against error—which alone is no little gain. I apply the term *transcendental* to all knowledge which is not so much occupied with objects as with the mode of

our cognition of these objects, so far as this mode of cognition is possible *a priori*. A system of such conceptions would be called *Transcendental Philosophy*. But this, again, is still beyond the bounds of our present essay. For as such a science must contain a complete exposition not only of our synthetic *a priori*, but of our analytical *a priori* knowledge, it is of too wide a range for our present purpose, because we do not require to carry our analysis any further than is necessary to understand, in their full extent, the principles of synthesis *a priori*, with which alone we have to do. This investigation, which we cannot properly call a doctrine, but only a transcendental critique, because it aims not at the enlargement, but at the correction and guidance of our knowledge, and is to serve as a touchstone of the worth or worthlessness of all knowledge *a priori*, is the sole object of our present essay. Such a critique is consequently, as far as possible, a preparation for an organon; and if this new organon should be found to fail, at least for a canon of pure reason, according to which the complete system of the philosophy of pure reason, whether it extend or limit the bounds of that reason, might one day be set forth both analytically and synthetically. For that this is possible, nay, that such a system is not of so great extent as to preclude the hope of its ever being completed, is evident. For we have not here to do with the nature of outward objects, which is infinite, but solely with the mind, which judges of the nature of objects, and, again, with the mind only in respect of its cognition *a priori*. And the object of our investigations, as it is not to be sought without, but altogether within ourselves, cannot remain concealed, and in all probability is limited enough to be completely surveyed and fairly estimated, according to its worth or worthlessness. Still less let the reader here expect a critique of books and systems of pure reason; our present object is exclusively a critique of the faculty of pure reason itself. Only when we make this critique our foundation do we possess a pure touchstone for estimating the philosophical value of ancient and modern writings on this subject: and without this criterion, the incompetent historian or judge decides upon and corrects the groundless assertions of others with his own, which have themselves just as little foundation.

Transcendental philosophy is the idea of a science, for which the Critique of Pure Reason must sketch the whole plan architectonically, that is, from principles, with a full guarantee for the validity and stability of all the parts which enter into the building. It is the system of all the principles of pure reason. If this Critique itself does not assume the title of transcendental philosophy, it is only because, to be a complete system, it ought to contain a full analysis of all human knowledge *a priori*. Our critique must, indeed, lay

before us a complete enumeration of all the radical conceptions which constitute the said pure knowledge. But from the complete analysis of these conceptions themselves, as also from a complete investigation of those derived from them, it abstains with reason; partly because it would be deviating from the end in view to occupy itself with this analysis, since this process is not attended with the difficulty and insecurity to be found in the synthesis, to which our critique is entirely devoted, and partly because it would be inconsistent with the unity of our plan to burden this essay with the vindication of the completeness of such an analysis and deduction, with which, after all, we have at present nothing to do. This completeness of the analysis of these radical conceptions, as well as of the deduction from the conceptions *a priori* which may be given by the analysis, we can, however, easily attain, provided only that we are in possession of all these radical conceptions, which are to serve as principles of the synthesis, and that in respect of this main purpose nothing is wanting.

To the Critique of Pure Reason, therefore, belongs all that constitutes transcendental philosophy; and it is the complete idea of transcendental philosophy, but still not the science itself; because it only proceeds so far with the analysis as is necessary to the power of judging completely of our synthetic knowledge *a priori*.

The principal thing we must attend to, in the division of the parts of a science like this, is: that no conceptions must enter it which contain aught empirical; in other words, that the knowledge *a priori* must be completely pure. Hence, although the highest principles and fundamental conceptions of morality are certainly cognitions *a priori*, yet they do not belong to transcendental philosophy; because, though they certainly do not lay the conceptions of pain, pleasure, desires, inclinations, etc. (which are all of empirical origin), at the foundation of its precepts, yet still into the conception of duty—as an obstacle to be overcome, or as an incitement which should not be made into a motive—these empirical conceptions must necessarily enter, in the construction of a system of pure morality. Transcendental philosophy is consequently a philosophy of the pure and merely speculative reason. For all that is practical, so far as it contains motives, relates to feelings, and these belong to empirical sources of cognition.

If we wish to divide this science from the universal point of view of a science in general, it ought to comprehend, first, a *Doctrine of the Elements*, and, secondly, a *Doctrine of the Method* of pure reason. Each of these main divisions will have its subdivisions, the separate reasons for which we cannot here particularize. Only so much seems necessary, by way of introduction or

premonition, that there are two sources of human knowledge (which probably spring from a common, but to us unknown, root), namely, sense and understanding. By the former, objects are *given* to us; by the latter, *thought*. So far as the faculty of sense may contain representations *a priori*, which form the conditions under which objects are given, in so far it belongs to transcendental philosophy. The transcendental doctrine of sense must form the first part of our science of elements, because the conditions under which alone the objects of human knowledge are given must precede those under which they are thought.

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Thought Point	Points of Thought
What is Kant talking about?	
Compare and Contrast Hume and Hegel based on these passages; take a moment to defend both systems.	