

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY



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Philosophy and Theology: Introductory Remarks

Philosophy and Theology brings together some of the most important approaches to understanding and assessing the intellectual claims of religion. The study of Philosophy develops analytical rigour and the ability to criticise and reason logically. It allows you to apply these skills to many contemporary and historical schools of thought and individual thinkers, and to questions ranging from how we acquire knowledge and form moral judgements to central questions in the philosophy of religion, including the existence and nature of God and the relevance of religion to human life.

The study of Theology provides an understanding of the intellectual underpinning of religious traditions, and of the social and cultural contexts for religious belief and practice. It brings together a wide range of skills and disciplines, historical, textual, linguistic, sociological, literary-critical and philosophical.

I. Why Should We Study Philosophy and Theology?

Here is one of the clearest criteria for choosing or judging a college: you can be almost certain that any

college that has dropped philosophy and theology from its core curriculum is not serious about a liberal arts education. This raises two questions: (1) What are philosophy and theology, and why are they crucial to a young person's education today? (2) Aren't they outdated, impractical, abstract, irrelevant, elitist, superfluous and even dangerous to faith and sanity?

1. Some Definitions

"Philosophy" means "the love of wisdom." Wisdom is the knowledge of ultimate causes, explanations and principles. It includes knowledge of values, not just facts. It gives you a "big picture," a "world-view" and a "life-view." It explores such questions as these: What is the essence of a human being? What is the meaning (value, goal, purpose) of human life? What is a good life? What is a good society? Are there higher laws than man's laws? Are we here by chance or design? Are we fated or free? How do we know what is good or evil? How do we know anything? Is anything certain? Can reason prove (or disprove) the existence of God? Why do we suffer? Why do we die? Is there life after death? Anyone who is simply not interested in these questions is less than fully human, less than fully reasonable. Reasonable persons, even if skeptical about the possibility of answering them, will not dismiss them as unanswerable without looking (that is not reason but prejudice) but will examine the claims of philosophers to have given reasonable answers to these questions before settling into a comfortable, fashionable skepticism.

Theology comes in two forms, philosophical and religious. Philosophical theology ("natural theology") is a subdivision of philosophy. It uses natural human reason to explore the greatest of all questions, the questions about God. Religious theology (or "revealed theology") is a rational exploration of the meaning and consequences of faith in a revealed religion - in our case, the "deposit of faith" or "Sacred Tradition" of the Catholic Church which comes from Christ and His apostles, and the scriptures they wrote.

In most Catholic universities today, Sacred Tradition is no longer sacred. It is treated as something to be "dissented" from ("diss" is the first part of "dissent"), as an enemy to enlightenment, progress, maturity and liberation, or at least as an embarrassment to be "tweaked," "nuanced" or "massaged" rather than as a gift to be gratefully, faithfully and lovingly explored.

Most Catholic universities today have philosophy departments that are excellent spiritually as well as academically, but have deeply

compromised theology departments. Their effect on students is much more often to weaken their faith than to strengthen it, not only in controversial moral issues such as abortion, contraception, cloning, euthanasia and sexual morality, but even in fundamental doctrines such as Christ's divinity and resurrection and the historical truth of the Gospels.

2. The Goal of Education

Considering the trillions of rupees/dollars spent on universities by parents, governments and foundations, it is amazing that most of the people who go there (the students) and most of the people who pay for them (the parents and the government) never even ask, much less answer, this question: What is the purpose of the university? It is the most influential institution in Western civilization, and most of us don't really know exactly why we entrust our children to them. The commonest answer is probably to train them for a career. A B.A. looks good on your resume to prospective employers. That is not only a crass, materialistic answer, but also an illogical one. Consider what it means. It means that the reason students should study in universities is so that they can get high grade-point averages and thus get better jobs when they graduate.

What does "better jobs" mean? It means first of all, to most of them, better-paying jobs. But why do they need better paying jobs? For the money, of course. Silly question. But why do they need money? That is an even sillier question. Life has expenses. What life? Most of them hope to marry and raise families, and it takes a lot of money to do that. Why does a family need a lot of money? The two most expensive things a family needs money for are a house and a college education for the kids. Ah, so a student should study to get high grades to get an impressive resume to get a good job, to finance his family when it sends his kids to college to study, to get high grades, et cetera, et cetera.

This is arguing in a circle. It is like a tiger pacing round and round his cage in a zoo. Is there a better answer? There is if you know some philosophy. Let's look. Probably the most commonsensical and influential philosopher of all time was Aristotle. Aristotle says that there are three "whys," three purposes, ends or reasons for anyone ever to study and learn anything, in school or out of it. Thus there are three kinds of "sciences," which he called "productive," "practical" and "theoretical." (Aristotle used "science" in a much broader way

than we do, meaning any ordered body of knowledge through causes and reasons.)

The purpose of the “productive sciences” (which we today call technology) is to produce things, to make, improve or repair material things in the world, and thus to improve our world. Farming, surgery, shipbuilding, carpentry, writing and tailoring were examples in Aristotle’s era as well as ours, while ours also includes many new ones like cybernetics, aviation and electrical engineering.

The purpose of the “practical sciences” (which meant learning how to do or practice anything, how to act) is to improve your own behavior in some area of your own life. The two most important of these areas, Aristotle said, were ethics and politics. (Aristotle saw politics not as a pragmatic, bureaucratic business of running a state’s economy, but as social ethics, the science of the good life for a community.) Other examples of “practical sciences” include economics, athletics, rhetoric and military science.

The third kind of sciences is the “theoretical” or “speculative” (contemplative), i.e., those that seek the truth for its own sake, that seek to know just for the sake of knowing rather than for the sake of action or production (though, of course, they will have important practical application). These sciences include theology, philosophy, physics, astronomy, biology, psychology and math. Theoretical sciences are more important than practical sciences for the very same reason: practical sciences are more important than productive sciences: because their end and goal is more intimate to us. Productive sciences perfect some external thing in the material world that we use; practical sciences perfect our own action, our own lives; and theoretical sciences perfect our very selves, our souls, our minds. They make us bigger persons.

And that is the reason for going to college in the first place: not to make money, or things, or even to live better, but to be better, to be more, to grow your mind as you grow your body.

3. The Big Picture

What we have been doing for the last several paragraphs is philosophy. We need philosophy because we need to explore such reasons, reasons for studying, reasons for universities’ existence, even (especially) reasons for your own existence. For one of the primary questions all great philosophers ask is: What is the meaning of life, the reason for being, the point and purpose and end of human existence

in this world? If you don’t know that, you don’t know anything because you don’t know the point of everything. If you don’t know that, you may get all A’s in all your subjects, but you flunk Life.

The answer to that question for any intelligent, honest and serious Christian, Jew or Muslim is God. Supreme wisdom is about knowing God. And philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom. So philosophy is ultimately the pursuit of God, using the tools of natural human reason and theology by faith in supernatural divine revelation.

The “wisdom” philosophy pursues is not a factual knowledge like physics or history; but a knowledge, and understanding, and appreciation, of values, of what ought to be rather than merely what is. For instance, we need to know whether career (work) or family is more important, because most of us will invest enormous emotional and physical energy in both, and they will always compete and conflict to some extent.

We want to know the meaning of falling in love and romance and sex. What is its meaning, its purpose? For two generations now we have been asking every conceivable question (and many inconceivable questions, too), but not this one, not the very first and most basic one.

You see? Philosophy and theology raise the mind’s eyes to The Big Picture. If we can’t see that, we miss the forest and see only the trees; we count the syllables in the book of life but don’t know what kind of a story we are in.

II. Good Philosophy, Good Theology

One philosopher tells this story. (I paraphrase.) I was raised in a New York City slum. There were no books in my house. No one in my high school cared about education. I found an escape in the great 42nd Street library, where I devoured books indiscriminately. One day, I happened to read the famous “allegory of the cave” from Plato’s Republic. It changed my life. I found my identity. My life was that cave, and philosophy was the way out into another, bigger world. My mind was born that day. For the rest of my life I have explored the world outside the cave, the world of ideas, and taught others to do so. The biggest thrill in my life is finding among my students someone like me whom I can show that there is a way out of the cave, and that there is a bigger world outside.

That is why we all need to study philosophy (and, even more obviously, theology): because it is the discovery of another world,

another kind of world, another kind of reality than the material world: the discovery that ideas are real, and that (in the words of a great book title) “ideas have consequences.”

The only alternative to good philosophy is bad philosophy. “I hate philosophy” is bad philosophy, but it is a philosophy: egotism. “Philosophy isn’t practical” is a philosophy: pragmatism. “Philosophy doesn’t turn me on” is a philosophy: hedonism.

Everyone has a philosophy, just as everyone has an emotional temperament and a moral character. Your only choice is between “knowing yourself” and thinking about your philosophy, or hiding from it and from yourself. But what you do not think about will still be there, and will still motivate you, and have consequences, and those consequences will affect all the people in your life up to the day of your death and far beyond it.

Your philosophy can quite likely and quite literally make the difference between heaven and hell. Saint Francis of Assisi and Adolf Hitler were not professional philosophers, but both had philosophies, and lived them, and went to heaven or hell according to their philosophies. That is how much of a difference thought can make: “Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.” Buddha said, “All that we are is determined by our thoughts: it begins where our thoughts begin, it moves where our thoughts move, and it rests where our thoughts rest.”

Philosophy can lead you to God, and theology can lead you further into God (or away from Him). And God is the source of all truth, all goodness and all beauty; that is, of everything we value. (If that is not true, then God is not God.) All truth is God’s truth; when an atheist discovers some scientific truth, he is reading the mind of God, the Logos. All goodness is God’s goodness; when an agnostic secularist loves his neighbor, he is responding to divine grace. All beauty is God’s beauty; when a dissipated, confused and immoral artist creates a thing of beauty, he is using the image of God in his soul, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, however anonymously, and participating in God’s creative power.

Philosophy is a necessity if you want to understand our world. Bad philosophy is the source of most of the great errors in our world today. Errors in philosophy are devastating because they affect

everything, as an error of an inch in surveying the angle of a property line will become an error of ten yards a mile down the line.

Most of the controversies in our world today can be understood and solved only by good philosophy and theology; for instance, the relation between world religions, especially Islam and Christianity; human life issues such as abortion, euthanasia and cloning; the justice of wars; the meaning of human sexuality and of the “sexual revolution”; the relation between mind and brain, and between human intelligence and “artificial intelligence”; the relation between creation and evolution; how far we are free and responsible and how far we are determined by biological heredity and social environment; the relation between morality and religion, and between religion and politics; and whether morality is socially relative or universal, unchanging and absolute.

Revealed theology claims to have the answers, or at least the principles that should govern the answers, to many of these questions. So theology is even more important than philosophy, if answers are more important than questions. And of course they are, for the whole point of asking a question, if you are honest, is the hope of finding an answer. It is nonsense to believe that “it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive,” and good philosophy refutes that self-contradiction. If it’s not better to arrive at your goal of truth than to strain after it, then truth is not really your goal at all, and the straining after it is a sham.

That is not, of course, to say that it is easy to arrive at the goal of truth, or that all we need is a set of answers we believe on the Church’s authority but do not understand. The truly respectful attitude toward the authority of the Church - which is an extension of the authority of Christ - is to let revealed truth permeate our minds and our lives like light, not simply to preserve that light by hiding it under a bushel basket. All “ideas have consequences,” especially divinely revealed ideas; and it is our job to lovingly draw out those consequences, like philosophers, and not to fear them, like heresy hunters, or to claim them as our own in a spirit of superiority to our divine teacher, like heretics.

III. The Relationship Between Philosophy and Theology

It was taught that although philosophy is the mother of the sciences, she is also the handmaid of theology. Sometimes the dialogue between philosophy and theology may have seemed to have taken the form of orders given by the theological mistress to her erudite but obedient maid, but that was a long time ago, if ever it was at all.

The idea that philosophy should be in service to theology has been rejected in the West by most philosophers, and many theologians, at least since the Enlightenment period of European thought. But instead of bringing about the emancipation of philosophy, the result has been to place philosophy at the service of her children, the natural and human sciences.

Scientific realists would determine being itself by the ultimate dictates of science. So, where does this leave the relationship between philosophy and theology? Many see it as forever broken off, and many Christian theologians think that this is to the advantage of theology. As they see it, philosophy was never a very good servant, for it was always raising more problems than it solved.

Of course, this attitude is not unknown to Muslim scholars. It is easy to find Muslims who are suspicious of philosophy, especially Islamic philosophy; there are even those, like Ghazali, who would accuse philosophy of blasphemy. Others would be satisfied if philosophy would mind its own business and stay out of the way of theological doctrine. Philosophy, however, refuses to be ignored. It has a way of making itself noticed even by those theologians who wish it would just go away. Philosophy accuses those who neglect her of lacking reason, and since it proclaims that reason is the difference between man and the other animals, this accusation amounts to the charge that those who neglect her are subhuman.

So, after the rise and fall of positivism, after philosophy had been declared to be a servant of the natural sciences, assigned to clean up left over questions, philosophy arrives in the new dress of philosophy of religion, coyly proffering her own questions for the theologian. On the surface, most or many of the questions are those that have been familiar to theologians for centuries: How can the existence of God be proved? How can God know what free humans will do? Can God make a stone so large that He Himself cannot lift it? How can the eternal God know the temporal material world? And so forth.

While on the surface, these appear to be the same questions familiar to theologians since reason was first applied to religion, once one becomes familiar with the contemporary discussions of these questions it becomes obvious that the philosophy of religion is not as innocent as she may seem. Her questions are not those of a naive girl seeking to understand her faith as best she can. Philosophy has served the sciences for years, and its servitude to the sciences has

required countless compromises with humanism, materialism, physicalism, naturalism, and other ideologies antagonistic to religion. When it raises its questions for the theologians, the arguments of all these ideologies are ready and waiting for whatever response the theologians may offer. If the theologian responds by rehearsing the standard discussions to be found in traditional texts, whether Christian or Islamic, he will be accused of ignorance and irrelevance to contemporary concerns.

The philosophy of religion is by no means merely another name for rational theology as traditionally understood, for the very standards of reason which are applied to theological issues have changed. If the theologian is not to be caught off guard, he must be prepared to question these standards, and thus, to adopt an unfamiliar hypercritical stance toward the canons of reason themselves. The dialogue between philosophy and theology today is not simply an affair between the questioning mind of the philosopher and the pious spirit of the theologian. Every question comes with unspoken expectations of what sort of answer will be considered suitable. Every search for a reason presupposes a standard of explanation.

The expectations and presuppositions that inform the philosophy of religion are deeply colored by the entire history of recent Western thought. Since many of those who write and publish in the area of philosophy of religion have been trained in analytic philosophy, the standards of analytic philosophy, which are influenced to a great degree by empiricism, positivism, pragmatism, and naturalism, play an important but subtle role in this field. The situation is complicated by the fact that many philosophers of religion, and even more Christian theologians, are influenced more by what is often called “continental philosophy” than by analytic philosophy.

IV. Pope Benedict on the Relationship of Philosophy and Theology

Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that St. Thomas Aquinas firmly believed in the harmony of faith and reason and respected the autonomy and complementarity of these two ways of knowing the truth that has its ultimate origin in God’s word. This complementary relationship between the two is a reflection of the truth that God’s grace builds on as it elevates and perfects human nature and enables man to pursue his deepest desire for happiness.

1. Plato and Aristotle

The principal reason why he is so highly valued rests not just in the content of his teaching, but also in the method he adopted, especially the entirely new way he treated philosophy and theology, bringing into focus both their harmony and their differences. The Fathers of the Church had to deal with various Platonic philosophies that presented a complete worldview and explanation of human life, including the question of God and religion. In their response to these philosophies, they themselves worked out a complete vision of reality, with faith as their starting point and using elements of Plato's philosophy in order to respond to man's most basic questions.

They called this worldview, which was based on biblical revelation and which they developed using Platonism corrected in light of faith, "our philosophy." The word "philosophy," therefore, did not refer to a purely rational system and, as such, distinct from faith, but rather indicated an overarching vision of reality that was constructed in the light of faith and thought through by human reason, which made it its own. Of course, it was a worldview that went beyond the specific capabilities of reason, but, even so, reason could take pleasure in it. However, St. Thomas' encounter with the pre-Christian philosophy of Aristotle (who died around 322 BC) opened up new horizons. Aristotelian philosophy was obviously a philosophy that was worked out without any knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, an explanation of the world without using revelation and based on reason alone. This purely rational framework was very convincing. As a result, the Church Fathers' old format of "our philosophy" no longer worked. The relationship between philosophy and theology, between faith and reason, had to be re-thought. There is a "philosophy" that is complete and convincing in and of itself, a rationality that precedes faith, and then there is a "theology," which is a way of thinking through faith and in faith.

2. Faith and Reason

The burning question was as follows: Are the world of rationality - a philosophy developed without Christ - and the world of faith compatible? Or are they mutually exclusive? Many people held that the two worlds were incompatible, but St. Thomas was firmly convinced that they were indeed compatible and even that the philosophy that had been elaborated without knowledge of Christ was practically awaiting Jesus' light in order to be complete. This

was St. Thomas' big "surprise," which was decisive in the development of his thought.

This great teacher's lifelong mission was to demonstrate the independence of philosophy and theology and, at the same time, their interdependent relationship. Thus, we can understand why, back in the 19th century when people were loudly affirming the incompatibility between modern reason and faith, Pope Leo XIII pointed to St. Thomas as a guide in the dialogue between the two.

In St. Thomas' theological works, he started from this relationship and worked out its specifics. Faith consolidates, integrates and illuminates the heritage of truth that human reason can acquire. The trust St. Thomas placed in both ways to knowledge - faith and reason - can be traced to his conviction that both come from the single wellspring of all truth, the divine Logos, which is at work in the area of both creation and redemption. However, in acknowledging this harmony between reason and faith, we also need to recognize that they make use of different cognitive procedures. Reason accepts a truth on the strength of its intrinsic evidence, indirect or immediate; faith, on the other hand, accepts a truth based on the authority of the Word of God that has been revealed to us.

At the beginning of his *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas writes: "We must bear in mind that there are two kinds of sciences. There are some which proceed from a principle known by the natural light of intelligence, such as arithmetic and geometry and the like. Others proceed from principles known by the light of a higher form of knowledge: Thus the science of perspective proceeds from principles established by geometry, and music from principles established by arithmetic. So it is that sacred doctrine is a science because it proceeds from principles established by the light of a higher form of knowledge, namely that of God and the blessed" (I, q. 1, a. 2).

3. A Mutual Relationship

This distinction ensures the autonomy both of human sciences and theological study. However, this is not tantamount to some kind of separation. Rather, it implies mutual and advantageous collaboration. Faith, in fact, protects reason from any temptation to mistrust its own capacity. It stimulates it to open up to even broader horizons. It keeps alive the quest for that which is fundamental and, when reason itself is applied to the supernatural sphere of the relationship between God and man, it enriches its own work.

According to St. Thomas, for example, human reason can undoubtedly attain to the affirmation of the existence of one God, but only faith, which accepts divine revelation, is able to attain to the mystery of the love of the triune God.

On the other hand, it is not only faith that helps reason. Reason, too, with the means at its disposal, can do something important for faith, offering it a threefold service that St. Thomas summarizes in the preface of his commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate*: "Demonstrating the foundations of the faith; using metaphors to explain the truths of faith; refuting objections that are raised against faith" (q. 2, a. 2). The entire history of theology is fundamentally the exercise of this task of the intellect, which shows the intelligibility of faith, its inner structure and harmony, its reasonableness and its ability to promote what is best for man.

The correctness of theological reasoning and its true cognitive significance is based on the value of theological language, which, according to St. Thomas, is primarily analogical. The distance between God the creator and his creatures is infinite; the dissimilarities are always greater than the similarities (see Denzinger-Schönmetzer 806). Nevertheless, despite all the difference between the Creator and his creatures, there is an analogy between created being and the being of the Creator, which allows us to speak with human words about God.

4. The Role of Revelation

St. Thomas based his teaching on analogy not only on purely philosophical arguments, but also on the fact that God himself has spoken to us through revelation and has, therefore, authorized us to speak about him. I feel it is important to reiterate this teaching. In fact, it helps us to overcome certain objections raised by modern atheism, which denies that religious language possesses objective meaning and maintains instead that its value is only subjective or merely emotional.

This objection arises from the fact that positivist thought is convinced that man does not know "being" itself, but only the functions of reality that can be experienced. Along with St. Thomas and the great philosophical tradition, we have the conviction that man truly knows not only its functions - the object of the natural sciences - but something of being itself. For example, he knows the person, the "you" of the other person, and not only the physical or biological aspect of his being.

In light of this teaching of St. Thomas, theology affirms that, because we are in contact with being, religious language does have meaning - however limited it may be - like an arrow flying towards the reality it signifies. This fundamental harmony between human reason and Christian faith is seen in another basic principle of Aquinas' thinking: Divine grace does not nullify but takes up and perfects human nature. Indeed, human nature, even after sin, is not completely corrupt, but wounded and weakened. Grace, which God lavishes and communicates through the mystery of the Word made flesh, is an absolutely gratuitous gift by which nature is healed, strengthened and aided in its pursuit of happiness, the innate desire in the heart of every man and woman. All the faculties of the human being are purified, transformed and elevated by divine grace.

5. Nature and Grace

An important application of this relationship between nature and grace can be perceived in St. Thomas Aquinas' moral theology, which is extremely relevant today.

At the center of his teaching, he puts the new law, which is the law of the Holy Spirit. With a profoundly Gospel-oriented focus, he insists on the fact that this law is the grace of the Holy Spirit given to all those who believe in Christ. To this grace is joined the written and oral teaching of doctrinal and moral truths, handed down by the Church.

Stressing the fundamental role of the work of the Holy Spirit in moral life - the work of grace - from which the theological and moral virtues flow, St. Thomas helps us to understand that all Christians can attain the high ideals of the Sermon on the Mount if they live in a genuine relationship of faith in Christ, if they are open to the work of his Holy Spirit.

However, Aquinas adds, "even if grace is more effective than nature, nonetheless nature is more essential for man" (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 29, a. 3), for whom, from the viewpoint of Christian morality, there is a place for reason, which is capable of discerning natural moral law.

Reason can recognize this law and consider what is good to do and what is good to avoid in order to obtain the happiness that every heart desires, but that also implies a responsibility towards others and, therefore, a quest for the common good.

In other words, man's theological and moral virtues are rooted in human nature. Divine grace accompanies, supports and is the impulse

behind the commitment to moral living, but, according to St. Thomas, all men and women, believers and nonbelievers, are called to recognize the demands of human nature as expressed in natural law and to draw inspiration from it when formulating positive law, that is, the laws which civil and political authorities produce to regulate society.

When the natural law and the responsibility it implies are rejected, the way is dramatically thrown open to ethical relativism at the individual level and to totalitarianism at the political level. Defending the universal rights of man and affirming the absolute value of the dignity of the person presupposes some foundation. Is not this foundation natural law and its non-negotiable values?

In his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, Venerable John Paul II wrote the following words that remain relevant today: “It is therefore urgently necessary, for the future of society and the development of a sound democracy, to rediscover those essential and innate human and moral values which flow from the very truth of the human being and express and safeguard the dignity of the person: values which no individual, no majority and no state can ever create, modify or destroy, but must only acknowledge, respect and promote” (No. 71).

St. Thomas presents us with a concept of human reason seen as broad and trustworthy. It is broad because it is not limited to the realm of so-called empirical-scientific reason; it is open to all of existence and, therefore, also to the fundamental and inescapable questions of human life. It is trustworthy because human reason, especially if it accepts the inspiration of Christian faith, promotes a civilization that recognizes the dignity of the person, the inviolability of his rights and the cogency of his duties.

It is not surprising that the doctrine regarding the dignity of the person, fundamental for the recognition of the inviolability of man’s rights, matured in schools of thought that took up the legacy of St. Thomas Aquinas, who had a very high concept of the human creature. He defined it, in his rigorously philosophical language, as “that which is found to be most perfect in all of nature, that is, a subject that subsists in a rational nature” (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 29, a. 3).

Let us never forget that the depth of St. Thomas Aquinas’ thought flows forth from his lively faith and his fervent devotion, which he expressed in inspired prayers, such as this one in which he beseeches God in the following words: “Grant me, I pray, the will to seek you, the wisdom to find you, the life that pleases you, a perseverance that

waits for you with trust, and a trust that will, in the end, lead to possessing you.”

V. Difference between Philosophy and Theology

It is hard for me to draw any sharp distinction between a Christian theology and a Christian philosophy. Philosophy generally is understood as an attempt to understand the world in its most broad, general features. It includes metaphysics or ontology (the study of being, of what “is”), epistemology (the study of knowing) and theory of value (ethics, aesthetics, etc.) If one seeks to develop a Christian philosophy, then he will certainly be doing so under the authority of Scripture, and thus will be applying Scripture to philosophical questions. As such, he would be doing theology, according to our definition [Frame’s definition of Theology is “the application of God’s word by people to all areas of life.”]. Philosophy would be a subdivision of theology. Further, since philosophy is concerned with reality in a broad, comprehensive sense, it may well take it as its task to “apply the word of God to all areas of life.” That would make philosophy, not a subdivision of theology, but identical to theology.

If there are any differences, they would probably be (1) that the Christian philosopher spends more time studying natural revelation than the theologian, while the theologian spends more time study Scripture; (2) that the theologian seeks a formulation which is an application of Scripture and thus absolutely authoritative; his goal is a formulation before which he can utter “Thus saith the Lord.” A Christian philosopher, however, may have a more modest goal: a wise human judgment which accords with Scripture thought is not necessarily warranted by Scripture.

A Christian philosophy can be of great value in helping us articulate in detail the biblical world view. We must beware, however, of “philosophical imperialism.” The comprehensiveness of philosophy has often led philosophers to seek rule over all other disciplines, even over theology, over God’s word. Even philosophers processing Christianity have been guilty of this. Some have even insisted that Scripture itself cannot be properly understood unless it is read in a way prescribed by the philosopher. Certainly philosophy can help us in the business of Scripture interpretation; philosophers often have interesting insights about language, e.g. But the line must be drawn: where a philosophical scheme contradicts Scripture, or where it seeks to inhibit the freedom of exegesis without Scriptural warrant, it must be rejected. (Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, 85-86)

VI Branches of Philosophy

Within philosophy there are five primary categories or branches:

1. Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of “knowledge.” Epistemology deals with the process by which we can know that something is true. It addresses questions such as:

- What can I know?
- How is knowledge acquired?
- Can we be certain of anything?

Within epistemology there are two important categories—rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism stresses reason as the most important element in knowing. Rationalism holds that knowledge is gained primarily through the mind. It also asserts that we are born with innate ideas that precede any experiences we may have with our physical senses.

Empiricism, on the other hand, asserts that all our knowledge comes from our five senses. To use the terminology of the empiricist, John Locke, our minds are a “blank slate” at birth. Thus knowledge comes from our experiences.

2. Metaphysics

Metaphysics is the study of “reality.” More specifically it is the study of reality that is beyond the scientific or mathematical realms. The term “metaphysics” itself literally means “beyond the physical.” The metaphysical issues most discussed are the existence of God, the soul, and the afterlife.

3. Ethics

Ethics is the study of moral value, right and wrong. Ethics is involved with placing value to personal actions, decisions, and relations. Important ethical issues today include abortion, sexual morality, the death penalty, euthanasia, pornography, and the environment.

4. Logic

Logic is the study of right reasoning. It is the tool philosophers use to study other philosophical categories. Good logic includes the use of good thinking skills and the avoidance of logic fallacies.

5. Aesthetics

Aesthetics is the study of art and beauty. It attempts to address such issues as:

- What is art?
- What is the relationship between beauty and art?
- Are there objective standards by which art can be judged?
- Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?

VII. Philosophy and Christian Theology

In the history of Christian theology, philosophy has sometimes been seen as a natural complement to theological reflection, whereas at other times practitioners of the two disciplines have regarded each other as mortal enemies. Some early Christian thinkers such as Tertullian were of the view that any intrusion of secular philosophical reason into theological reflection was out of order. Thus, even if certain theological claims seemed to fly in the face of the standards of reasoning defended by philosophers, the religious believer should not flinch. Other early Christian thinkers, such as St. Augustine of Hippo, argued that philosophical reflection complemented theology, but only when these philosophical reflections were firmly grounded in a prior intellectual commitment to the underlying truth of the Christian faith. Thus, the legitimacy of philosophy was derived from the legitimacy of the underlying faith commitments.

Into the High Middle Ages, Augustine’s views were widely defended. It was during this time however that St. Thomas Aquinas offered yet another model for the relationship between philosophy and theology. According to the Thomistic model, philosophy and theology are distinct enterprises, differing primarily in their intellectual starting points. Philosophy takes as its data the deliverances of our natural mental faculties: what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. These data can be accepted on the basis of the reliability of our natural faculties with respect to the natural world. Theology, on the other hand takes as its starting point the divine revelations contained in the Bible. These data can be accepted on the basis of divine authority, in a way analogous to the way in which we accept, for example, the claims made by a physics professor about the basic facts of physics.

On this way of seeing the two disciplines, if at least one of the premises of an argument is derived from revelation, the argument falls in the domain of theology; otherwise it falls into philosophy’s domain. Since this way of thinking about philosophy and theology

sharply demarcates the disciplines, it is possible in principle that the conclusions reached by one might be contradicted by the other. According to advocates of this model, however, any such conflict must be merely apparent. Since God both created the world which is accessible to philosophy and revealed the texts accessible to theologians, the claims yielded by one cannot conflict with the claims yielded by another unless the philosopher or theologian has made some prior error.

Since the deliverances of the two disciplines must then coincide, philosophy can be put to the service of theology (and perhaps vice-versa). How might philosophy play this complementary role? First, philosophical reasoning might persuade some who do not accept the authority of purported divine revelation of the claims contained in religious texts. Thus, an atheist who is unwilling to accept the authority of religious texts might come to believe that God exists on the basis of purely philosophical arguments. Second, distinctively philosophical techniques might be brought to bear in helping the theologian clear up imprecise or ambiguous theological claims. Thus, for example, theology might provide us with information sufficient to conclude that Jesus Christ was a single person with two natures, one human and one divine, but leave us in the dark about exactly how this relationship between divine and human natures is to be understood. The philosopher can provide some assistance here, since, among other things, he or she can help the theologian discern which models are logically inconsistent and thus not viable candidates for understanding the relationship between the divine and human natures in Christ.

For most of the twentieth century, the vast majority of English language philosophy-including philosophy of religion-went on without much interaction with theology at all. While there are a number of complex reasons for this divorce, three are especially important.

The first reason is that atheism was the predominant opinion among English language philosophers throughout much of that century. A second, quite related reason is that philosophers in the twentieth century regarded theological language as either meaningless, or, at best, subject to scrutiny only insofar as that language had a bearing on religious practice. The former belief (i.e., that theological language was meaningless) was inspired by a tenet of logical positivism, according to which any statement that lacks empirical content is meaningless. Since much theological language, for example, language describing the doctrine of the Trinity, lacks empirical content, such

language must be meaningless. The latter belief, inspired by Wittgenstein, holds that language itself only has meaning in specific practical contexts, and thus that religious language was not aiming to express truths about the world which could be subjected to objective philosophical scrutiny.

A third reason is that a great many academic theologians also became skeptical of our ability to think and speak meaningfully about God; but, rather than simply abandon traditional doctrines of Christianity, many of them turned away from more “metaphysical” and quasi-scientific ways of doing theology, embracing instead a variety of alternative construals and developments of these doctrines-including, but not limited to, metaphorical, existentialist, and postmodern construals. This, we might add, seems to be one reason why the methodological rift between so-called “analytic” and “non-analytic” philosophers has to some extent been replicated as a rift between analytic philosophers of religion and their counterparts in theology.

In the last forty years, however, philosophers of religion have returned to the business of theorizing about many of the traditional doctrines of Christianity and have begun to apply the tools of contemporary philosophy in ways that are somewhat more eclectic than what was envisioned under the Augustinian or Thomistic models. In keeping with the recent academic trend, contemporary philosophers of religion have been unwilling to maintain hard and fast distinctions between the two disciplines. As a result, it is often difficult in reading recent work to distinguish what the philosophers are doing from what the theologians (and philosophers) of past centuries regarded as strictly within the theological domain. Indeed, philosophers and theologians alike are now coming to use the term “analytic theology” to refer to theological work that aims to explore and unpack theological doctrines in a way that draws on the resources, methods, and relevant literature of contemporary analytic philosophy. The use of this term reflects the heretofore largely unacknowledged reality that the sort of work now being done under the label “philosophical theology” is as much *theology* as it is *philosophical*.

Chapter 2

Philosophy of Evolution, Essence

Some claim that evolution is a metaphysic equivalent to a religion. To attack evolution, these critics feel the need to present it not as just a scientific theory, but as a world view that competes with the world views of the objectors. For example:

“When we discuss creation/evolution, we are talking about beliefs: i.e. religion. The controversy is not religion versus science, it is religion versus religion, and the science of one religion versus the science of another.” [Ham, K: 1983. The relevance of creation. Casebook II, *Ex Nihilo* 6(2):2, cited in Selkirk and Burrows 1987:3]

“It is crucial for creationists that they convince their audience that evolution is not scientific, because both sides agree that creationism is not.” [Miller 1982: 4, cited in Selkirk and Burrows 1987: 103]

Metaphysics is the name given to a branch of philosophical thought that deals with issues of the fundamental nature of reality and what is beyond experience. It literally means “after the physics”, so-

named because Aristotle’s book on the subject followed his *Physics*, which dealing with the nature of the ordinary world, which in Classical Greek is *physike*. It is defined in the 1994 *Webster’s Dictionary* (Brittanica CD edition) as “a division of philosophy that is concerned with the fundamental nature of reality and being and that includes ontology, cosmology, and often epistemology: ontology: abstract philosophical studies: a study of what is outside objective experience”.

Metaphysical systems come in three main flavors: *philosophical systems* (overall systems such as Kant’s or Hegel’s, or more recently Whitehead’s or Collingwood’s); *ideologies*, which are usually political, moral or other practical philosophical systems; and *religions* which in their theologies attempt to create comprehensive philosophical structures.

A metaphysic is often derived from first principles by logical analysis. Aristotle, for example, started with an analysis of “being” and “becoming” (ie, what is and how it changes); Kant, with an analysis of knowledge of the external world; Hegel, from an analysis of historical change. Religious metaphysics often attempt to marry a philosophical system with basic theses about the nature and purpose of God, derived from an authoritative scripture or revelation.

In some traditions, metaphysics is seen to be a Bad Thing, especially in those views sometimes called “modernisms”. The great 18th century Scottish philosopher Hume once wrote that any book not containing reasoning by number or matters of fact was mere sophistry and should be consigned to the flames (he exempted his own philosophical writings, apparently). This distaste stems from the excesses of the medieval Scholastics, whose often empty formalism was applied to Aquinas’ theology based on Aristotle’s metaphysics. Early science arose in part from the rejection of this vapid quibbling.

No-one can deny that views such as Luther’s and Marx’s rely upon metaphysical assumptions and methods. If views like these come into conflict with science, then there are four options: change the science to suit the metaphysics; change the metaphysics to suit the science; change both to fit each other; or find a place for the metaphysics in a “gap” where science hasn’t yet gone. The last option is called the “God of the Gaps” approach [Flew and McIntyre 1955], and of course it has the disadvantage that if (when) science does explain that phenomenon, the religion is diminished.

Historically, evolutionary science grew out partly from natural theology such as Paley's and Chambers' arguments from design, which defined the problems of biology in the early 19th century [Ruse 1979: chapter 3]. These writers sought evidence of God in the appearance of design in the natural world, yet, only a century later, when the evolutionary biologist JBS Haldane was asked what biology taught of the nature of God, he is reported to have replied "He has an inordinate fondness for beetles", since there were so many species of beetle. Other than that, he couldn't really say. Evolutionary science removed the ground from underneath natural theology. Arguments from design for the existence of God were no longer the only conclusion that could be drawn from the adaptation of living things [Dennett 1995].

All the furore generated about the nature of chance in evolution is based not upon challenges to the scientific nature of the theory, but upon the need to find purpose in every facet of reality [cf Dennett 1995]. Often, this derives from religious conviction, but sometimes it arises from a more considered philosophical view.

Metaphysical theories tend to fall into two kinds: those that view everything in nature as the result of Mind (idealisms) and those that view Mind as the result of mechanisms of Nature (naturalisms). One may take a naturalistic approach to some things, and still be an idealist in other domains; for example, one may accept with equanimity that minds are the result of certain sorts of physical brains and still consider, say, society or morality to be the result of the workings of Mind. Typically, though, idealism and naturalism are held as distinct and separate philosophical doctrines.

Idealists, including creationists, cannot accept the view that reality cares little for the aspirations, goals, moral principles, pain or pleasure of organisms, especially humans [cf. Dawkins 1995:132f]. There has to be a Purpose, they say and Evolution implies there is no Purpose. Therefore, they say that evolution is a metaphysical doctrine of the same type as, but opposed to, the sort of religious or philosophical position taken by the idealist. Worse, not only is it not science (because it's a metaphysic, you see), it's a pernicious doctrine because it denies Mind.

Christian creationism may rely upon a literal interpretation of Christian scripture, but its foundation is the view that God's Mind (Will) lies directly behind *all* physical phenomena. Anything that occurs must take place because it is immediately part of God's plan; they

believe that the physical world should, and does, provide proof of God's existence and goodness (extreme providentialism). Evolution, which shows the appearance of design does not imply design, is seen to undercut this eternal truth, and hence they argue that it must be false. In the particular (actual) demonology of fundamentalism, it follows as a corollary that evolution is the work of the devil and his minions. [note 11]

It should be noted that many evolutionists think that the mere fact and scientific theory of evolution in no way prohibits further moral or spiritual meaning, and many do not think that any particular purpose to the universe is implied just by evolution, but requires some religious or philosophical commitment.

Philosophers of science mostly conclude that science is metaphysics neutral, following the Catholic physicist Pierre Duhem [1914]. Science functions the same way for Hindus as for Catholics, for Frenchmen as for Americans, for communists as for democrats, allowing for localised variations that are ironed out after a while. However, science does indeed rule out various religious *etiologial* myths (origin stories), and often forces the revision of historical and medical stories used in the mythology of a religion. And when cosmologies are given in ancient scriptures that involve solid heavens, elephants and scarab beetles, science shows them to be unqualifiedly false as descriptions of the physical world as it is observed.

Science *can* rule out a metaphysical claim, then. Is evolutionary science therefore a metaphysical *Weltanschauung* (a nice pretentious German word meaning world-view)? I don't think so. Many things claimed by metaphysical views such as fundamentalist Christian biblical literalism are not themselves metaphysical claims. For example, the claim that the world is flat (if made by a religious text) is a matter of experiment and research, not first principles and revelation. If "by their fruits shall ye know them", false factual claims are evidence of bad science, not good religion.

Many of those who do hold religious views take the approach that they get their religion from their scriptures and their science from the scientific literature and community. They therefore treat the factual claims made in those scriptures the same way they treat the metaphysical views of scientists: as not germane to the function of that source of knowledge [Berry 1988]. Does the fact that Stephen Jay Gould admits to learning Marxism at his father's knee or Richard

Dawkins to being an atheist mean that evolution is either Marxist or atheistic (as so many immediately and fallaciously conclude)? Of course not.[note 12]

If it were the case that personal views of scientists *defined* the results of scientific work, then the broad range of metaphysical views of practising scientists would mean that - at the same time - science was Christian, Hindu, Marxist and probably even animist, as well as agnostic or atheist. While some extreme cultural relativists do try to claim that science is no more than the sum of its cultural environments, this view fails to explain how it is that science gets such consistent results and acquires such broad agreement on matters of fact. Nevertheless, this does not stop idealists from sometimes disingenuously claiming that science is what you want (or “will”) to make of it (see the section on the nature of science).

There is a tradition in modern Western philosophy, dating at least from the Romantic philosophers of the 18th century, that treats overall theories of the natural world as self-contained and self-validating systems of belief that are beyond criticism from other such systems. Many Christian and some Jewish philosophers and theologians have claimed that Christianity (or any religion) is indeed a self-contained *Weltanschauung*, and that it is immune from attacks upon its claims by scientific research. This takes several forms. One theologian, Rudolph Bultmann, once said that even if Jesus’ physical remains were found, Christianity (as he interpreted it) would still be true. Others hold that all of science is just a religion, in the sense that it is a self-contained belief system, and therefore it cannot objectively disprove or challenge the claims made by another system (ie, Christianity). This is the approach often taken by creationists.

In the final analysis, this boils down to an “anti-science” prejudice, for science is not, in this sense, a metaphysical system. Since science is not a system of thought deduced from first principles (as are traditional metaphysical systems), and that it deals precisely with objective experience, science is not, nor is any theory of science, a true metaphysical system.

However, the claim is sometimes, and more plausibly, made that evolutionary theory, along with some other scientific theories, functions as a kind of *attitudinal* metaphysical system [Ruse 1989]. It is (in my opinion, rightly) thought to influence the kinds of problems and solutions dealt with by science. There is no problem with this, since

in order for a discipline to make any progress, the field of possible problems (essentially infinite, to use a malapropism) must be restricted to some set of plausible and viable research options. The theory of evolution as now consensually held acts to narrow the range and limit the duplication required. This is harmless, and is true of any field of science.

Ruse also describes what he calls “metaphysical Darwinism” [Ruse 1992] (as opposed to “scientific Darwinism”) which is indeed a metaphysical system akin to a worldview, and which has expressed itself in numerous extra-scientific philosophies, including Spencer’s, Teilhard’s, and Haeckel’s, or even the quasi-mystical views of Julian Huxley. These must be considered separate to the scientific theory, and are often in contradiction to the actual scientific models.

Other than this, the “metaphysic” of evolution by selection is primarily a research-guiding mindset that has been extraordinarily fruitful where no others have been [Hull 1989]. However, *as a metaphysic*, evolutionary theory is fairly poverty-stricken. This is what *should* be true of a scientific theory; for the number of conclusions beyond the empirical evidence that can be conjectured is unlimited. Any theory that committed itself to a metaphysical conclusion as a logical inference would be almost certainly false.

Those who need Cosmic Meaning need not fear that any version of evolutionary theory prohibits it; although neither does nor can it support it. Those evolutionists who have either argued in favour of Cosmic Meaning on the basis of evolutionary theory, or have argued that there can be no Cosmic Meaning because things evolve, are both wrong. The conclusions do not follow from the premises, simply *because* ‘is’ does not imply ‘ought’.

Substance and Essence

The concepts of substance and essence are among the most fundamental in metaphysics. They are also among the most sharply questioned, in both Eastern and Western philosophy. Today, “essentialism,” the belief in essences, is regarded a fallacy in much academic opinion, both sensible and foolish. Nevertheless, what the ideas represent is something that it is difficult to do without, in both ordinary language and any serious ontology.

Some simple definitions are in order. A “substance” has certain characteristics. It is durable, separable, and identical. An “essence”

is that which makes something what it is. The definitions of substance and essence may both be said to express what it is that makes them what they are, i.e. their essences, if the essences are themselves durable, etc.

A substance as “durable” means that it persists over time. It endures. It may come into existence, or cease to exist (as in Aristotle), or it may be uncreated or indestructible (as in Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, or Leibniz), but either way, it has an extended existence in time. A substance as “separable” means that its existence is not dependent on other things. It exists independently, and it can be separated from other things that exist. A substance as “identical” means that it has an identity, in which it is the same thing as itself, or in which it has an identity as the member of a certain kind - the same as it endures over time, or as it is separated from other things.

The essence as what “makes something what it is” implies that the something *is* something, i.e. a particular kind of thing, i.e. a dog, radio, planet, number, etc. But substance is not necessarily about kinds of things, since what is durable, separable, and identical may be an individual where, as such, what it is is irrelevant. Thus, Aristotle distinguished “primary substances,” i.e. individuals, from “secondary substances,” i.e. kinds. A kind of thing is then to be associated with an essence. The metaphysics of the essences of kinds get us into the Problem of Universals. Whether individuals have an essence is a good question. The question gets us into the issue of Naming. Using Frege’s distinction between sense and reference, it looks like what makes a particular individual *that* individual is not in the sense, which can always specify more than one individual, but in the reference. Although it is common to assume, as did Frege, that sense determines reference, this generates paradoxes and has been ably refuted by Jerrold Katz.

Aristotle’s terminology in these matters now looks a little confusing. The Greek word for “substance” was *ousía*, from *oûsa*, the feminine participle of “to be” (infinite, *eînai*). Thus, the word looks more like Latin *essentia*, “essence,” which is from the infinite of “to be,” *esse*. Terminologically, Aristotle does not seem to have clearly distinguished between substance and essence. On the other hand, as *substantia* in Latin appears to mean “stand” (*stare*) “under” (*sub*), there is a word corresponding in meaning in Greek: *hypokeímenon* (as a neuter passive participle), “lie” (*keîmai*) “under” (*hypó*). Aristotle uses this to mean “matter” in his sense, which is not substance, precisely

because it is not separable. Aristotelian matter is merely *potential* and is parasitic on “form,” which is the *actuality* (*enérgeia*) of the thing. Potentiality does not have actual existence and so is not separable. On the other hand, Aristotle’s matter is what allows him to avoid substances that are uncreated and indestructible, since the matter “underlies” the transformation of one substance into another.

In Greek philosophy, on top of substance and essence, we get the issue of the *ontôs ónta*, the “beingly beings,” i.e. what things most truly exist. For Plato, that would be the essences of kinds, the Forms (*aneîdos* or *idéa*), in the World of Being; for Aristotle, it is the actuality of the individual, in the form again (*eîdos* or, in Latin, *species*); and for Descartes, just so we move across the board, it is, for natural objects, in the matter, which is essentially extension. Although the Cartesian view of matter now seems the most natural and obvious meaning of “substance,” it nevertheless is the conception that has suffered the most from developments in science. While Descartes believed, as many still do, that matter is a solid plenum of *stuff*, in physics matter has disintegrated into a blizzard of abstract features in largely, or entirely, empty space. Since Einstein made mass equivalent to energy, we might say, to the delight of Aristotle, that matter has disintegrated into *enérgeia*.

Substantia becomes the term for *ousía* in Latin, perhaps with the sense that what endures may undergo superficial changes and so “underlies” such apparent changes. Such changes, indeed, are what we still say are not “substantial.” In terms of essence, superficial changes do not change what the thing is, and so the changes are merely “accidental” rather than “essential.” While the contrasts between “substance and attribute” and “essence and accident” are now standard, the original combination of substance and essence in Greek *ousía* we see in the occasional use of the expression “substance and accident.” To fully untangle them, we need to be clear that essence is *defined* by attributes. What makes the thing what it is are certain characteristics, and these inhere in the durable and separable substance. Indeed, they *identify* it, as a member of its kind.

A very ancient rejection of substance and essence altogether, or their equivalents in Indian philosophy, began in Buddhism. Since the approach of Buddhism to the world is to break attachments, so that one does not suffer because of relationships to things, a simple way to do that is to say, in effect, that there are no things. If nothing is

substantial or has any essence, this will do that job. What we get instead are the doctrines of “momentariness,” “no self nature,” and “relative existence.” If everything exists only momentarily, then nothing is durable, and we lose that characteristic of substances. If there is no self nature, then there is nothing in things that makes them what they are, and we lose the existence of essences. If things only exist relative to other things, then (1) nothing exists independently and we lose that characteristic of substance, and (2) nothing has its own character, so we lose that characteristic of essence. So what is actually *there*? Well, what we see is the “form” of things, the external appearance. Since there is no self nature and things only have relative existence, what are things in themselves when we take away everything else? Well, Emptiness. This is not nothingness (a major heresy), but neither existence nor non-existence nor both nor neither. In other words, we can’t say or comprehend what is there. Later, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, we get the doctrine of the *Heart Sutra* that “Emptiness is Form, and Form is Emptiness.”

Unfortunately, Buddhism always had difficulty with the implications of all this fundamental metaphysics. The loss of substance and essence takes with it *identity*, so that it becomes difficult to say that an individual, like the Buddha, achieves Enlightenment and Salvation. The individual, in fact, does not survive beyond the moment, and so it is a different being who achieves Enlightenment from the one who existed previously, and a different being in turn who achieves Salvation. Buddhism attempts to substitute causality for substance, so that what I am now is simply *caused* by what I was before. Unfortunately, this does not restore identity. If I make a tuna sandwich, and so cause its existence, this does not mean I am the tuna sandwich. Causal connections can be within substances or pass between them, and the identity relation is contributed by the substance, not by the causality. In the end, Buddhism seems to settle into the notion of “provisional existence,” which is durable and identical, and then, with some other expedients, ceases to worry about the matter. The popular belief, indeed, is that Buddhism is about finding one’s true self, not about finding that there is no self at all (*anatma* or *anatta*, “No Self”).

In Mediaeval Europe we get the rejection of the reality of essence by the Nominalists. To them, universals are just “names” (*nomina*). Their very sensible motivation would seem to be that what we see and experience in the world are concrete individuals, not abstract universals or essences. Unfortunately, the difficulty they would always

have is that individuals do not become members of kinds just because we happen to apply a particular name to them, but we apply a particular name to individuals because we *recognize* a feature in them that matches up with the *meaning* of the word. The Nominalists thus not only rejected the reality of essences, but they tended to overlook the abstract content of *meaning* as well, focusing only on the tangible things, the object and the word. Both these tendencies survived well into Modern Philosophy and down to the present.

Meanwhile, a focus on the tangible had earlier produced a striking assertion. The Islamic philosopher Al-Ghazzâlî (d. 1111) had noted that the *causal connection itself* was an intangible feature that purportedly connected different tangible objects. So he did not believe that it needed to be there. Actually, Ghazzâlî did believe in causality; he just did not believe that it was where we thought it was. Instead, God alone is the cause of everything that happens - this is Islamic “Occasionalism” (since an event is not really a cause, but simply the “occasion,” for an effect), a term offered by Malbranche, and a doctrine still used by Spinoza. Note what this would do to Buddhist metaphysics, where there is no God: Its last realistic principle would be gone. But this would never happen in Buddhism, where the Buddha himself asserted that there were causes, i.e. that there is a cause for suffering.

In David Hume (d. 1776) we have a true *Götterdämmerung* of metaphysics. All together we get the Nominalist rejection of essences, Ghazzâlî’s critique of causality, and the Buddhist rejection of substance. With all of these, Hume focuses on the tangible, with the added Empiricist notion that the only contents of the mind are images, because that is what experience delivers. Thus there are no “abstract ideas,” a thesis easily confirmed when abstractions are discovered not to be images, e.g. a “human being” cannot be imagined without attributes that always characterize particular human beings - i.e. neither short nor tall, neither fat nor thin, neither light nor dark, neither male nor female, etc. Since a substratum to experience is not visible in experience, nor the abstract essence visible in the concrete individual, these are going to fall to Hume’s critique - although, as we have seen, Hume himself initially offers to abandon his theory if a concept can be cited that he cannot trace to an antecedent image. Evidently realizing the difficulty this would create for him, Hume then shifted to arguing that a concept, far from refuting his theory, is *meaningless* if he cannot trace it to an antecedent image.

Abandoning substance and essence, Hume would be left with the same difficulties as his predecessors. How an object maintains a durable identity over time, Hume cannot not account for. How he would even know whether a particular word applies or does not apply to a particular object would also be a difficulty. Since the British Empiricists all played billiards, we could ask how Hume identifies a billiard ball (which figures in the discussions of causality by Locke, Berkeley, and Hume). That it is round, indeed a sphere, requires the recognition of an abstract feature. It does not matter that the *word* is applied to the ball, since we want to know what it is about the ball that would merit the application of the word to it. The word “ball” has no affinity with the ivory (or plastic) object on the pool table.

What Hume must do, which he is quite justified in doing given the rest of his thought, is simply to say that we *do* apply the word, just as we otherwise use the concepts of causality and of vice and virtue, without being able to rationally justify this action. For Hume, as it happens, states quite openly that the Skepticism of his thought “has little or no influence on practice” [*Treatise of Human Nature*, Shelby-Bigge edition, Oxford, 1888, 1968, p. 469]. The *custom* and the *habit* of humanity are Hume’s ultimate justification, even when rational justification is exposed as *vacuus*.

Hume’s discussion of identity is revealing:

- ...we may observe, that the view of any one object is not sufficient to convey the idea of identity... One single object conveys the idea of unity, not that of identity.
- On the other hand, a multiplicity of objects can never convey this idea, however resembling they may be suppos’d. The mind always pronounces the one not to be the other, and considers them as forming two, three, or any determinate number of objects, whose existences are entirely distinct and independent.
- Since then both number and unity are incompatible with the relation of identity, it must lie in something that is neither of them. But to tell the truth, at first sight this seems utterly impossible. Betwixt unity and number there can be no medium; no more than betwixt existence and non-existence. After one object is suppos’d to exist, we must either suppose another also to exist; in which case we have the idea of number: Or we must suppose it not to exist; in which case the first object remains at unity.
- To remove this difficulty, let us have recourse to the idea of time or duration. I have already observ’d, that time in a strict sense,

implies succession, and that when we apply its idea to any unchangeable object, ’tis only by a fiction of the imagination, by which the unchangeable object is suppos’d to participate of the changes of the co-existent objects, and in particular of that of our perceptions. This fiction of the imagination almost universally takes place; and ’tis by means of it, that a single object, plac’d before us, and survey’d for any time without our discovering in it any interruption or variation, is able to give us a notion of identity... Here then is an idea, which is a medium betwixt unity and number; or more properly speaking, is either of them, according to the view, in which we take it: And this idea we call that of identity. [*op.cit.* pp. 200-201, boldface added]

Hume must have recourse to many “fictions of the imagination” in order to salvage many of the principles of ordinary belief and experience. Recourse to “time or duration” will not be sufficient in the matter, since with the perception of successive objects it is perfectly conceivable (Hume’s own criterion of the possible) that we have successive objects (number) rather than the same object (unity and identity). Thus, even if an object is “survey’d for any time without our discovering in it any interruption or variation,” this is not of itself “able to give us a notion of identity” - any more, I might add, than the regularities of constant conjunction “give us a notion” of causality without, as Hume says, the subjective psychological expectation that is created. The “fiction of the imagination” is that there are some “unchangeable objects” which undergo some, but not all, of the duration that we perceive in experience. The underlying, unchangeable reality is itself invisible. It is not enough that it looks the same, for we know that, as we turn our back on the pool table, our trickster friend can, behind our back, switch the original cue ball for one from another table. Examining the ball, when we may not have paid very close attention to the original one, may not reveal the truth.

For Immanuel Kant (d.1804), what the mind supplies is not a “fiction of the imagination” but a concept, a “category,” that, *a priori*, is necessary for the coherence of the world. He understood that Hume could hardly disagree with this but had had a difficulty accounting for its origin and the necessity of its agreement with experience. The former is easier when we allow that abstract concepts are not images, so that they may be innate without our being aware of them (which Locke could not allow). The latter, and part of the former, depends on Kant’s own theory that experience

and phenomenal objects themselves are generated by the activity of the mind, reflecting rules without which consciousness would not exist, and which are then sewn into the fabric of the tangible world.

Thus, when we go about our lives and ask, “Is this the soap that was here earlier?” or “What makes this shoe a “pump”?” we presuppose that the earlier soap is a durable object that can be identical to the present one, and that there are features that make a “pump” what it is. To the nature of the world that makes these sensible questions and presuppositions realistic we supply the concepts “substance” and “essence.” What is really behind the appearances, what is really enduring, we cannot say. Concepts of substance in Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz are of *indestructible* and eternal substances: matter, soul, God, and monads. Substance, however, does not necessarily require indestructibility. Aristotle’s substances come into being and pass out of being, which is what happens with shoes and other ordinary objects. The basic meaning of “substance” thus does not resolve some of the most important questions about substance, e.g. whether there is a soul, God, etc. Indeed, it doesn’t even answer the question whether there is “matter” in the sense meant by Democritus, Descartes, or materialists since them.

At the same time, the meaning of “essence” does not answer basic questions about essence. What makes something what it is may not involve any necessity or causality within the object itself. Thus, human artifacts are meaningful only in relation to human purposes. A shoe is not a natural kind but an object that will decay and disappear from the world unless we use and maintain it. The essence of a shoe only exists as an artifact of human consciousness. At the same time, there *are* natural kinds, and what makes a deer a deer or an igneous rock an igneous rock depends on causation internal to the things. The features of an essence must be *held together* by something, and it looks like this must be the different modes of necessity, which have been examined elsewhere. Thus, the laws of nature make many things what they are, but logic and *a priori* metaphysical truths underlie more fundamental things. Truths of value, of justice, goodness, and beauty go beyond these, into modes of purposive truth. At the same time, a definition of something can just be made up and stipulated. Things can even be done this way in mathematics. The necessity of the essence *there* is that of a matter of fact, or of “perfect” necessity.

In Kantian terms, essences require *synthesis*. Kant thought of synthesis in terms of propositions, i.e. synthetic propositions, with analytic propositions then merely unpacking in the predicate the meaning already put together in the subject. He does not get into the question of what put the meaning together in the subject in the first place. However, his notion about propositions, that a ground connects subject and predicate, works just as well for the structure of meaning in the subject. A deer is made by its DNA and defined by the zoologist using diagnostic features of its anatomy. Our concept of the deer, then, is put together in ultimate dependence on the causal ground of the DNA. Since that is not something that, presently, can be examined directly, we infer it indirectly. Now, at least, from modern biochemistry we know that the DNA is there and is the inner spring of the process - something Hume doubted we could ever know. Other essences - of logic, mathematics, metaphysics - do not require an examination of physical causes.

A Kantian theory of substance and essence is thus only the beginning of how they work. They do not just leap out at us from the objects. They are, however, indispensable, and themselves are part of the *a priori* structure of knowledge that metaphysics must account for.

Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of the nature and scope of knowledge and justified belief. It analyzes the nature of knowledge and how it relates to similar notions such as truth, belief and justification. It also deals with the means of production of knowledge, as well as skepticism about different knowledge claims. It is essentially about issues having to do with the creation and dissemination of knowledge in particular areas of inquiry.

Epistemology asks questions like: “What is knowledge?”, “How is knowledge acquired?”, “What do people know?”, “What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge?”, “What is its structure, and what are its limits?”, “What makes justified beliefs justified?”, “How we are to understand the concept of justification?”, “Is justification internal or external to one’s own mind?”

The kind of knowledge usually discussed in Epistemology is propositional knowledge, “knowledge-that” as opposed to “knowledge-how” (for example, the knowledge that “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ”, as opposed to the knowledge of how to go about adding two numbers).

What Is Knowledge?

Knowledge is the awareness and understanding of particular aspects of reality. It is the clear, lucid information gained through the process of reason applied to reality. The traditional approach is that knowledge requires three necessary and sufficient conditions, so that knowledge can then be defined as "justified true belief":

- truth: since false propositions cannot be known - for something to count as knowledge, it must actually be true. As Aristotle famously (but rather confusingly) expressed it: *"To say of something which is that it is not, or to say of something which is not that it is, is false. However, to say of something which is that it is, or of something which is not that it is not, is true."*
- belief: because one cannot know something that one doesn't even believe in, the statement *"I know x, but I don't believe that x is true"* is contradictory.
- justification: as opposed to believing in something purely as a matter of luck.

The most contentious part of all this is the definition of justification, and there are several schools of thought on the subject:

- According to Evidentialism, what makes a belief justified in this sense is the possession of evidence - a belief is justified to the extent that it fits a person's evidence.
- Different varieties of Reliabilism suggest that either: 1) justification is not necessary for knowledge provided it is reliably-produced true belief; or 2) justification is required but any reliable cognitive process (e.g. vision) is sufficient justification.
- Yet another school, Infallibilism, holds that a belief must not only be true and justified, but that the justification of the belief must necessitate its truth, so that the justification for the belief must be infallible.

Another debate focuses on whether justification is external or internal:

- Externalism holds that factors deemed "external" (meaning outside of the psychological states of those who are gaining the knowledge) can be conditions of knowledge, so that if the relevant facts justifying a proposition are external then they are acceptable.
- Internalism, on the other hand, claims that all knowledge-yielding conditions are within the psychological states of those who gain knowledge.

As recently as 1963, the American philosopher Edmund Gettier called this traditional theory of knowledge into question by claiming that there are certain circumstances in which one does not have knowledge, even when all of the above conditions are met (his Gettier-cases). For example: Suppose that the clock on campus (which keeps accurate time and is well maintained) stopped working at 11:56pm last night, and has yet to be repaired. On my way to my noon class, exactly twelve hours later, I glance at the clock and form the belief that the time is 11:56. My belief is true, of course, since the time is indeed 11:56. And my belief is justified, as I have no reason to doubt that the clock is working, and I cannot be blamed for basing beliefs about the time on what the clock says. Nonetheless, it seems evident that I do not know that the time is 11:56. After all, if I had walked past the clock a bit earlier or a bit later, I would have ended up with a false belief rather than a true one.

How Is Knowledge Acquired?

Propositional knowledge can be of two types, depending on its source:

- a priori (or non-empirical), where knowledge is possible independently of, or prior to, any experience, and requires only the use of reason (e.g. knowledge of logical truths and of abstract claims); or
- a posteriori (or empirical), where knowledge is possible only subsequent, or posterior, to certain sense experiences, in addition to the use of reason (e.g. knowledge of the colour or shape of a physical object, or knowledge of geographical locations).

Knowledge of empirical facts about the physical world will necessarily involve perception, in other words, the use of the senses. But all knowledge requires some amount of reasoning, the analysis of data and the drawing of inferences. Intuition is often believed to be a sort of direct access to knowledge of the a priori.

Memory allows us to know something that we knew in the past, even, perhaps, if we no longer remember the original justification. Knowledge can also be transmitted from one individual to another via testimony (that is, my justification for a particular belief could amount to the fact that some trusted source has told me that it is true).

There are a few main theories of knowledge acquisition:

- Empiricism, which emphasizes the role of experience, especially experience based on perceptual observations by the five senses in the formation of ideas, while discounting the notion of innate ideas. Refinements of this basic principle led to Phenomenalism, Positivism, Scientism and Logical Positivism.
- Rationalism, which holds that knowledge is not derived from experience, but rather is acquired by a priori processes or is innate (in the form of concepts) or intuitive.
- Representationalism (or Indirect Realism or Epistemological Dualism), which holds that the world we see in conscious experience is not the real world itself, but merely a miniature virtual-reality replica of that world in an internal representation.
- Constructivism (or Constructionism), which presupposes that all knowledge is "constructed", in that it is contingent on convention, human perception and social experience.

What Can People Know?

The fact that any given justification of knowledge will itself depend on another belief for its justification appears to lead to an infinite regress.

Skepticism begins with the apparent impossibility of completing this infinite chain of reasoning, and argues that, ultimately, no beliefs are justified and therefore no one really knows anything.

Fallibilism also claims that absolute certainty about knowledge is impossible, or at least that all claims to knowledge could, in principle, be mistaken. Unlike Skepticism, however, Fallibilism does not imply the need to abandon our knowledge, just to recognize that, because empirical knowledge can be revised by further observation, any of the things we take as knowledge might possibly turn out to be false.

In response to this regress problem, various schools of thought have arisen:

- Foundationalism claims that some beliefs that support other beliefs are foundational and do not themselves require justification by other beliefs (self-justifying or infallible beliefs or those based on perception or certain a priori considerations).
- Instrumentalism is the methodological view that concepts and theories are merely useful instruments, and their worth is measured

by how effective they are in explaining and predicting phenomena. Instrumentalism therefore denies that theories are truth-evaluable. Pragmatism is a similar concept, which holds that something is true only insofar as it works and has practical consequences.

- Infitism typically take the infinite series to be merely potential, and an individual need only have the ability to bring forth the relevant reasons when the need arises. Therefore, unlike most traditional theories of justification, Infitism considers an infinite regress to be a valid justification.
- Coherentism holds that an individual belief is justified circularly by the way it fits together (coheres) with the rest of the belief system of which it is a part, so that the regress does not proceed according to a pattern of linear justification.
- Foundherentism is another position which is meant to be a unification of foundationalism and coherentism.

Who are we? How can we be happy? Does the universe have a purpose? Greek philosophers approached the big questions of life sometimes in a genuine scientific way, sometimes in mystic ways, but always in an imaginative fashion. Pythagoras considered a charlatan for claiming the doctrine of reincarnation, a half-naked Socrates haranguing people in the street with provocative and unanswerable questions, Aristotle tutoring great generals: these are examples of how Greek thinkers dared to question traditional conventions and to challenge the prejudices of their age, sometimes putting their own lives at stake. Greek Philosophy as an independent cultural genre began around 600 BC, and its insights still persist to our times.

Chapter 3

The Pre-Socratic Greek Philosophers

About 600 BC, the Greek cities of Ionia were the intellectual and cultural leaders of Greece and the number one sea-traders of the Mediterranean. Miletus, the southernmost Ionian city, was the wealthiest of Greek cities and the main focus of the “Ionian awakening”, a name for the initial phase of classical Greek civilization, coincidental with the birth of Greek philosophy.

The first group of Greek philosophers is a triad of Milesian thinkers: Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes. Their main concern was to come up with a cosmological theory purely based on natural phenomena. Their approach required the rejection of all traditional explanations based on religious authority, dogma, myth and superstition. They all agreed on the notion that all things come from a single “primal substance”: Thales believed it was water; Anaximander said it was a substance different from all other known substances, “infinite, eternal and ageless”; and Anaximenes claimed it was air.

Observation was important among the Milesian school. Thales predicted an eclipse which took place in 585 BC and it seems he had been able to calculate the distance of a ship at sea from observations taken at two points. Anaximander, based on the fact that human infants are helpless at birth, argued that if the first human had somehow appeared on earth as an infant, it would not have survived: therefore, humans have evolved from other animals whose offspring are fitter. The science among Milesians was stronger than their philosophy and somewhat crude, but it encouraged observation in many subsequent thinkers and was also a good stimulus to approach in a rational fashion many of the traditional questions that had previously been answered through religion and superstition. The Ionian rational view caused nothing but perplexity among some of their powerful neighbours such as the Babylonians and Egyptians, which were nations based on theocratic governments where religion played an important political and social role.

Pythagoras is considered one of the Ionian thinkers but outside the Milesian school: he was originally from Samos, an offshore Ionian settlement. His approach combines science with religious beliefs, something that would have caused horror among the Milesian school. His philosophy has a dose of mysticism, probably an influence of the Orphic tradition. Mathematics, in the sense of demonstrative deductive arguments, begins with Pythagoras: he is credited as the author of the first known mathematical formulation, the theorem which states that the square of the longest side of a right triangle equals the sum of the squares of the other two sides. Deductive reasoning from general premises seems to have been a Pythagorean innovation.

Atomism began with Leucippus and Democritus. Among the ancient schools, this approach is the closest to modern science: they believed that everything is composed of atoms, which are indestructible and physically indivisible. They were strict determinists, who believed that everything happens in accordance with natural laws and the universe, they said, has no purpose and is nothing more than a mixture of infinite atoms being shuffled and re-shuffled according to the indifferent rules of nature. What is interesting about this school is that it attempted to understand the universe as objectively as possible and minimize intellectual deviations in favour of cultural and mystic prejudices.

Thales of Miletus (620 BC-c. 546 BC)

The ancient Greek philosopher Thales was born in Miletus in Greek Ionia. Aristotle, the major source for Thales’s philosophy and science,

identified Thales as the first person to investigate the basic principles, the question of the originating substances of matter and, therefore, as the founder of the school of natural philosophy. Thales was interested in almost everything, investigating almost all areas of knowledge, philosophy, history, science, mathematics, engineering, geography, and politics. He proposed theories to explain many of the events of nature, the primary substance, the support of the earth, and the cause of change. Thales was much involved in the problems of astronomy and provided a number of explanations of cosmological events which traditionally involved supernatural entities. His questioning approach to the understanding of heavenly phenomena was the beginning of Greek astronomy. Thales' hypotheses were new and bold, and in freeing phenomena from godly intervention, he paved the way towards scientific endeavor. He founded the Milesian school of natural philosophy, developed the scientific method, and initiated the first western enlightenment. A number of anecdotes is closely connected to Thales' investigations of the cosmos. When considered in association with his hypotheses they take on added meaning and are most enlightening. Thales was highly esteemed in ancient times, and a letter cited by Diogenes Laertius, and purporting to be from Anaximenes to Pythagoras, advised that all our discourse should begin with a reference to Thales (D.L. II.4).

1. The Writings of Thales: Doubts have always existed about whether Thales wrote anything, but a number of ancient reports credit him with writings. Simplicius (Diels, *Dox.* p. 475) specifically attributed to Thales authorship of the so-called Nautical Star-guide. Diogenes Laertius raised doubts about authenticity, but wrote that 'according to others [Thales] wrote nothing but two treatises, one *On the Solstice* and one *On the Equinox*' (D.L. I.23). Lobon of Argus asserted that the writings of Thales amounted to two hundred lines (D.L. I.34), and Plutarch associated Thales with opinions and accounts expressed in verse (Plutarch, *De Pyth. or.* 18. 402 E). Hesychius, recorded that '[Thales] wrote on celestial matters in epic verse, on the equinox, and much else' (DK, 11A2). Callimachus credited Thales with the sage advice that navigators should navigate by Ursa Minor (D.L. I.23), advice which may have been in writing.

Thales says Water is the Primary Principle: Aristotle defined wisdom as knowledge of certain principles and causes (*Metaph.* 982 a2-3). He commenced his investigation of the wisdom of the philosophers who preceded him, with Thales, the first philosopher, and described Thales as the founder of natural philosophy

(*Metaph.* 983 b21-22). He recorded: 'Thales says that it is water'. 'it' is the nature, the *archê*, the originating principle. For Thales, this nature was a single material substance, water. Despite the more advanced terminology which Aristotle and Plato had created, Aristotle recorded the doctrines of Thales in terms which were available to Thales in the sixth century BC, Aristotle made a definite statement, and presented it with confidence. It was only when Aristotle attempted to provide the reasons for the opinions that Thales held, and for the theories that he proposed, that he sometimes displayed caution.

Thales's Primary Principle: The problem of the nature of matter, and its transformation into the myriad things of which the universe is made, engaged the natural philosophers, commencing with Thales. For his hypothesis to be credible, it was essential that he could explain how all things could come into being from water, and return ultimately to the originating material. It is inherent in Thales's hypotheses that water had the potentiality to change to the myriad things of which the universe is made, the botanical, physiological, meteorological and geological states. In *Timaeus*, 49B-C, Plato had Timaeus relate a cyclic process. The passage commences with 'that which we now call "water" ', and describes a theory which was possibly that of Thales. Thales would have recognized evaporation, and have been familiar with traditional views, such as the nutritive capacity of mist and ancient theories about spontaneous generation, phenomena which he may have 'observed', just as Aristotle believed he, himself had (*Hist. An.* 569 b1; *Gen. An.* 762 a9-763 a34), and about which Diodorus Siculus (I.7.3-5; 1.10.6), Epicurus (ap. Censorinus, D.N. IV.9), Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura*, V.783-808) and Ovid (*Met.* I.416-437) wrote.

When Aristotle reported Thales's pronouncement that the primary principle is water, he made a precise statement: 'Thales says that it [the nature of things] is water' (*Metaph.* 983 b20), but he became tentative when he proposed reasons which might have justified Thales's decision: '[Thales's] supposition may have arisen from observation...' (*Metaph.* 983 b22). It was Aristotle's opinion that Thales may have observed, 'that the nurture of all creatures is moist, and that warmth itself is generated from moisture and lives by it; and that from which all things come to be is their first principle' (*Metaph.* 983 b23-25). Then, in the lines 983 b26-27, Aristotle's tone changed towards greater confidence. He declared: 'Besides this, another reason for the supposition would be that the semina of all things have a moist nature...' (*Metaph.* 983 b26-27). In continuing the criticism of Thales,

Aristotle wrote: 'That from which all things come to be is their first principle' (*Metaph.* 983 b25).

Simple metallurgy had been practised long before Thales presented his hypotheses, so Thales knew that heat could return metals to a liquid state. Water exhibits sensible changes more obviously than any of the other so-called elements, and can readily be observed in the three states of liquid, vapour and ice. The understanding that water could generate into earth is basic to Thales's watery thesis. At Miletus it could readily be observed that water had the capacity to thicken into earth. Miletus stood on the Gulf of Lade through which the Maeander river emptied its waters. Within living memory, older Milesians had witnessed the island of Lade increasing in size within the Gulf, and the river banks encroaching into the river to such an extent that at Priene, across the gulf from Miletus the warehouses had to be rebuilt closer to the water's edge. The ruins of the once prosperous city-port of Miletus are now ten kilometres distant from the coast and the Island of Lade now forms part of a rich agricultural plain. There would have been opportunity to observe other areas where earth generated from water, for example, the deltas of the Halys, the Ister, about which Hesiod wrote (*Theogony*, 341), now called the Danube, the Tigris-Euphrates, and almost certainly the Nile. This coming-into-being of land would have provided substantiation of Thales's doctrine. To Thales water held the potentialities for the nourishment and generation of the entire cosmos. Aëtius attributed to Thales the concept that 'even the very fire of the sun and the stars, and indeed the cosmos itself is nourished by evaporation of the waters' (*Placita*, I.3).

It is not known how Thales explained his watery thesis, but Aristotle believed that the reasons he proposed were probably the persuasive factors in Thales's considerations. Thales gave no role to the Olympian gods. Belief in generation of earth from water was not proven to be wrong until A.D. 1769 following experiments of Antoine Lavoisier, and spontaneous generation was not disproved until the nineteenth century as a result of the work of Louis Pasteur.

Parmenides 510 BC - 560 BC

Parmenides was a known follower of Pythagoras, another renowned figure in the philosophical paradigm of ancient Greece. His poems and thoughts always seemed to have a significant influence from Xanophanes, leading to most of the historians contemplating that he must have been his pupil. Among the pre-Socratic philosophers

(those who went into the limelight before the time-period of Socrates), he is placed among one of the most significant ones.

In his only known work, the aptly titled poem 'On Nature', he tries to unravel the biggest questions of all - Is it or is it not? If truth be told, his attempt at deciphering this philosophical mystery (and a rhetorical one, some might say) leads to a rather paradoxical statement rather than a satisfying answer. Parmenides states that everything 'that is' must have always been, since any arbitrary, nothing would have to come from 'nothing' itself. And in turn, it becomes a paradox because it is impossible to think of what is not, and again, it is also impossible to think of something that cannot be thought of. The subsequent philosophers that succeeded him would work on to simply these philosophical impossibilities.

Anaxagoras 500 BC - 428 BC

Another important figure from the pre-Socratic era, Anaxagoras of Clazomenae was an influential philosopher and scientist who lived and taught in Athens for almost 30 years. His philosophical views much revolved around the nature itself. As it was the case with most of the philosophers in ancient Greece, his ideas contrasted and collided with the contemporary ideologies and beliefs that led him to face life-threatening consequences.

Anaxagoras is credited for being the first to establish a philosophy in its entirety in Athens, a place where it would go on to reach its peak, and continue to have an impact on the society for hundreds of years to come. He devoted much of his time in explaining nature as it is - taking universe as an undifferentiated mass until it was worked upon by a spiritual component which he called 'nous'. He believed that in the physical world, everything contains a portion of everything else. Nothing was pure on its own, and everything was jumbled together in a chaotic, and 'nous' (which means 'mind') asserts a certain motion and meaning to the entities in this chaos.

Anaximander 610 BC - 546 BC

Anaximander of Miletus is the famous pupil and, in many ways, a philosophical successor to Thales himself. He is credited for being the first known writer on philosophy - given that he is the only known philosopher to have authored the first surviving lines of western philosophy. He is also a known figure in early of biology and geography. Moreover, he created the first world image of an open universe, diverting from the-then notion of closed universe and making him the first speculative astronomer in the human history.

He further extended the philosophical views of his master - proposing an 'Arche' or a principle that he believed to be the basis of all universe. But unlike Thales, he believed this basis had an 'apeiron' (an unlimited substance) that acted as a source for everything. This source acted as the prime point of differentiation for polar opposites like hot and cold, light and dark and so on. Much of his work may remain truncated, especially at the hands of subsequent generations of philosophers. But he was indeed one of the greatest minds in the ancient Greece.

Empedocles 490 BC - 430 BC

Empedocles was one of the most important pre-Socratic era philosophers and even more outstanding were his poems that went on to impose a great influence on later poets including the likes of Lucretius. One of his philosophical landmarks has been his assertion of four element theory of matter. It states that all matter is basically composed of four primary elements - earth, air, fire and water. This became one of the earliest theories to have been postulated on particle physics, although some historians see it as a hassled effort to negate the no-dualism theory of Parmenides.

He simply rejected the presence of any void or an empty space, thus contradicting the philosophical ideology of Parmenides through and through. He put forth the idea of opposite motive forces involved in building of the world - namely, love as the cause of union and strife as the cause of separation. He also went on to become the first person to give an evolutionary account on the development of species.

Pythagoras (BC 570-490)

Pythagoras, (born c. 570 BC, Samos, Ionia [Greece]- died c. 500-490 BC, Metapontum, Lucanium [Italy]) Greek philosopher, mathematician, and founder of the Pythagorean brotherhood that, although religious in nature, formulated principles that influenced the thought of Plato and Aristotle and contributed to the development of mathematics and Western rational philosophy. (For a fuller treatment of Pythagoras and Pythagorean thought, see Pythagoreanism).

Pythagoras emigrated to southern Italy about 532 BC, apparently to escape Samos's tyrannical rule, and established his ethico-political academy at Croton (now Crotona, Italy). It is difficult to distinguish Pythagoras's teachings from those of his disciples. None of his writings have survived, and Pythagoreans invariably supported their doctrines by indiscriminately citing their master's authority. Pythagoras,

however, is generally credited with the theory of the functional significance of numbers in the objective world and in music. Other discoveries often attributed to him (the incommensurability of the side and diagonal of a square, for example, and the Pythagorean theorem for right triangles) were probably developed only later by the Pythagorean school. More probably, the bulk of the intellectual tradition originating with Pythagoras himself belongs to mystical wisdom rather than to scientific scholarship.

The Rise of Athens: The Sophists & Socrates

About 500 BC, the Greek city-states or poleis were still largely divided. They had a common language and culture, but they were very often rivals. Some years earlier, Athens implemented a socio-political innovation by which all free male citizens had equal rights regardless of their origin and fortune. They named it democracy. Before the time of democracy, government decision-making was in the hands of a few, often aristocratic and noble families. Democracy allowed all free citizens to be part of the important decisions of the polis. They could engage in the discussions held during deliberative assembly and tribunals, their voices could be heard everywhere and had the same value as any other voice. In this context, speech was king: being able to discuss different topics effectively and to persuade others, granted a competitive advantage. This was true not only of citizens actively involved in politics, but for any other citizen. During court hearings, for example, prosecutor and accused had to appear in court in person, never through lawyers, and the failure or success of the process relied largely on rhetorical skills and any citizen could be subject to a court hearing. This period, therefore, saw the beginning of the Sophist school.

The Sophists were intellectuals who taught courses in various topics, including rhetoric, a useful skill in Athens. Because they taught in return for a fee, the Sophists' schools were only attended by those who could afford it, usually members of the aristocracy and wealthy families. This was a time of profound political and social change in Athens: democracy had replaced the old way of doing politics and many aristocrats whose interests were affected were trying to destroy the democracy; the rapid increase of wealth and culture, mainly due to foreign commerce, undermined traditional beliefs and morals. In a way, the Sophists represented the new political era in Athenian life, especially because they were linked with the new educational needs.

Chapter 4

Socrates: The Father of Philosophy

Socrates (469-399 BC) is one of the few individuals whom one could say has so-shaped the cultural and intellectual development of the world that, without him, history would be profoundly different. He is best known for his association with the Socratic method of question and answer, his claim that he was ignorant (or aware of his own absence of knowledge), and his claim that the unexamined life is not worth living, for human beings. He was the inspiration for Plato, the thinker widely held to be the founder of the Western philosophical tradition. Plato in turn served as the teacher of Aristotle, thus establishing the famous triad of ancient philosophers: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Unlike other philosophers of his time and ours, Socrates never wrote anything down but was committed to living simply and to interrogating the everyday views and popular opinions of those in his home city of Athens. At the age of 70, he was put to death at the hands of his fellow citizens on charges of impiety and corruption of the youth. His

trial, along with the social and political context in which occurred, has warranted as much treatment from historians and classicists as his arguments and methods have from philosophers.

Socrates was born in Athens in the year 469 BC to Sophroniscus, a stonemason, and Phaenarete, a midwife. His family was not extremely poor, but they were by no means wealthy, and Socrates could not claim that he was of noble birth like Plato. He grew up in the political deme or district of Alopece, and when he turned 18, began to perform the typical political duties required of Athenian males. These included compulsory military service and membership in the Assembly, the governing body responsible for determining military strategy and legislation.

Between 431- 404 BC Athens fought one of its bloodiest and most protracted conflicts with neighboring Sparta, the war that we now know as the Peloponnesian War. Aside from the fact that Socrates fought in the conflict, it is important for an account of his life and trial because many of those with whom Socrates spent his time became either sympathetic to the Spartan cause at the very least or traitors to Athens at worst. This is particularly the case with those from the more aristocratic Athenian families, who tended to favor the rigid and restricted hierarchy of power in Sparta instead of the more widespread democratic distribution of power and free speech to all citizens that obtained in Athens. Plato more than once places in the mouth of his character Socrates praise for Sparta (*Protagoras* 342b, *Crito* 53a; cf. *Republic* 544c in which most people think the Spartan constitution is the best). The political regime of the *Republic* is marked by a small group of ruling elites that preside over the citizens of the ideal city.

While many of his fellow citizens found considerable evidence against Socrates, there was also historical evidence in addition to his military service for the case that he was not just a passive but an active supporter of the democracy. For one thing, just as he had associates that were known oligarchs, he also had associates that were supporters of the democracy, including the metic family of Cephalus and Socrates' friend Chaerephon, the man who reported that the oracle at Delphi had proclaimed that no man was wiser than Socrates. Additionally, when he was ordered by the Thirty to help retrieve the democratic general Leon from the island of Salamis for execution, he refused to do so. His refusal could be understood not as the defiance of a legitimately established government but rather

his allegiance to the ideals of due process that were in effect under the previously instituted democracy. Indeed, in Plato's *Crito*, Socrates refuses to escape from prison on the grounds that he lived his whole life with an implied agreement with the laws of the democracy (*Crito* 50a-54d). Notwithstanding these facts, there was profound suspicion that Socrates was a threat to the democracy in the years after the end of the Peloponnesian War. But because of the amnesty, Anytus and his fellow accusers Meletus and Lycon were prevented from bringing suit against Socrates on political grounds. They opted instead for religious grounds.

The Socratic Problem: the Philosophical Socrates

The Socratic problem is the problem faced by historians of philosophy when attempting to reconstruct the ideas of the original Socrates as distinct from his literary representations. While we know many of the historical details of Socrates' life and the circumstances surrounding his trial, Socrates' identity as a philosopher is much more difficult to establish. Because he wrote nothing, what we know of his ideas and methods comes to us mainly from his contemporaries and disciples.

We therefore see the difficult nature of the Socratic problem: because we don't seem to have any consistently reliable sources, finding the true Socrates or the original Socrates proves to be an impossible task. What we are left with, instead, is a composite picture assembled from various literary and philosophical components that give us what we might think of as Socratic themes or motifs.

i. Aristophanes

Born in 450 BC, Aristophanes wrote a number of comic plays intended to satirize and caricature many of his fellow Athenians. His *Clouds* (423 BC) was so instrumental in parodying Socrates and painting him as a dangerous intellectual capable of corrupting the entire city that Socrates felt compelled in his trial defense to allude to the bad reputation he acquired as a result of the play (Plato, *Apology* 18a-b, 19c). Aristophanes was much closer in age to Socrates than Plato and Xenophon, and as such is the only one of our sources exposed to Socrates in his younger years.

In the play, Socrates is the head of a phrontistêrion, a school of learning where students are taught the nature of the heavens and how to win court cases. Socrates appears in a swing high above the stage, purportedly to better study the heavens. His patron deities,

the clouds, represent his interest in meteorology and may also symbolize the lofty nature of reasoning that may take either side of an argument. The main plot of the play centers on an indebted man called Strepsiades, whose son Phidippides ends up in the school to learn how to help his father avoid paying off his debts. By the end of the play, Phidippides has beaten his father, arguing that it is perfectly reasonable to do so on the grounds that, just as it is acceptable for a father to spank his son for his own good, so it is acceptable for a son to hit a father for his own good. In addition to the theme that Socrates corrupts the youth, we therefore also find in the *Clouds* the origin of the rumor that Socrates makes the stronger argument the weaker and the weaker argument the stronger. Indeed, the play features a personification of the Stronger Argument-which represents traditional education and values-attacked by the Weaker Argument-which advocates a life of pleasure.

While the *Clouds* is Aristophanes' most famous and comprehensive attack on Socrates, Socrates appears in other of his comedies as well. In the *Birds* (414 BC), Aristophanes coins a Greek verb based on Socrates' name to insinuate that Socrates was truly a Spartan sympathizer (1280-83). Young men who were found "Socratizing" were expressing their admiration of Sparta and its customs. And in the *Frogs* (405), the Chorus claims that it is not refined to keep company with Socrates, who ignores the poets and wastes time with 'frivolous words' and 'pompous word-scraping' (1491-1499).

Aristophanes' Socrates is a kind of variegated caricature of trends and new ideas emerging in Athens that he believed were threatening to the city. We find a number of such themes prevalent in Presocratic philosophy and the teachings of the Sophists, including those about natural science, mathematics, social science, ethics, political philosophy, and the art of words. Amongst other things, Aristophanes was troubled by the displacement of the divine through scientific explanations of the world and the undermining of traditional morality and custom by explanations of cultural life that appealed to nature instead of the gods. Additionally, he was reticent about teaching skill in disputation, for fear that a clever speaker could just as easily argue for the truth as argue against it. These issues constitute what is sometimes called the "new learning" developing in 5th century BC Athens, for which the Aristophanic Socrates is the iconic symbol.

ii. Xenophon

Born in the same decade as Plato (425 BC), Xenophon lived in the political deme of Erchia. Though he knew Socrates he would not have had as much contact with him as Plato did. He was not present in the courtroom on the day of Socrates' trial, but rather heard an account of it later on from Hermogenes, a member of Socrates' circle. His depiction of Socrates is found principally in four works: *Apology*-in which Socrates gives a defense of his life before his jurors-*Memorabilia*-in which Xenophon himself explicates the charges against Socrates and tries to defend him-*Symposium*-a conversation between Socrates and his friends at a drinking party-and *Oeconomicus*-a Socratic discourse on estate management. Socrates also appears in Xenophon's *Hellenica* and *Anabasis*.

Xenophon's reputation as a source on the life and ideas of Socrates is one on which scholars do not always agree. Largely thought to be a significant source of information about Socrates before the 19th century, for most of the 20th century Xenophon's ability to depict Socrates as a philosopher was largely called into question. Following Schleiermacher, many argued that Xenophon himself was either a bad philosopher who did not understand Socrates, or not a philosopher at all, more concerned with practical, everyday matters like economics. However, recent scholarship has sought to challenge this interpretation, arguing that it assumes an understanding of philosophy as an exclusively speculative and critical endeavor that does not attend to the ancient conception of philosophy as a comprehensive way of life.

While Plato will likely always remain the principal source on Socrates and Socratic themes, Xenophon's Socrates is distinct in philosophically interesting ways. He emphasizes the values of self-mastery (*enkrateia*), endurance of physical pain (*karteria*), and self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*). For Xenophon's Socrates, self-mastery or moderation is the foundation of virtue (*Memorabilia*, 1.5.4). Whereas in Plato's *Apology* the oracle tells Chaerephon that no one is wiser than Socrates, in Xenophon's *Apology* Socrates claims that the oracle told Chaerephon that "no man was more free than I, more just, and more moderate" (Xenophon, *Apology*, 14).

Part of Socrates' freedom consists in his freedom from want, precisely because he has mastered himself. As opposed to Plato's Socrates, Xenophon's Socrates is not poor, not because he has much, but because he needs little. *Oeconomicus* 11.3 for instance shows

Socrates displeased with those who think him poor. One can be rich even with very little on the condition that one has limited his needs, for wealth is just the excess of what one has over what one requires. Socrates is rich because what he has is sufficient for what he needs (*Memorabilia* 1.2.1, 1.3.5, 4.2.38-9).

We also find Xenophon attributing to Socrates a proof of the existence of God. The argument holds that human beings are the product of an intelligent design, and we therefore should conclude that there is a God who is the maker (*dēmiourgos*) or designer of all things (*Memorabilia* 1.4.2-7). God creates a systematically ordered universe and governs it in the way our minds govern our bodies (*Memorabilia* 1.4.1-19, 4.3.1-18). While Plato's *Timaeus* tells the story of a *dēmiourgos* creating the world, it is Timaeus, not Socrates, who tells the story. Indeed, Socrates speaks only sparingly at the beginning of the dialogue, and most scholars do not count as Socratic the cosmological arguments therein.

iii. Plato

Plato was Socrates' most famous disciple, and the majority of what most people know about Socrates is known about Plato's Socrates. Plato was born to one of the wealthiest and politically influential families in Athens in 427 BC, the son of Ariston and Perictione. His brothers were Glaucon and Adeimantus, who are Socrates' principal interlocutors for the majority of the *Republic*. Though Socrates is not present in every Platonic dialogue, he is in the majority of them, often acting as the main interlocutor who drives the conversation.

The attempt to extract Socratic views from Plato's texts is itself a notoriously difficult problem, bound up with questions about the order in which Plato composed his dialogues, one's methodological approach to reading them, and whether or not Socrates, or anyone else for that matter, speaks for Plato. Readers interested in the details of this debate should consult "Plato." Generally speaking, the predominant view of Plato's Socrates in the English-speaking world from the middle to the end of the 20th century was simply that he was Plato's mouthpiece. In other words, anything Socrates says in the dialogues is what Plato thought at the time he wrote the dialogue. This view, put forth by the famous Plato scholar Gregory Vlastos, has been challenged in recent years, with some scholars arguing that Plato has no mouthpiece in the dialogues (see Cooper xxi-xxiii). While we can attribute to Plato certain doctrines that are consistent throughout his

corpus, there is no reason to think that Socrates, or any other speaker, always and consistently espouses these doctrines.

1. Content: What does Socrates Think?

Given the nature of these sources, the task of recounting what Socrates thought is not an easy one. Nonetheless, reading Plato's *Apology*, it is possible to articulate a number of what scholars today typically associate with Socrates. Plato the author has his Socrates claim that Plato was present in the courtroom for Socrates' defense (*Apology* 34a), and while this cannot mean that Plato records the defense as a word for word transcription, it is the closest thing we have to an account of what Socrates actually said at a concrete point in his life.

i. Presocratic Philosophy and the Sophists

Socrates opens his defense speech by defending himself against his older accusers (*Apology* 18a), claiming they have poisoned the minds of his jurors since they were all young men. Amongst these accusers was Aristophanes. In addition to the claim that Socrates makes the worse argument into the stronger, there is a rumor that Socrates idles the day away talking about things in the sky and below the earth. His reply is that he never discusses such topics (*Apology* 18a-c). Socrates is distinguishing himself here not just from the sophists and their alleged ability to invert the strength of arguments, but from those we have now come to call the Presocratic philosophers.

The Presocratics were not just those who came before Socrates, for there are some Presocratic philosophers who were his contemporaries. The term is sometimes used to suggest that, while Socrates cared about ethics, the Presocratic philosophers did not. This is misleading, for we have evidence that a number of Presocratics explored ethical issues. The term is best used to refer to the group of thinkers whom Socrates did not influence and whose fundamental unifying characteristic was that they sought to explain the world in terms of its own inherent principles. The 6th cn. Milesian Thales, for instance, believed that the fundamental principle of all things was water. Anaximander believed the principle was the indefinite (*apeiron*), and for Anaxamines it was air. Later in Plato's *Apology* (26d-e), Socrates rhetorically asks whether Meletus thinks he is prosecuting Anaxagoras, the 5th cn. thinker who argued that the universe was originally a mixture of elements that have since been set in motion by *Nous*, or Mind. Socrates suggests that he does not

engage in the same sort of cosmological inquiries that were the main focus of many Presocratics.

The other group against which Socrates compares himself is the Sophists, learned men who travelled from city to city offering to teach the youth for a fee. While he claims he thinks it an admirable thing to teach as Gorgias, Prodicus, or Hippias claim they can (*Apology* 20a), he argues that he himself does not have knowledge of human excellence or virtue (*Apology* 20b-c). Though Socrates inquires after the nature of virtue, he does not claim to know it, and certainly does not ask to be paid for his conversations.

ii. Socratic Ignorance

Plato's Socrates moves next to explain the reason he has acquired the reputation he has and why so many citizens dislike him. The oracle at Delphi told Socrates' friend Chaerephon, "no one is wiser than Socrates" (*Apology* 21a). Socrates explains that he was not aware of any wisdom he had, and so set out to find someone who had wisdom in order to demonstrate that the oracle was mistaken. He first went to the politicians but found them lacking wisdom. He next visited the poets and found that, though they spoke in beautiful verses, they did so through divine inspiration, not because they had wisdom of any kind. Finally, Socrates found that the craftsmen had knowledge of their own craft, but that they subsequently believed themselves to know much more than they actually did. Socrates concluded that he was better off than his fellow citizens because, while they thought they knew something and did not, he was aware of his own ignorance. The god who speaks through the oracle, he says, is truly wise, whereas human wisdom is worth little or nothing (*Apology* 23a).

This awareness of one's own absence of knowledge is what is known as Socratic ignorance, and it is arguably the thing for which Socrates is most famous. Socratic ignorance is sometimes called simple ignorance, to be distinguished from the double ignorance of the citizens with whom Socrates spoke. Simple ignorance is being aware of one's own ignorance, whereas double ignorance is not being aware of one's ignorance while thinking that one knows. In showing many influential figures in Athens that they did not know what they thought they did, Socrates came to be despised in many circles.

It is worth nothing that Socrates does not claim here that he knows nothing. He claims that he is aware of his ignorance and that

whatever it is that he does know is worthless. Socrates has a number of strong convictions about what makes for an ethical life, though he cannot articulate precisely why these convictions are true. He believes for instance that it is never just to harm anyone, whether friend or enemy, but he does not, at least in Book I of the *Republic*, offer a systematic account of the nature of justice that could demonstrate why this is true. Because of his insistence on repeated inquiry, Socrates has refined his convictions such that he can both hold particular views about justice while maintaining that he does not know the complete nature of justice.

We can see this contrast quite clearly in Socrates' cross-examination of his accuser Meletus. Because he is charged with corrupting the youth, Socrates inquires after who it is that helps the youth (*Apology*, 24d-25a). In the same way that we take a horse to a horse trainer to improve it, Socrates wants to know the person to whom we take a young person to educate him and improve him. Meletus' silence condemns him: he has never bothered to reflect on such matters, and therefore is unaware of his ignorance about matters that are the foundation of his own accusation (*Apology* 25b-c). Whether or not Socrates-or Plato for that matter-actually thinks it is possible to achieve expertise in virtue is a subject on which scholars disagree.

iii. Priority of the Care of the Soul

Throughout his defense speech (*Apology* 20a-b, 24c-25c, 31b, 32d, 36c, 39d) Socrates repeatedly stresses that a human being must care for his soul more than anything else (see also *Crito* 46c-47d, *Euthyphro* 13b-c, *Gorgias* 520a4ff). Socrates found that his fellow citizens cared more for wealth, reputation, and their bodies while neglecting their souls (*Apology* 29d-30b). He believed that his mission from the god was to examine his fellow citizens and persuade them that the most important good for a human being was the health of the soul. Wealth, he insisted, does not bring about human excellence or virtue, but virtue makes wealth and everything else good for human beings (*Apology* 30b).

Socrates believes that his mission of caring for souls extends to the entirety of the city of Athens. He argues that the god gave him to the city as a gift and that his mission is to help improve the city. He thus attempts to show that he is not guilty of impiety precisely because everything he does is in response to the oracle and at the service of the god. Socrates characterizes himself as a gadfly and

the city as a sluggish horse in need of stirring up (*Apology* 30e). Without philosophical inquiry, the democracy becomes stagnant and complacent, in danger of harming itself and others. Just as the gadfly is an irritant to the horse but rouses it to action, so Socrates supposes that his purpose is to agitate those around him so that they begin to examine themselves. One might compare this claim with Socrates' assertion in the *Gorgias* that, while his contemporaries aim at gratification, he practices the true political craft because he aims at what is best (521d-e). Such comments, in addition to the historical evidence that we have, are Socrates' strongest defense that he is not only not a burden to the democracy but a great asset to it.

iv. The Unexamined Life

After the jury has convicted Socrates and sentenced him to death, he makes one of the most famous proclamations in the history of philosophy. He tells the jury that he could never keep silent, because "the unexamined life is not worth living for human beings" (*Apology* 38a). We find here Socrates' insistence that we are all called to reflect upon what we believe, account for what we know and do not know, and generally speaking to seek out, live in accordance with, and defend those views that make for a well lived and meaningful life.

Some scholars call attention to Socrates' emphasis on human nature here, and argue that the call to live examined lives follows from our nature as human beings. We are naturally directed by pleasure and pain. We are drawn to power, wealth and reputation, the sorts of values to which Athenians were drawn as well. Socrates' call to live examined lives is not necessarily an insistence to reject all such motivations and inclinations but rather an injunction to appraise their true worth for the human soul. The purpose of the examined life is to reflect upon our everyday motivations and values and to subsequently inquire into what real worth, if any, they have. If they have no value or indeed are even harmful, it is upon us to pursue those things that are truly valuable.

One can see in reading the *Apology* that Socrates examines the lives of his jurors during his own trial. By asserting the primacy of the examined life after he has been convicted and sentenced to death, Socrates, the prosecuted, becomes the prosecutor, surreptitiously accusing those who convicted him of not living a life that respects their own humanity. He tells them that by killing him they will not escape examining their lives. To escape giving an account of one's

life is neither possible nor good, Socrates claims, but it is best to prepare oneself to be as good as possible (*Apology* 39d-e).

We find here a conception of a well-lived life that differs from one that would likely be supported by many contemporary philosophers. Today, most philosophers would argue that we must live ethical lives (though what this means is of course a matter of debate) but that it is not necessary for everyone to engage in the sort of discussions Socrates had everyday, nor must one do so in order to be considered a good person. A good person, we might say, lives a good life insofar as he does what is just, but he does not necessarily need to be consistently engaged in debates about the nature of justice or the purpose of the state. No doubt Socrates would disagree, not just because the law might be unjust or the state might do too much or too little, but because, insofar as we are human beings, self-examination is always beneficial to us.

2. Other Socratic Positions and Arguments

In addition to the themes one finds in the *Apology*, the following are a number of other positions in the Platonic corpus that are typically considered Socratic.

i. Unity of Virtue; All Virtue is Knowledge

In the *Protagoras* (329b-333b) Socrates argues for the view that all of the virtues—justice, wisdom, courage, piety, and so forth—are one. He provides a number of arguments for this thesis. For example, while it is typical to think that one can be wise without being temperate, Socrates rejects this possibility on the grounds that wisdom and temperance both have the same opposite: folly. Were they truly distinct, they would each have their own opposites. As it stands, the identity of their opposites indicates that one cannot possess wisdom without temperance and vice versa.

This thesis is sometimes paired with another Socratic, view, that is, that virtue is a form of knowledge (*Meno* 87e-89a; cf. *Euthydemus* 278d-282a). Things like beauty, strength, and health benefit human beings, but can also harm them if they are not accompanied by knowledge or wisdom. If virtue is to be beneficial it must be knowledge, since all the qualities of the soul are in themselves neither beneficial nor harmful, but are only beneficial when accompanied by wisdom and harmful when accompanied by folly.

ii. No One Errs Knowingly/No One Errs Willingly

Socrates famously declares that no one errs or makes mistakes knowingly (*Protagoras* 352c, 358b-b). Here we find an example of Socrates' intellectualism. When a person does what is wrong, their failure to do what is right is an intellectual error, or due to their own ignorance about what is right. If the person knew what was right, he would have done it. Hence, it is not possible for someone simultaneously know what is right and do what is wrong. If someone does what is wrong, they do so because they do not know what is right, and if they claim they have known what was right at the time when they committed the wrong, they are mistaken, for had they truly known what was right, they would have done it.

Socrates therefore denies the possibility of *akrasia*, or weakness of the will. No one errs willingly (*Protagoras* 345c4-e6). While it might seem that Socrates is equivocating between knowingly and willingly, a look at *Gorgias* 466a-468e helps clarify his thesis. Tyrants and orators, Socrates tells Polus, have the least power of any member of the city because they do not do what they want. What they do is not good or beneficial even though human beings only want what is good or beneficial. The tyrant's will, corrupted by ignorance, is in such a state that what follows from it will necessarily harm him. Conversely, the will that is purified by knowledge is in such a state that what follows from it will necessarily be beneficial.

iii. All Desire is for the Good

One of the premises of the argument just mentioned is that human beings only desire the good. When a person does something for the sake of something else, it is always the thing for the sake of which he is acting that he wants. All bad things or intermediate things are done not for themselves but for the sake of something else that is good. When a tyrant puts someone to death, for instance, he does this because he thinks it is beneficial in some way. Hence his action is directed towards the good because this is what he truly wants (*Gorgias* 467c-468b).

A similar version of this argument is in the *Meno*, 77b-78b. Those that desire bad things do not know that they are truly bad; otherwise, they would not desire them. They do not naturally desire what is bad but rather desire those things that they believe to be good but that are in fact bad. They desire good things even though they lack knowledge of what is actually good.

iv. It is Better to Suffer an Injustice Than to Commit One

Socrates infuriates Polus with the argument that it is better to suffer an injustice than commit one (*Gorgias* 475a-d). Polus agrees that it is more shameful to commit an injustice, but maintains it is not worse. The worst thing, in his view, is to suffer injustice. Socrates argues that, if something is more shameful, it surpasses in either badness or pain or both. Since committing an injustice is not more painful than suffering one, committing an injustice cannot surpass in pain or both pain and badness. Committing an injustice surpasses suffering an injustice in badness; differently stated, committing an injustice is worse than suffering one. Therefore, given the choice between the two, we should choose to suffer rather than commit an injustice.

This argument must be understood in terms of the Socratic emphasis on the care of the soul. Committing an injustice corrupts one's soul, and therefore committing injustice is the worst thing a person can do to himself (cf. *Crito* 47d-48a, *Republic* I 353d-354a). If one commits injustice, Socrates goes so far as to claim that it is better to seek punishment than avoid it on the grounds that the punishment will purge or purify the soul of its corruption (*Gorgias* 476d-478e).

v. Eudaimonism

The Greek word for happiness is *eudaimonia*, which signifies not merely feeling a certain way but being a certain way. A different way of translating *eudaimonia* is well-being. Many scholars believe that Socrates holds two related but not equivalent principles regarding *eudaimonia*: first, that it is rationally required that a person make his own happiness the foundational consideration for his actions, and second, that each person does in fact pursue happiness as the foundational consideration for his actions. In relation to Socrates' emphasis on virtue, it is not entirely clear what that means. Virtue could be identical to happiness-in which case there is no difference between the two and if I am virtuous I am by definition happy-virtue could be a part of happiness-in which case if I am virtuous I will be happy although I could be made happier by the addition of other goods-or virtue could be instrumental for happiness-in which case if I am virtuous I might be happy (and I couldn't be happy without virtue), but there is no guarantee that I will be happy.

There are a number of passages in the *Apology* that seem to indicate that the greatest good for a human being is having philosophical

conversation (36b-d, 37e-38a, 40e-41c). *Meno* 87c-89a suggests that knowledge of the good guides the soul toward happiness (cf. *Euthydemus* 278e-282a). And at *Gorgias* 507a-c Socrates suggests that the virtuous person, acting in accordance with wisdom, attains happiness (cf. *Gorgias* 478c-e: the happiest person has no badness in his soul).

vi. Ruling is An Expertise

Socrates is committed to the theme that ruling is a kind of craft or art (*technē*). As such, it requires knowledge. Just as a doctor brings about a desired result for his patient-health, for instance-so the ruler should bring about some desired result in his subject (*Republic* 341c-d, 342c). Medicine, insofar as it has the best interest of its patient in mind, never seeks to benefit the practitioner. Similarly, the ruler's job is to act not for his own benefit but for the benefit of the citizens of the political community. This is not to say that there might not be some contingent benefit that accrues to the practitioner; the doctor, for instance, might earn a fine salary. But this benefit is not intrinsic to the expertise of medicine as such. One could easily conceive of a doctor that makes very little money. One cannot, however, conceive of a doctor that does not act on behalf of his patient. Analogously, ruling is always for the sake of the ruled citizen, and justice, contra the famous claim from Thrasymachus, is not whatever is in the interest of the ruling power (*Republic* 338c-339a).

3. Legacy: How Have Other Philosophers Understood Socrates?

Nearly every school of philosophy in antiquity had something positive to say about Socrates, and most of them drew their inspiration from him. Socrates also appears in the works of many famous modern philosophers. Immanuel Kant, the 18th century German philosopher best known for the categorical imperative, hailed Socrates, amongst other ancient philosophers, as someone who didn't just speculate but who lived philosophically. One of the more famous quotes about Socrates is from John Stuart Mill, the 19th century utilitarian philosopher who claimed that it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. The following is but a brief survey of Socrates as he is treated in philosophical thinking that emerges after the death of Aristotle in 322 BC.

a. Hellenistic Philosophy

i. The Cynics

The Cynics greatly admired Socrates, and traced their philosophical lineage back to him. One of the first representatives of the Socratic legacy was the Cynic Diogenes of Sinope. No genuine writings of Diogenes have survived and most of our evidence about him is anecdotal. Nevertheless, scholars attribute a number of doctrines to him. He sought to undermine convention as a foundation for ethical values and replace it with nature. He understood the essence of human being to be rational, and defined happiness as freedom and self-mastery, an objective readily accessible to those who trained the body and mind.

ii. The Stoics

There is a biographical story according to which Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school and not the Zeno of Zeno's Paradoxes, became interested in philosophy by reading and inquiring about Socrates. The Stoics took themselves to be authentically Socratic, especially in defending the unqualified restriction of ethical goodness to ethical excellence, the conception of ethical excellence as a kind of knowledge, a life not requiring any bodily or external advantage nor ruined by any bodily disadvantage, and the necessity and sufficiency of ethical excellence for complete happiness.

Zeno is known for his characterization of the human good as a smooth flow of life. Stoics were therefore attracted to the Socratic elenchus because it could expose inconsistencies—both social and psychological—that disrupted one's life. In the absence of justification for a specific action or belief, one would not be in harmony with oneself, and therefore would not live well. On the other hand, if one held a position that survived cross-examination, such a position would be consistent and coherent. The Socratic elenchus was thus not just an important social and psychological test, but also an epistemological one. The Stoics held that knowledge was a coherent set of psychological attitudes, and therefore a person holding attitudes that could withstand the elenchus could be said to have knowledge. Those with inconsistent or incoherent psychological commitments were thought to be ignorant.

Socrates also figures in Roman Stoicism, particularly in the works of Seneca and Epictetus. Both men admired Socrates' strength of character. Seneca praises Socrates for his ability to remain consistent

unto himself in the face of the threat posed by the Thirty Tyrants, and also highlights the Socratic focus on caring for oneself instead of fleeing oneself and seeking fulfillment by external means. Epictetus, when offering advice about holding to one's own moral laws as inviolable maxims, claims, "though you are not yet a Socrates, you ought, however, to live as one desirous of becoming a Socrates" (*Enchiridion* 50).

One aspect of Socrates to which Epictetus was particularly attracted was the elenchus. Though his understanding of the process is in some ways different from Socrates', throughout his *Discourses* Epictetus repeatedly stresses the importance of recognition of one's ignorance (2.17.1) and awareness of one's own impotence regarding essentials (2.11.1). He characterizes Socrates as divinely appointed to hold the elenctic position (3.21.19) and associates this role with Socrates' protreptic expertise (2.26.4-7). Epictetus encouraged his followers to practice the elenchus on themselves, and claims that Socrates did precisely this on account of his concern with self-examination (2.1.32-3).

iii. The Sceptics

Broadly speaking, skepticism is the view that we ought to be either suspicious of claims to epistemological truth or at least withhold judgment from affirming absolute claims to knowledge. Amongst Pyrrhonian skeptics, Socrates appears at times like a dogmatist and at other times like a skeptic or inquirer. On the one hand, Sextus Empiricus lists Socrates as a thinker who accepts the existence of god (*Against the Physicists*, I.9.64) and then recounts the cosmological argument that Xenophon attributes to Socrates (*Against the Physicists*, I.9.92-4). On the other hand, in arguing that human being is impossible to conceive, Sextus Empiricus cites Socrates as unsure whether or not he is a human being or something else (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 2.22). Socrates is also said to have remained in doubt about this question (*Against the Professors* 7.264).

Academic skeptics grounded their position that nothing can be known in Socrates' admission of ignorance in the *Apology* (Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.67, *Academica* 1.44). Arcesilaus, the first head of the Academy to take it toward a skeptical turn, picked up from Socrates the procedure of arguing, first asking others to give their positions and then refuting them (Cicero, *On Ends* 2.2, *On the Orator* 3.67, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.11). While the Academy would eventually move away from skepticism, Cicero, speaking on

behalf of the Academy of Philo, makes the claim that Socrates should be understood as endorsing the claim that nothing, other than one's own ignorance, could be known (*Academics* 2.74).

iv. *The Epicurean*

The Epicureans were one of the few schools that criticized Socrates, though many scholars think that this was in part because of their animus toward their Stoic counterparts, who admired him. In general, Socrates is depicted in Epicurean writings as a sophist, rhetorician, and skeptic who ignored natural science for the sake of ethical inquiries that concluded without answers. Colotes criticizes Socrates' statement in the *Phaedrus* (230a) that he does not know himself (Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 21 1119b), and Philodemus attacks Socrates' argument in the *Protagoras* (319d) that virtue cannot be taught (*Rhetoric* I 261, 8ff).

The Epicureans wrote a number of books against several of Plato's Socratic dialogues, including the *Lysis*, *Euthydemus*, and *Gorgias*. In the *Gorgias* we find Socrates suspicious of the view that pleasure is intrinsically worthy and his insistence that pleasure is not the equivalent of the good (*Gorgias* 495b-499b). In defining pleasure as freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*) and defining this sort of pleasure as the sole good for human beings, the Epicureans shared little with the unbridled hedonism Socrates criticizes Callicles for embracing. Indeed, in the Letter to Menoeceus, Epicurus explicitly argues against pursuing this sort of pleasure (131-132). Nonetheless, the Epicureans did equate pleasure with the good, and the view that pleasure is not the equivalent of the good could not have endeared Socrates to their sentiment.

Another reason for the Epicurean refusal to praise Socrates or make him a cornerstone of their tradition was his perceived irony. According to Cicero, Epicurus was opposed to Socrates' representing himself as ignorant while simultaneously praising others like Protagoras, Hippias, Prodicus, and Gorgias (*Rhetoric*, Vol. II, Brutus 292). This irony for the Epicureans was pedagogically pointless: if Socrates had something to say, he should have said it instead of hiding it.

v. *The Peripatetics*

Aristotle's followers, the Peripatetics, either said little about Socrates or were pointedly vicious in their attacks. Amongst other things, the Peripatetics accused Socrates of being a bigamist, a charge that appears to have gained so much traction that the Stoic Panaetius

wrote a refutation of it (Plutarch, *Aristides* 335c-d). The general peripatetic criticism of Socrates, similar in one way to the Epicureans, was that he concentrated solely on ethics, and that this was an unacceptable ideal for the philosophical life.

b. Modern Philosophy

i. *Hegel*

In Socrates, Hegel found what he called the great historic turning point (*Philosophy of History*, 448). With Socrates, Hegel claims, two opposed rights came into collision: the individual consciousness and the universal law of the state. Prior to Socrates, morality for the ancients was present but it was not present Socratically. That is, the good was present as a universal, without its having had the form of the conviction of the individual in his consciousness (407). Morality was present as an immediate absolute, directing the lives of citizens without their having reflected upon it and deliberated about it for themselves. The law of the state, Hegel claims, had authority as the law of the gods, and thus had a universal validity that was recognized by all (408).

In Hegel's view the coming of Socrates signals a shift in the relationship between the individual and morality. The immediate now had to justify itself to the individual consciousness. Hegel thus not only ascribes to Socrates the habit of asking questions about what one should do but also about the actions that the state has prescribed. With Socrates, consciousness is turned back within itself and demands that the law should establish itself before consciousness, internal to it, not merely outside it (408-410). Hegel attributes to Socrates a reflective questioning that is skeptical, which moves the individual away from unreflective obedience and into reflective inquiry about the ethical standards of one's community.

Generally, Hegel finds in Socrates a skepticism that renders ordinary or immediate knowledge confused and insecure, in need of reflective certainty which only consciousness can bring (370). Though he attributes to the sophists the same general skeptical comportment, in Socrates Hegel locates human subjectivity at a higher level. With Socrates and onward we have the world raising itself to the level of conscious thought and becoming object for thought. The question as to what Nature is gives way to the question about what Truth is, and the question about the relationship of self-conscious thought to real essence becomes the predominant philosophical issue (450-1).

ii. Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard's most well recognized views on Socrates are from his dissertation, *The Concept of Irony With Continual Reference to Socrates*. There, he argues that Socrates is not the ethical figure that the history of philosophy has thought him to be, but rather an ironist in all that he does. Socrates does not just speak ironically but is ironic. Indeed, while most people have found Aristophanes' portrayal of Socrates an obvious exaggeration and caricature, Kierkegaard goes so far as to claim that he came very close to the truth in his depiction of Socrates. He rejects Hegel's picture of Socrates ushering in a new era of philosophical reflection and instead argues that the limits of Socratic irony testified to the need for religious faith. As opposed to the Hegelian view that Socratic irony was an instrument in the service of the development of self-consciousness, Kierkegaard claims that irony was Socrates' position or comportment, and that he did not have any more than this to give.

Later in his writing career Kierkegaard comes to think that he has neglected Socrates' significance as an ethical and religious figure. In his final essay entitled *My Task*, Kierkegaard claims that his mission is a Socratic one; that is, in his task to reinvigorate a Christianity that remained the cultural norm but had, in Kierkegaard's eyes, nearly ceased altogether to be practiced authentically, Kierkegaard conceives of himself as a kind of Christian Socrates, rousing Christians from their complacency to a conception of Christian faith as the highest, most passionate expression of individual subjectivity. Kierkegaard therefore sees himself as a sort of Christian gadfly. The Socratic call to become aware of one's own ignorance finds its parallel in the Kierkegaardian call to recognize one's own failing to truly live as a Christian. The Socratic claim to ignorance-while Socrates is closer to knowledge than his contemporaries-is replaced by the Kierkegaard's claim that he is not a Christian-though certainly more so than his own contemporaries.

iii. Nietzsche

Nietzsche's most famous account of Socrates is his scathing portrayal in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which Socrates and rational thinking lead to the emergence of an age of decadence in Athens. The delicate balance in Greek culture between the Apollonian-order, calmness, self-control, restraint-and the Dionysian-chaos, revelry, self-forgetfulness, indulgence-initially represented on stage in the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, gave way to the rationalism of Euripides. Euripides, Nietzsche argues, was only a mask for the newborn demon

called Socrates (section 12). Tragedy-and Greek culture more generally-was corrupted by "aesthetic Socratism", whose supreme law, Nietzsche argues, was that 'to be beautiful everything must be intelligible'. Whereas the former sort of tragedy absorbed the spectator in the activities and sufferings of its chief characters, the emergence of Socrates heralded the onset of a new kind of tragedy in which this identification is obstructed by the spectators having to figure out the meaning and presuppositions of the characters' suffering.

Nietzsche continues his attack on Socrates later in his career in *Twilight of the Idols*. Socrates here represents the lowest class of people (section 3), and his irony consists in his being an exaggeration at the same time as he conceals himself. He is the inventor of dialectic which he wields mercilessly because, being an ugly plebeian, he had no other means of expressing himself and therefore employed question and answer to render his opponent powerless. Socrates turned dialectic into a new kind of contest, and because his instincts had turned against each other and were in anarchy, he established the rule of reason as a counter-tyrant in order not to perish. Socrates' decadence here consists in his having to fight his instincts. He was thus profoundly anti-life, so much so that he wanted to die.

Nonetheless, while Nietzsche accuses Socrates of decadence, he nevertheless recognizes him as a powerful individual, which perhaps accounts for why we at times find in Nietzsche a hesitant admiration of Socrates. He calls Socrates one of the very greatest instinctive forces (*The Birth of Tragedy*, section 13), labels him as a "free spirit" (*Human, All Too Human I*, 433) praises him as the first "philosopher of life" in his 17th lecture on the Preplatonic, and anoints him a 'virtuoso of life' in his notebooks from 1875. Additionally, contra *Twilight of the Idols*, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche speaks of a death in which one's virtue still shines, and some commentators have seen in this a celebration of the way in which Socrates died.

iv. Heidegger

Heidegger finds in Socrates a kinship with his own view that the truth of philosophy lies in a certain way of seeing things, and thus is identical with a particular kind of method. He attributes to Socrates the view that the truth of some subject matter shows itself not in some definition that is the object or end of a process of inquiry, but in the very process of inquiry itself. Heidegger characterizes the Socratic method as a kind of productive negation: by refuting that which stands in front of it-in Socrates' case, an interlocutor's definition-it discloses

the positive in the very process of questioning. Socrates is not interested in articulating propositions about piety but rather concerned with persisting in a questioning relation to it that preserves its irreducible sameness. Behind multiple examples of pious action is Piety, and yet Piety is not something that can be spoken of. It is that which discloses itself through the process of silent interrogation.

It is precisely in his emphasis on silence that Heidegger diverges from Socrates. Where Socrates insisted on the give and take of question and answer, Heideggerian questioning is not necessarily an inquiry into the views of others but rather an openness to the truth that one maintains without the need to speak. To remain in dialogue with a given phenomenon is not the same thing as conversing about it, and true dialogue is always silent.

v. *Gadamer*

As Heidegger's student, Gadamer shares his fundamental view that truth and method cannot be divorced in philosophy. At the same time, his hermeneutics leads him to argue for the importance of dialectic as conversation. Gadamer claims that whereas philosophical dialectic presents the whole truth by superceding all its partial propositions, hermeneutics too has the task of revealing a totality of meaning in all its relations. The distinguishing characteristic of Gadamer's hermeneutical dialectic is that it recognizes radical finitude: we are always already in an open-ended dialogical situation. Conversation with the interlocutor is thus not a distraction that leads us away from seeing the truth but rather is the site of truth. It is for this reason that Gadamer claims Plato communicated his philosophy only in dialogues: it was more than just an homage to Socrates, but was a reflection of his view that the word find its confirmation in another and in the agreement of another.

Gadamer also sees in the Socratic method an ethical way of being. That is, he does not just think that Socrates converses about ethics but that repeated Socratic conversation is itself indicative of an ethical comportment. On this account, Socrates knows the good not because he can give some final definition of it but rather because of his readiness to give an account of it. The problem of not living an examined life is not that we might live without knowing what is ethical, but because without asking questions as Socrates does, we will not be ethical.

Plato and Christian Theology

Plato is one of the world's best known and most widely read and studied philosophers. He was the student of Socrates and the teacher of Aristotle, and he wrote in the middle of the fourth century BC in ancient Greece. Though influenced primarily by Socrates, to the extent that Socrates is usually the main character in many of Plato's writings, he was also influenced by Heraclitus, Parmenides, and the Pythagoreans.

There are varying degrees of controversy over which of Plato's works are authentic, and in what order they were written, due to their antiquity and the manner of their preservation through time. Nonetheless, his earliest works are generally regarded as the most reliable of the ancient sources on Socrates, and the character Socrates that we know through these writings is considered to be one of the greatest of the ancient philosophers.

Plato's middle to later works, including his most famous work, the *Republic*, are generally regarded as providing Plato's own philosophy, where the main

character in effect speaks for Plato himself. These works blend ethics, political philosophy, moral psychology, epistemology, and metaphysics into an interconnected and systematic philosophy. It is most of all from Plato that we get the theory of Forms, according to which the world we know through the senses is only an imitation of the pure, eternal, and unchanging world of the Forms. Plato's works also contain the origins of the familiar complaint that the arts work by inflaming the passions, and are mere illusions. We also are introduced to the ideal of "Platonic love:" Plato saw love as motivated by a longing for the highest Form of beauty-The Beautiful Itself, and love as the motivational power through which the highest of achievements are possible. Because they tended to distract us into accepting less than our highest potentials, however, Plato mistrusted and generally advised against physical expressions of love.

Platonic Thought and Christian Theology

Being quite the intellectual, Augustine, having received a prestigious academic chair within the Latin world, was oddly in internal turmoil. Having been a devout follower of Manichaeism, Augustine was moving away from the religion on the basis of a theological disagreement. In its place, Augustine pursued skepticism, only to later fall under the sway of Neoplatonism. It was here that his vehicle to Christianity, that of reason under Neoplatonic influence, would take him into the embrace of Christianity. Having arrived through this vehicle of reason, Augustine was to become one of the most inspirational thinkers in Western Christianity, and would be the father of thought further developed during the medieval era. It is no wonder then, that even now, Christians freely speak of his thought as common dogma: from his concept of original sin, to his ideas of just war. The interplay between reason, Augustine's Christianity, and his Platonic influence thus begs the question: if Augustine found immeasurable value between these two schools, what could a comparison between Christianity and Platonism provide for modern readers and practitioners? What similarities and differences do these two invaluable schools of belief and thought hold? This paper will focus on detailing and comparing Christian Theology with Platonic Philosophy, underscoring the similarities and differences between the two, and concluding with an evaluation of this assessment.

First and foremost, a discussion of the similarities between Platonic Philosophy and Christian Theology necessitates a brief summary of the nature of God. To start, God is a perfect being, containing within

himself the reason for His existence, and absolute freedom. In addition, the Christian God contains various Omni-traits, as have been agreed upon by the Christian theologians of the ages. He contains within himself absolute intelligence, power, goodness, freedom, and needs no external force for His continued existence. Within this absolute freedom, we find a will that wished creation into being, with no external or internal factors forcing the creation of this world. Rather, God created the world simply because He desired to. In addition to these characteristics, God is also a reasonable and all knowing figure, allowing humans to understand him on a rational basis, and concerning himself greatly with man's affairs. Upon creation, God desired man to find fulfillment and completion in a loving relationship with Him. However, man, containing a free will in the image of the freedom of God, yet not containing the all-knowingness of God, could choose between entering into a genuine relationship with God (as loving presupposes choice and free will), or rejecting him. It is from this rejection of God that sin and imperfection enters the world, and it is God's redemptive plan, through the saving powers of Grace through the salvation and revealed self-expression found within Jesus Christ that God made manifest his plan to reconnect humanity to their primal purpose: intimacy with the Father. It is from this brief summary of the Nature of God and the purpose of humanity that we build upon.

After establishing the absolute freedom and power of the Judaic-Christian God, we can now establish the Creation, and humanities relation to God. The Christian God created the world *ex nihilo*, or 'out of nothing'. His purpose for creating the world is his own, and is not dependent, like the Platonic *Demiurgos*, on any external or internal factor. The infinite God created simply because he had the power and freedom to do so, and in this we find his purpose for doing so. Within this creation, which he deemed Good, we find the creation of Man in His image (Genesis 1:26, 31). With the character of the Christian God established, and a general summary of creation made, we can now move to Human Nature and Man's intended purpose.

As earlier mentioned, man's purpose is to enter into an intimate relationship with his Creator, for a flock without a Shepard is lost. Man is lost in the sense that by following himself, his own impulses and his selfishness, man is trapped in a life of sinfulness, and sinfulness stands in opposite to the goodness and relationship God intends for Humanity. God created man with the purpose of making him in His "image and likeness" (Gen 1:26). However, Man has the ability to dedicate himself to God, or to sinful materialism. To combat man's

sinfulness, God revealed his self-expression in his son, Jesus, whom man could emulate to fulfill the above-mentioned purpose (As the Father, the Son, and the Spirit exist in a loving trinity). Through loving Christ, and modeling oneself after Him, man could fulfill his created purpose (entering into relationship with God, and modeling oneself 'in His image'). Jesus, the *Logos*, is the revealed knowledge of God, and represents a physical entity that individuals can learn to and follow, in order to enter into communion with and understand God's expression and love. This purpose and idea is personified in the Christ, and made manifest in the form of Jesus' teachings and His sacrifice and resurrection. Jesus is thus "God's 'definition' of what humanity and the world are all about," (Komonchak 28). Jesus is the Christ destined to save humanity from their self-imposed sinfulness, and steer them on a redemptive path towards their initial intended purpose.

Another important topic on the subject of Human Nature is the element of Grace. Grace can be defined in Christian terms as the "sphere of the freely offered love-relationship between the triune God and humans," (Komonchak 711). This is somewhat similar, as a factor for motivating good, with the Platonic concept of Eros (developed in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*). According to this concept, "the impulse to philosophy arises when the soul recognizes the imperfect copies of ideas present in material reality, and with longing love (*Eros*) strives to transcend the corporeal and reach the purity of ideal forms," (Brauer 664). The similarity is drawn with Christianity in this: The Christian understands God to be the source of Goodness and Completion (as to the Platonist the source of Goodness is the Good and the world of transcendent ideas/Forms), and through the divine Grace of God, man's "desire for good and the freedom to pursue it is established," (Komonchak 711). The force that motivates the Christian to do good is the divine grace given to him by God, and he is established in a general longing for completeness via a relationship with God through the saving Christ, whereas the motivating factor for the Platonist to do good is the longing love (*eros*) to reach the perfection of ideals, and thus share these ideas with humanity. The Christian concept of human nature desiring divine intimacy can be similar to the Platonic longing love (*eros*) to connect with the world of ideas/Forms. In addition, both, as found in Christian Charity, and as found in the Republic's Philosopher Kings and knowledge of The Good, can be forces for moral good and love in the world.

One lasting note on the subject of Human Nature is a unique Christian version of the Theory of Forms. According to Gen 1:31, all

things were made Good by a Good God. Here, in the beginning within the Garden, the forms and ideals manifest in the world were perfect. After the fall of Man, personified as Adam and Eve selfishly pursuing 'knowledge' in absence of God (summarized as selfishness; sin), sinful nature is brought into this world. The result of sinfulness is change and accident in the world, leading to a distortion and deprivation of these ideal forms. The ideal forms, however, are still found in the teachings of God, made manifest in His Word (his *Logos*), Jesus, and his inspired word (revelation found in the Bible). Thus, man's connection to this lost world of ideas/forms, the source of real knowledge, is via the channel of revelation from God (seen in the Hebrews and the Hebrew Bible), and direct discipleship and relationship with His *Logos*, Jesus the Christ. Reason leads one to understand and embrace revelation.

In addition to the discussion of God, nature and humankind's purpose, we can now analyze the goal of human action. The purpose of human action is summarized in the Great Commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...and... 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matt 22:37-39). The second of these indicates a certain sociability of purpose, as loving neighbors is a proactive command and suggests a society in which to love. With this in mind, "human nature cannot be activated without the cooperation of many individuals working together in a social structure for the common good," (Wild 5). The sociability of man is here established (far before the moderns), and "God is himself a society of persons each sharing perfectly and identically in the supreme values of divinity, and cooperating in different ways for the attainment of a single end willed by all. This is the model for human society," (Wild 6). This harkens a similarity to the sociability of man in Platonism, and the need for man to work together (modeled in the *Republic's* ideal government and Philosopher Kings) in order to bring about Good change and good government. Through knowing God via Jesus, the Christian can love his fellow man (bringing about the earthly kingdom of heaven and the end of worldly injustices taught by Jesus), and through knowing the Good, the Platonic Philosopher can lead and teach his Society (the Good Polis).

We can finally summarize Christian Philosophy as follows: 1) a free intelligent Creator of the Universe, and the free and rational human being ('made in his image'). 2) God concerns Himself with individuals, social order, and concrete human history (Jesus' sacrifice,

revelation, Mosaic and the Great Commandments, etc.). 3) The freedom of man and the essence of freedom (Commandments imply the freedom of man, as man would necessitate freedom in order to follow a law), (Wild 4, 7). “To be truly human is to be *like* God, so far as human limitations permit. So far as we act as God acts [as Jesus acts and taught], we may be as God is [with the Father, as Jesus is], and thus achieve a mode of human perfection which is as that unlimited perfection of our Heavenly Father [salvation and communion with God],” (Wild 6).

Although we have attempted the impossible task of summarizing Christian philosophy within a handful of pages, so too is it impossible to summarize Platonic Philosophy. When we speak of Platonism, we speak of a complicated school inspired by the teachings of Plato that stretched over 800 years, dividing itself into the “Old Academy (347-267 BC.), the ‘New’ (Skeptical) Academy (267-ca. 80 BC.), Middle Platonism (80 ca. BC.-250 BC.), and Neoplatonism (ca. 250 BC.)” (Freedman 378). For this reason, when we speak of Platonic Philosophy, we will be focusing on the main body of thought as expressed by Plato in his writings, as well as the intellectual tradition developed within these periods. After our summary, we will lightly explore the vehicle of Neoplatonism in permanently inspiring Christianity through Christian Platonist and ideas.

In understanding a Platonic Natural Theology, the first premise in which we work on is that the divine is rationally intelligible. Man can use his reason to understand the transcendental truths and perfections found in the world of forms. Everything in reality is created in forms, as there exist within humanity itself an ideal concept in which we call humanness. Every multiple form has a perfected Form in this transcendental world of Forms, and it is this understanding that the cosmos is organized (formed), and not chaotic (unformed). From this, we must say that all good Forms must come from a good creator, as sporadic chaos cannot form order. For the Good Creator to create Good Forms there must be an Ideal concept of Goodness in which he can model after (The Good). Since material forms are in constant change, the Former and Forms must be in a fixed state, as to remain ideal. Because of all this, there exist a “Former (Demiurgos), and the Form (Good) after which all things are formed,” (Geisler 594). In addition, Plato realized that the world is in constant motion, but objects do not move themselves (a ball stays at rest until pushed). However, the human body can initiate motion itself, and the Mover of the Human

Body is thus the Human Soul. As such, there must also exist (Besides the Form, and The Former), a First Mover (World Soul) that put the cosmos in motion (A Triad of circumstances: The Former, The Form, and the First Mover are established) (Geisler 594). The cosmos is in constant motion, and as motion necessitates a mover, this First Mover must also be an eternal principle. This idea of a First Mover is later found in Philosophical defenses of Christianity, and “we may say that of the five later casual arguments developed by Christian philosophy, four are at least implicitly stated by Plato,” (West 9).

Plato also gives us an anthropomorphic conception of a finite God, one that leaves little room for freedom. The Platonic God is subjected to creating the best possible world, and for striving for perfected order. The Platonic God cannot choose to not create the world, but is “subjected to an inner moral need for emanating order and law.” (West 9). “The Platonic Deity is only the maker or moulder of a coexistent matter or spatial receptacle, not a creator *ex nihilo*.” (Wild 9). This finite God is subjected to some higher principle: The Good. The Christian God, however, has true freedom, and could have easily chosen not to create the world.

In addition to Platonic Natural Theology, and the Platonic Deity, we will next analyze the Platonic Anthropology and Creation. Traditionally, the Platonic tradition has rejected a “concept of creation from nothing,” as found within Christianity (Freedman 380). Rather, the Platonists believed in the molding of the *kiōiō* (organized world) from preexistent matter (Freedman 380). The molder of this world is known as the Demiurge (according to the Creation myth found in *Timaeus*), and created the world using the “idea of the good as a pattern and a cause,” (Brauer 664). It is from this pattern of Creation, and the the essence of God and cause of creation being the Good, that we find certain similarities with the Creation in Genesis and the later Christian teleological ideas.

The essence of reality and the world are divided, according to the important Platonic idea of the doctrine of ideas. This division occurs between the essence of reality, and the decomposing phenomenal world (Brauer 664). True reality is a place of unchangeable ideas, and to attain knowledge within the phenomenal material world, “the rational soul must direct itself beyond material sensuous becoming to contemplation of these transcendent ideas, all of which are encompassed in the idea of the good, the Godhead,” (Brauer 664). Philosophy is thus the pursuit of these perfected ideas, or Forms, and

the division of reality is between this mere shadow of decomposing existence (best personified by the ever changing human body) and the realm of perfected ideas or forms (radiations of the Good).

To Platonism, the Soul itself was “ungenerate and eternal,” and according to the *Phaedo*’s story of a soul’s fate after death, “as the principle of life and of motion in bodies, [the soul] is by definition incapable of death and thus everlasting, without beginning or end,” (Ferguson 455). Within *The Republic*, Plato groups mankind into three images: “a many headed beast, a lion, and an inner human.” (Freedman 378). Plato seeks to relate these three images to a “tripartite nature of the soul: appetitive, spirited, rational.” (Freedman 378). *The Republic* thus divides this tripartite nature into the highest part, reason, which should rule the others, being ‘spirit’ (or noble courage), and the bodily desires (Ferguson 735). It is of interest that we find a tripartite division within the being of man as found within the Christian Theological tradition: man too is divided into the body (appetite), mind (thoughts), and the soul (essence). In addition to this human division, we can find perhaps the tripartite beginnings that inspired the idea of a Trinity within the Platonists hierarchy of being (this hierarchy being the relations between Soul [Rational], spirit [courage], and desires [body]). Within the writings of Plato’s *Republic* and *Timaeus*, we find the existence of the Good and of the Demiurge. Later Platonists divide these two into a supreme God and an irrational world soul (Plutarch), or the supreme God and a world mind and soul (Albinus). It is from this later intellectual development that the gradual triadic sequence of “God the Father (the Good), Demiurge, and World Soul,” was formalized by later Neoplatonist such as Plotinus (the supposed founder of Neoplatonism). The Trinitarian division of the Godhead between God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit recall a similarity with the above-mentioned triadic sequence developed within Platonic thought (Ferguson 736). A footnote to this is that although there is a tripartite division, this does not necessarily mean Plato had a concept of the trinity, as “the Form and the World Soul are not even persons in any significant sense of the term... [and] do not all share one and the same nature,” (Geisler 595).

What now, is the Platonic Goal of Human Action? As earlier stated, the goal of philosophy is the attainment of truth, and the attainment of truth is the process of a one’s rational soul reaching out to the perfected ideas as radiated from the Good. Man’s purpose is thus found in contemplating these perfected ideas and virtues in their purest form,

and in contemplating them he will have an idea how to further perfect his own nature. The Platonic realization of one’s nature, one’s essence, thus gives one purpose for moral action. In contemplating the Good in a rational sense, and by reaching out to this world of perfected forms and ideas, one receives the knowledge to act morally. It is when one ignores his or her reason, and rejects these universal forms, that one commits evil. “When it allows its bestial, sensuous inclinations to deform its higher nature and deflect its striving for ideal purity and truth,” evil comes about (Brauer 664). Man may contemplate this world of ideas, and thus understand how to live a moral life, and if one grasps the nature of the Good, one can further free his rational soul from the bonds of bodily ignorance via death. For this reason of contemplating and understanding these universal truths and this world of ideas, *The Republic* concludes that those best to govern (those who govern most morally), are Philosopher kings (those individuals who have rationally ‘seen’ the Good, and can thus govern by an understanding of these perfected virtues). Individuals must then model their material selves to the likeness of The Good (God). “This basic conception of the imitation of God underlies the whole Platonic ethics, for all existence to some degree participates in the divine perfection. Hence the aim of activity is to intensify such participation,” (Wild 13).

In summarizing Platonic Ideology (truly an impossible task), I will reach for those ideological similarities it shares with Christian Ideology. In the words of Plato, and similar to the first two Christian ideological summaries, “the three assertions—that the Gods exist, and that they are concerned with the affairs of men, and that they can never be persuaded to do injustice are now sufficiently demonstrated,” (*Laws*, 907). Although in the quote Plato refers to ‘Gods’, his writings in “*Phaedo* 106 d, *Republic* 382 d, 567 c, and *laws* 913 d,” establish an understanding of one finite Creator God, known to us as *Demiurgos* (Wild 14). With the establishment of the free and rational human being, the idea of a Creator God, and the concern God has in the universe (as stated in his writings), the third area of ideological agreement is the freedom of man. The Platonic system cannot function without there being a freedom in man. Although Plato probably fails greatest in not according this same essential freedom to his God, the *Demiurgos* (*Demiurgos* was constrained to create as according to the Form of the Good), the Platonic system cannot function without an understanding that man was essentially free enough to pursue the world of transcendental forms with his reason, and thus gain true knowledge, or continue to be an object and an enslavement of his

bodily passions. Placing this besides the task of a Christian to accept God's redemptive plan and his revelation in Christ, and adhere to these Good principles, vs. the rejection of this Gospel and the resulting enslavement to one's sinfulness, is rather illuminating.

In addition to having analyzed the Christian and Platonic systems in their own right, we shall also quickly survey and acknowledge the role of Neoplatonism and Christian Platonists in communicating these ideas with each other. It is no exaggeration to state that Neoplatonism was a main vehicle in inspiring Christian philosophical thought. The term itself designates a school of Platonism founded by Plotinus (204-305 BC.). One of the main additions within this new school was the division of thought in dualistic terms (a thinking element and an object of thought). Another important aspect from Neoplatonism that inspired later philosophical Christian arguments was Plotinus' idea of matter and evil as negativities, or "the dark edges of light radiated by the one," (Freedman 380). In addition, a de-emphasis of the mathematical element of Platonism is replaced with "the notion of a chain of being, a hierarchical series of strata extending with diminishing perfection from the One all the way down to the lowliest level of matter," (Brauer 591). With the rise of various salvation cults in the 2nd century (Neo-Pythagoreanism, Gnosticism, Oriental salvation cults, etc.), Christians thought it necessary to develop a theology for Christianity. When this was attempted, it is no surprise that early Christians turned to the ideas of Platonism and Neoplatonism for their philosophical defense. Already various Judaic Platonists had fused Platonism with Judaic thought (As found in the *Book of Wisdom*), arguing for a harmony that followed suit in such Christian Platonist thinkers as Justin Martyr (fl. Ca. 150 C.E.), Alexandrians Clement (ca. 150-215), and Origen (ca. 176-254). Some, such as Justin Martyr, that Socrates and Plato received "divine illumination," (Brauer 665). Some have even argued that Plato knew Christ through an understanding of the pre-existent *Logos*, whom the Gospel of John borrows the term to define Christ ("in the beginning was the word [ἰῶν] and the word was with God, and the word was God," John 1:1). With Eastern Christian thinkers such as Origen and Clement incorporating Platonist ideas into Christian Theology, St. Augustine is accredited most with cementing Platonic notions into Western thought and Latin Christianity, via his hefty usage of Platonic ideas to communicate his Christian Philosophical convictions (Cross 1300). St. Augustine showed various Neoplatonic influence in Book 7 of *The Confessions* and Book 8 and 10 of *The*

City of God, and even claimed that Platonism was both the closest philosophy to Christianity (missing the incarnation, and an aid to his own personal conversion (Brauer 592).

In review, we find various similarities between Platonism and Christian philosophy. One area of firm agreement, and a place where Christian Philosophers and Apologists have borrowed and developed from, is that of the proofs Plato provides for God. From his arguments Christians developed the Teleological, First Cause, and Ontological arguments. Also, as discussed in Plato's theory of forms, truth was an absolute, and absolutes exist. As such, there is an ideal pattern of behavior for humanity modeled off of virtues that found their perfection in this concept of The Good. Plato advocated a system in which moral absolutes, such as justice and goodness, existed, and as such should be modeled in one's life. This system of moral absolutes is similar to that of the Christian world, where God has established a series of moral absolutes (as found in Mosaic commandments, and the Golden Rule).

Another similarity between the two involves the superiority of the unseen. With his ideas of the theory of form, and his concept of the Form of Good which goodness is modeled, Plato places the highest priority in the realm of the unseen. Similarly, Christianity places the highest value in the things not of this world, but of the heaven's.

A fourth area of similarity is the immortality of the soul. Although early Judaic and Greek traditions lack a teaching on the concept of the immortality of the soul, it has become commonplace in modern Christian theology. Although the Pharisaic tradition affirmed the immortality of the soul, there is understandable influence of this concept from Platonic thought. It is within Platonism that we find this type of immortality of the Soul, and it isn't until the Christian Platonist thinkers of Justin, Irenaeus and Origen that we find the tradition cemented that the Soul survives death (Ferguson 457). Although Justin Martyr is careful not to explain the Soul in platonic terms of being ungenerate, he does establish that the soul survives death.

Also similar is the primal enemies both fields face. Christianity's greatest enemy is the Darwinist self-sustained evolving theory of life, its purpose, its morality, and its creation. Plato's greatest enemy was the materialism of the Stoics, and in their rejection of any metaphysical necessities such as a first mover, perfected forms, and an Ideal Goodness. Both rely on the necessity of purpose being found in transcendental absolutes (those of God and of The Good).

In addition to these various similarities established between the traditions, we must also fairly acknowledge the key differences. One of these differences between Christianity and Platonism is the Platonic dualism of creation out of pre-existing matter (*ex material*), vs. the Christian concept of a monarchial creation from nothing (*ex nihilo*) (Geisler 595). Unlike Christianity, the Platonic concept of the universe is one of eternal, and not temporal, material (Geisler 595). In addition, as mentioned earlier, God created the world and saw that it was good. In Platonism, there is the thought that the material world was bad (being in a state of constant change and corrosion), and as such one must remove his trapped soul from the imprisonment of the body.

A second difference is the Anthropological Dualism of Platonism. In the Judea-Christian tradition, the soul is embodied in the body, whereas in the Platonic tradition, the Soul is rather trapped in the body. Being created as embodied beings, Christians would not see the body in the prison-perspective used by the Platonists. Rather, the Christian tradition is one where a new resurrected body awaits the Christian, and upon creation in the Garden, man (Adam) was made with a good body. It is more the action of willed sinfulness that initiates evil, than the fact that the body is evil in and of itself.

A third area of extreme contention with Christianity is the Platonic idea of reincarnation. Similar to eastern concepts, Plato believed in a reincarnation of the soul in the entrapment of another body (unless realization of true knowledge was attained). Although sharing similarities with the Vedic and Eastern Oriental traditions, this has no similarity within the Judea-Christian tradition, and has been firmly debunked by Christian theologians.

One final area of conflict between the two is that of Finite Godism. “Unlike the theistic God of Christianity who is infinite in power and perfection, Plato’s God was finite,” (Geisler 595). From the Christian God come universal truths and a concept of goodness. God’s ideas of what are good are generate from Himself, unlike Plato’s God. In Platonism, the highest metaphysical principle of the Good is not directly identified with God (Geisler 595-596). Rather, the creator of the world, known as Demiurgos, is below this metaphysical principle. This is overly different to the hierarchy and sovereignty of God over such ideas.

In conclusion, having analyzed Christian natural theology, philosophy of nature, anthropology, the goals of human action, and Christianity’s

ideology and enemies, along with those of Platonic philosophy, natural theology, philosophy of nature, goal of moral action, and it’s ideology and enemies, we find some interesting similarities. We have drawn some exciting conclusions regarding the Judeo-Christian God with the Platonic one, their focus on transcendental forms and perfections, the purpose of God’s redemptive plan and the Platonic responsibility of the philosopher to adhere and teach the principles of the Good, and the enslavement to one’s sinfulness or ignorance. After having analyzed these deep philosophical and ideological tones, we analyzed Neo-Platonists and Platonized Christians, reviewing the influence and significance they had within their traditions. After drawing similarities, and providing the contrasting differences, we summarized key areas of agreement (Platonic and Christian proofs for God, moral absolutes, superiority of the unseen, immortality of the soul, and their shared materialistic enemies), as well as key areas of disagreement (Platonic dualism, *ex material* vs. *ex nihilo*, Anthropological Dualism, reincarnation and eternal life, and Finite Godism). We may now conclude, having reviewed these details in length, that Christianity shares many Platonic themes. Although it would be silly to say Platonism mainly influenced Christianity, as doing so would reject the special relationship Christianity has with it’s father religion Judaism (and perhaps actually project Christian ideas into what would be Platonism), we may conclude that Christians, ever eager to fulfill the Great Commission and bring converts into the warm embrace of salvation, adapted the language and ideas of their times to further the end of God’s kingdom: both in terms of souls saved, and of reverential reason.

Chapter 6

Aristotalian Causality and Categories

Aristotle (384-322 BC) is a towering figure in ancient Greek philosophy, making contributions to logic, metaphysics, mathematics, physics, biology, botany, ethics, politics, agriculture, medicine, dance and theatre. He was a student of Plato who in turn studied under Socrates. He was more empirically-minded than Plato or Socrates and is famous for rejecting Plato's theory of forms.

As a prolific writer and polymath, Aristotle radically transformed most, if not all, areas of knowledge he touched. It is no wonder that Aquinas referred to him simply as "The Philosopher." In his lifetime, Aristotle wrote as many as 200 treatises, of which only 31 survive. Unfortunately for us, these works are in the form of lecture notes and draft manuscripts never intended for general readership, so they do not demonstrate his reputed polished prose style which attracted many great followers, including the Roman Cicero. Aristotle was the first to classify areas of human knowledge into

distinct disciplines such as mathematics, biology, and ethics. Some of these classifications are still used today.

As the father of the field of logic, he was the first to develop a formalized system for reasoning. Aristotle observed that the validity of any argument can be determined by its structure rather than its content. A classic example of a valid argument is his syllogism: All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is mortal. Given the structure of this argument, as long as the premises are true, then the conclusion is also guaranteed to be true. Aristotle's brand of logic dominated this area of thought until the rise of modern propositional logic and predicate logic 2000 years later.

Aristotle's emphasis on good reasoning combined with his belief in the scientific method forms the backdrop for most of his work. For example, in his work in ethics and politics, Aristotle identifies the highest good with intellectual virtue; that is, a moral person is one who cultivates certain virtues based on reasoning. And in his work on psychology and the soul, Aristotle distinguishes sense perception from reason, which unifies and interprets the sense perceptions and is the source of all knowledge.

Aristotle famously rejected Plato's theory of forms, which states that properties such as beauty are abstract universal entities that exist independent of the objects themselves. Instead, he argued that forms are *intrinsic* to the objects and cannot exist apart from them, and so must be studied in relation to them. However, in discussing art, Aristotle seems to reject this, and instead argues for idealized universal form which artists attempt to capture in their work.

Aristotle was the founder of the Lyceum, a school of learning based in Athens, Greece; and he was an inspiration for the Peripatetics, his followers from the Lyceum.

1. Logic

Aristotle's writings on the general subject of logic were grouped by the later Peripatetics under the name *Organon*, or instrument. From their perspective, logic and reasoning was the chief preparatory instrument of scientific investigation. Aristotle himself, however, uses the term "logic" as equivalent to verbal reasoning. The *Categories* of Aristotle are classifications of individual words (as opposed to sentences or propositions), and include the following ten: substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, situation, condition, action, passion. They seem to be arranged according to the order of the

questions we would ask in gaining knowledge of an object. For example, we ask, first, what a thing is, then how great it is, next of what kind it is. Substance is always regarded as the most important of these. Substances are further divided into first and second: first substances are *individual* objects; second substances are the *species* in which first substances or individuals inhere.

Notions when isolated do not in themselves express either truth or falsehood: it is only with the combination of ideas in a proposition that truth and falsity are possible. The elements of such a proposition are the noun substantive and the verb. The combination of words gives rise to rational speech and thought, conveys a meaning both in its parts and as a whole. Such thought may take many forms, but logic considers only *demonstrative* forms which express truth and falsehood. The truth or falsity of propositions is determined by their agreement or disagreement with the facts they represent. Thus propositions are either affirmative or negative, each of which again may be either universal or particular or undesignated. A definition, for Aristotle is a statement of the essential character of a subject, and involves both the genus and the difference. To get at a true definition we must find out those qualities within the genus which taken separately are wider than the subject to be defined, but taken together are precisely equal to it. For example, “prime,” “odd,” and “number” are each wider than “triplet” (that is, a collection of any three items, such as three rocks); but taken together they are just equal to it. The genus definition must be formed so that no species is left out. Having determined the genus and species, we must next find the points of similarity in the species separately and then consider the common characteristics of different species. Definitions may be imperfect by (1) being obscure, (2) by being too wide, or (3) by not stating the essential and fundamental attributes. Obscurity may arise from the use of equivocal expressions, of metaphorical phrases, or of eccentric words. The heart of Aristotle’s logic is the syllogism, the classic example of which is as follows: All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is mortal. The syllogistic form of logical argumentation dominated logic for 2,000 years until the rise of modern propositional and predicate logic thanks to Frege, Russell, and others.

2. Metaphysics

Aristotle’s editors gave the name “Metaphysics” to his works on *first philosophy*, either because they went *beyond* or followed *after* his physical investigations. Aristotle begins by sketching

the history of philosophy. For Aristotle, philosophy arose historically after basic necessities were secured. It grew out of a feeling of curiosity and wonder, to which religious myth gave only provisional satisfaction. The earliest speculators (i.e. Thales, Anaximenes, Anaximander) were philosophers of nature. The Pythagoreans succeeded these with mathematical abstractions. The level of pure thought was reached partly in the Eleatic philosophers (such as Parmenides) and Anaxagoras, but more completely in the work of Socrates. Socrates’ contribution was the expression of general conceptions in the form of definitions, which he arrived at by induction and analogy. For Aristotle, the subject of metaphysics deals with the first principles of scientific knowledge and the ultimate conditions of all existence. More specifically, it deals with existence in its most fundamental state (i.e. being *as* being), and the essential attributes of existence. This can be contrasted with mathematics which deals with existence in terms of lines or angles, and not existence as it is in itself. In its universal character, metaphysics superficially resembles dialectics and sophistry. However, it differs from dialectics which is tentative, and it differs from sophistry which is a pretence of knowledge without the reality.

The axioms of science fall under the consideration of the metaphysician insofar as they are properties of *all* existence. Aristotle argues that there are a handful of universal truths. Against the followers of Heraclitus and Protagoras, Aristotle defends both the laws of contradiction, and that of excluded middle. He does this by showing that their denial is suicidal. Carried out to its logical consequences, the denial of these laws would lead to the sameness of all facts and all assertions. It would also result in an indifference in conduct. As the science of being *as* being, the leading question of Aristotle’s metaphysics is, What is meant by the real or true substance? Plato tried to solve the same question by positing a universal and invariable element of knowledge and existence - the forms - as the only real permanent besides the changing phenomena of the senses. Aristotle attacks Plato’s theory of the forms on three different grounds.

First, Aristotle argues, forms are powerless to explain *changes* of things and a thing’s ultimate extinction. Forms are not causes of movement and alteration in the physical objects of sensation. *Second*, forms are equally incompetent to explain how we arrive at *knowledge* of particular things. For, to have knowledge of a particular object, it must be knowledge of the substance which

is *in* that things. However, the forms place knowledge outside of particular things. Further, to suppose that we know particular things better by adding on their general conceptions of their forms, is about as absurd as to imagine that we can count numbers better by multiplying them. Finally, if forms were needed to explain our knowledge of particular objects, then forms must be used to explain our knowledge of objects of art; however, Platonists do not recognize such forms. The *third* ground of attack is that the forms simply cannot explain the *existence* of particular objects. Plato contends that forms do not exist *in* the particular objects which partake in the forms. However, that substance of a particular thing cannot be separated from the thing itself. Further, aside from the jargon of “participation,” Plato does not explain the relation between forms and particular things. In reality, it is merely metaphorical to describe the forms as patterns of things; for, what is a genus to one object is a species to a higher class, the same idea will have to be both a form and a particular thing at the same time. Finally, on Plato’s account of the forms, we must imagine an intermediate link between the form and the particular object, and so on *ad infinitum*: there must always be a “third man” between the individual man and the form of man.

For Aristotle, the form is not something outside the object, but rather *in* the varied phenomena of sense. Real substance, or true being, is not the abstract form, but rather the *concrete* individual thing. Unfortunately, Aristotle’s theory of substance is not altogether consistent with itself. In the *Categories* the notion of substance tends to be nominalistic (that is, substance is a concept we apply to things). In the *Metaphysics*, though, it frequently inclines towards realism (that is, substance has a real existence in itself). We are also struck by the apparent contradiction in his claims that science deals with universal concepts, and substance is declared to be an individual. In any case, substance is for him a merging of matter into form. The term “matter” is used by Aristotle in four overlapping senses. *First*, it is the underlying structure of changes, particularly changes of growth and of decay. *Secondly*, it is the potential which has implicitly the capacity to develop into reality. *Thirdly*, it is a kind of stuff without specific qualities and so is indeterminate and contingent. *Fourthly*, it is identical with form when it takes on a form in its actualized and final phase.

Causality

The development of potentiality to actuality is one of the most important aspects of Aristotle’s philosophy. It was intended to solve

the difficulties which earlier thinkers had raised with reference to the beginnings of existence and the relations of the one and many. The actual vs. potential state of things is explained in terms of the causes which act on things. There are four causes:

1. Material cause, or the elements *out of which* an object is created;
2. Efficient cause, or the means *by which* it is created;
3. Formal cause, or the expression of *what* it is;
4. Final cause, or the end *for which* it is.

Take, for example, a bronze statue. Its material cause is the bronze itself. Its efficient cause is the sculptor, insofar as he forces the bronze into shape. The formal cause is the idea of the completed statue. The final cause is the idea of the statue as it *prompts* the sculptor to act on the bronze. The final cause tends to be the same as the formal cause, and both of these can be subsumed by the efficient cause. Of the four, it is the formal and final which is the most important, and which most truly gives the explanation of an object. The final end (purpose, or teleology) of a thing is realized in the full perfection of the object itself, not in our conception of it. Final cause is thus internal to the nature of the object itself, and not something we subjectively impose on it.

To be able to give a rational account of constant change in the realm of natural beings and consequently to lay ground for physics as an explanatory potent science Aristotle introduces a scheme of causal relations. Nature itself is a principle and a cause of change. But we speak about the cause with regard to four different points of reference each pointing to one aspect of the more general question “why something is”.

To ask “why something is” means to identify main factors in the process of potentiality realization. Aristotle explicates this question in a fourfold way:

1. Out of what has a thing come? **Answer obtained by identifying: The Material Cause:**

The material cause points to “that from which, as a constituent, an object comes into being.” (For instance, the bronze of a statue.)

2. What is it? **Answer obtained by identifying: The Formal Cause:**

The formal cause embodies the essential nature (all essential attributes) and represents the model or archetype of the outcome; conceptually it is expressed in the definition

(logos). (It is the idea of the statue as present in artist’s head.)

3. By means of what is it? **Answer obtained by identifying: The Efficient Cause:**

The efficient cause is “the source of the change or rest”; it is the moving cause: “what makes of what is made and what changes of what is changed” (the sculptor who makes the statue).

4. For the sake of what is it? **Answer obtained by identifying: The Final Cause:**

The final cause states “that for the sake of which” a thing is done, or, in other words, it explicates something’s end (the final shape or the effect on the audience which admires the statue).

To Aristotle, God is the first of all substances, the necessary first source of movement who is himself unmoved. God is a being with everlasting life, and perfect blessedness, engaged in never-ending contemplation.

Categories

Substances are unique in that they are independent. The other nine categories are “accidental.” These nine categories each depend on substances and can’t exist on their own, e.g. redness, double, smallness, etc.

1. Substance (ousia, “essence” or “substance”). Substance is defined as that which neither can be predicated of anything nor be said to be in anything. Hence, this particular man or that particular tree are substances. Later in the text, Aristotle calls these particulars “primary substances”, to distinguish them from secondary substances, which are universals and can be predicated. Hence, Socrates is a primary substance, while man is a secondary substance. Man is predicated of Socrates, and therefore all that is predicated of man is predicated of Socrates.
2. Quantity (poson, “how much”). This is the extension of an object, and may be either discrete or continuous. Further, its parts may or may not have relative positions to each other. All medieval discussions about the nature of the continuum, of the infinite and the infinitely divisible, are a long footnote to this text. It is of great importance in the development of mathematical ideas in the medieval and late Scholastic period.
3. Quality (poion, “of what kind or quality”). This is a determination which characterizes the nature of an object.

4. Relation (pros ti, “toward something”). This is the way in which one object may be related to another.
5. Place (pou, “where”). Position in relation to the surrounding environment.
6. Time (pote, “when”). Position in relation to the course of events.
7. Position (keisthai, “to lie”). The examples Aristotle gives indicate that he meant a condition of rest resulting from an action: ‘Lying’, ‘sitting’. Thus position may be taken as the end point for the corresponding action. The term is, however, frequently taken to mean the relative position of the parts of an object (usually a living object), given that the position of the parts is inseparable from the state of rest implied.
8. State or habitus (echein, “to have”). The examples Aristotle gives indicate that he meant a condition of rest resulting from an affection (i.e. being acted on): ‘shod’, ‘armed’. The term is, however, frequently taken to mean the determination arising from the physical accoutrements of an object: one’s shoes, one’s arms, etc. Traditionally, this category is also called a habitus (from Latin habere, “to have”).
9. Action (poiein, “to make” or “to do”). The production of change in some other object.
10. Affection (paschein, “to suffer” or “to undergo”). The reception of change from some other object. It is also known as passivity. It is clear from the examples Aristotle gave for action and for affection that action is to affection as the active voice is to the passive. Thus for action he gave the example, ‘to lance’, ‘to cauterize’; for affection, ‘to be lanced’, ‘to be cauterized.’ The term is frequently misinterpreted to mean a kind of emotion or passion.

Categories	Aristotle’s Term	Greek	Examples
Substance/Essence	“substance”	<i>ousia</i>	man, horse
	“this”	<i>tode ti</i>	Socrates
	“what-it-is”	<i>ti esti</i>	“Socrates is a man”
Quantity	How much	<i>poson</i>	four-foot, five-foot
Quality	What sort	<i>poion</i>	white, literate
Relation	related to what	<i>pros ti</i>	double, half, greater
Location	Where	<i>pou</i>	in the Lyceum, in the marketplace
Time	When	<i>pote</i>	yesterday, last year
Position	Being situated	<i>keisthai</i>	lies, sits

Habit	Having, possession	<i>echein</i>	is shod, is armed
Action	Doing	<i>poiein</i>	cuts, burns
Passion	Undergoing	<i>paschein</i>	is cut, is burned

3. Ethics

Ethics, as viewed by Aristotle, is an attempt to find out our chief end or highest good: an end which he maintains is really final. Though many ends of life are only means to further ends, our aspirations and desires must have some final object or pursuit. Such a chief end is universally called happiness. But people mean such different things by the expression that he finds it necessary to discuss the nature of it for himself. For starters, happiness must be based on human nature, and must begin from the facts of personal experience. Thus, happiness cannot be found in any abstract or ideal notion, like Plato’s self-existing good. It must be something practical and human. It must then be found in the work and life which is unique to humans. But this is neither the vegetative life we share with plants nor the sensitive existence which we share with animals. It follows therefore that true happiness lies in the active life of a rational being or in a perfect realization and outworking of the true soul and self, continued throughout a lifetime.

Aristotle expands his notion of happiness through an analysis of the human soul which structures and animates a living human organism. The parts of the soul are divided as follows:

	Calculative - Intellectual Virtue
Rational	
	Appetitive - Moral Virtue
Irrational	
	Vegetative - Nutritional Virtue

The human soul has an irrational element which is shared with the animals, and a rational element which is distinctly human. The most primitive irrational element is the vegetative faculty which is responsible for nutrition and growth. An organism which does this well may be said to have a nutritional virtue. The second tier of the soul is the appetitive faculty which is responsible for our emotions and desires (such as joy, grief, hope and fear). This faculty is both rational and irrational. It is irrational since even animals experience desires.

However, it is also rational since humans have the distinct ability to control these desires with the help of reason. The human ability to properly control these desires is called moral virtue, and is the focus of morality. Aristotle notes that there is a purely rational part of the soul, the calculative, which is responsible for the human ability to contemplate, reason logically, and formulate scientific principles. The mastery of these abilities is called intellectual virtue.

Aristotle continues by making several general points about the nature of moral virtues (i.e. desire-regulating virtues). First, he argues that the ability to regulate our desires is not instinctive, but learned and is the outcome of both teaching and practice. Second, he notes that if we regulate our desires either too much or too little, then we create problems. As an analogy, Aristotle comments that, either “excess or deficiency of gymnastic exercise is fatal to strength.” Third, he argues that desire-regulating virtues are character traits, and are not to be understood as either emotions or mental faculties.

The core of Aristotle’s account of moral virtue is his doctrine of the mean. According to this doctrine, moral virtues are desire-regulating character traits which are at a mean between more extreme character traits (or vices). For example, in response to the natural emotion of fear, we should develop the virtuous character trait of courage. If we develop an excessive character trait by curbing fear too much, then we are said to be rash, which is a vice. If, on the other extreme, we develop a deficient character trait by curbing fear too little, then we are said to be cowardly, which is also a vice. The virtue of courage, then, lies at the mean between the excessive extreme of rashness, and the deficient extreme of cowardice. Aristotle is quick to point out that the virtuous mean is not a strict mathematical mean between two extremes. For example, if eating 100 apples is too many, and eating zero apples is too little, this does not imply that we should eat 50 apples, which is the mathematical mean. Instead, the mean is rationally determined, based on the relative merits of the situation. That is, it is “as a prudent man would determine it.” He concludes that it is difficult to live the virtuous life primarily because it is often difficult to find the mean between the extremes.

Most moral virtues, and not just courage, are to be understood as falling at the mean between two accompanying vices. His list may be represented by the following table:

VICE OF DEFICIENCY	VIRTUOUS MEAN	VICE OF EXCESS
Cowardice	Courage	Rashness
Insensibility	Temperance	Intemperance
Illiberality	Liberality	Prodigality
Pettiness	Munificence	Vulgarity
Humble-mindedness	High-mindedness	Vaingloriness
Want of Ambition	Right Ambition	Over-ambition
Spiritlessness	Good Temper	Irascibility
Surliness	Friendly Civility	Obsequiousness
Ironical Depreciation	Sincerity	Boastfulness
Boorishness	Wittiness	Buffoonery
Shamelessness	Modesty	Bashfulness
Callousness	Just Resentment	Spitefulness

The prominent virtue of this list is high-mindedness, which, as being a kind of ideal self-respect, is regarded as the crown of all the other virtues, depending on them for its existence, and itself in turn tending to intensify their force. The list seems to be more a deduction from the formula than a statement of the facts on which the formula itself depends, and Aristotle accordingly finds language frequently inadequate to express the states of excess or defect which his theory involves (for example in dealing with the virtue of ambition). Throughout the list he insists on the “autonomy of will” as indispensable to virtue: courage for instance is only really worthy of the name when done from a love of honor and duty: munificence again becomes vulgarity when it is not exercised from a love of what is right and beautiful, but for displaying wealth.

Justice is used both in a general and in a special sense. In its general sense it is equivalent to the observance of law. As such it is the same thing as virtue, differing only insofar as virtue exercises the disposition simply in the abstract, and justice applies it in dealings with people. Particular justice displays itself in two forms. First, *distributive justice* hands out honors and rewards according to the merits of the recipients. Second, *corrective justice* takes no account of the position of the parties concerned, but simply secures equality between the two by taking away from the advantage of the one and adding it to the disadvantage of the other. Strictly speaking, distributive and corrective justice are more than mere retaliation and

reciprocity. However, in concrete situations of civil life, retaliation and reciprocity is an adequate formula since such circumstances involve money, depending on a relation between producer and consumer. Since absolute justice is abstract in nature, in the real world it must be supplemented with equity, which corrects and modifies the laws of justice where it falls short. Thus, morality requires a standard which will not only regulate the inadequacies of absolute justice but be also an idea of moral progress.

This idea of morality is given by the faculty of moral insight. The truly good person is at the same time a person of perfect insight, and a person of perfect insight is also perfectly good. Our idea of the ultimate end of moral action is developed through habitual experience, and this gradually frames itself out of particular perceptions. It is the job of reason to apprehend and organize these particular perceptions. However, moral action is never the result of a mere act of the understanding, nor is it the result of a simple desire which views objects merely as things which produce pain or pleasure. We start with a rational conception of what is advantageous, but this conception is in itself powerless without the natural impulse which will give it strength. The will or purpose implied by morality is thus either reason stimulated to act by desire, or desire guided and controlled by understanding. These factors then motivate the willful action. Freedom of the will is a factor with both virtuous choices and vicious choices. Actions are involuntary only when another person forces our action, or if we are ignorant of important details in actions. Actions are voluntary when the originating cause of action (either virtuous or vicious) lies in ourselves.

Moral weakness of the will results in someone does what is wrong, knowing that it is right, and yet follows his desire against reason. For Aristotle, this condition is not a myth, as Socrates supposed it was. The problem is a matter of conflicting moral principles. Moral action may be represented as a syllogism in which a general principle of morality forms the first (i.e. major) premise, while the particular application is the second (i.e. minor) premise. The conclusion, though, which is arrived at through speculation, is not always carried out in practice. The moral syllogism is not simply a matter of logic, but involves psychological drives and desires. Desires can lead to a minor premise being applied to one rather than another of two major premises existing in the agent’s mind. Animals, on the other hand, cannot be called weak willed or incontinent since such a conflict of principles is not possible with them.

Pleasure is not to be identified with Good. Pleasure is found in the consciousness of free spontaneous action. It is an invisible experience, like vision, and is always present when a perfect organ acts upon a perfect object. Pleasures accordingly differ in kind, varying along with the different value of the functions of which they are the expression. They are determined ultimately by the judgment of “the good person.” Our chief end is the perfect development of our true nature; it thus must be particularly found in the realization of our highest faculty, that is, reason. It is this in fact which constitutes our personality, and we would not be pursuing our own life, but the life of some lower being, if we followed any other aim. Self-love accordingly may be said to be the highest law of morals, because while such self-love may be understood as the selfishness which gratifies a person’s lower nature, it may also be, and is rightly, the love of that higher and rational nature which constitutes each person’s true self. Such a life of thought is further recommended as that which is most pleasant, most self-sufficient, most continuous, and most consonant with our purpose. It is also that which is most akin to the life of God: for God cannot be conceived as practising the ordinary moral virtues and must therefore find his happiness in contemplation.

Friendship is an indispensable aid in framing for ourselves the higher moral life; if not itself a virtue, it is at least associated with virtue, and it proves itself of service in almost all conditions of our existence. Such results, however, are to be derived not from the worldly friendships of utility or pleasure, but only from those which are founded on virtue. The true friend is in fact a second self, and the true moral value of friendship lies in the fact that the friend presents to us a mirror of good actions, and so intensifies our consciousness and our appreciation of life.

Chapter 7

Scholastic Philosophy and Theology

Scholasticism means the philosophical systems and speculative tendencies of various medieval Christian thinkers, who, working against a background of fixed religious dogma, sought to solve anew general philosophical problems (as of faith and reason, will and intellect, realism and nominalism, and the provability of the existence of God), initially under the influence of the mystical and intuitional tradition of patristic philosophy, and especially Augustinianism, and later under that of Aristotle.

From the time of the Renaissance until at least the beginning of the 19th century, the term Scholasticism, not unlike the name Middle Ages, was used as an expression of blame and contempt. The medieval period was widely viewed as an insignificant intermezzo between Greco-Roman antiquity and modern times, and Scholasticism was normally taken to describe a philosophy busied with sterile subtleties, written in bad Latin, and above all subservient to Roman Catholic theology. Even the German idealist philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in his *Vorlesungen über*

die Geschichte der Philosophie (1833-36; *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*), declared that he would “put on seven-league boots” in order to skip over the thousand years between the 6th and 17th centuries and, having at last arrived at René Descartes, said that now he could “cry land like the sailor.” In those same first decades of the 19th century, on the other hand, the Romanticists swung the pendulum sharply to the opposite side, to an indiscriminate overestimation of everything medieval.

Today, scholars seem better able to confront the medieval epoch, as well as Scholasticism-i.e., its philosophy (and theology)-without prejudgments. One reason for this state of affairs is the voluminous research which has been devoted to this era and which has revealed its true nature, not only as a respectable continuation of the genuinely philosophical tradition but also as a period of exemplary personalities quite able to stand comparison with any of the great philosophers of antiquity or of modern times.

Nature and significance

Scholasticism is so much a many-sided phenomenon that, in spite of intensive research, scholars still differ considerably in their definition of the term and in the emphases that they place on individual aspects of the phenomenon. Some historians, seeming almost to capitulate to the complexity of the subject, confine themselves to the general point that Scholasticism can only be defined denotatively as that kind of philosophy that during the European Middle Ages was taught in the Christian schools. The question of its connotation, however, remains, namely, What kind of philosophy was it?

The answer that Scholasticism was “school” philosophy and, in fact, “Christian” school philosophy can be understood only by examining the historical exigencies that created the need for schools. The search thus leads the inquirer back to the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages—a point which, according to Hegel, was marked by the symbolic date 529 BC, when a decree of the Christian emperor Justinian closed the Platonic Academy in Athens and sealed “the downfall of the physical establishments of pagan philosophy.” In the same year, however, still another event occurred, which points much less to the past than to the coming age and, especially, to the rise of Scholasticism, namely, the foundation of Monte Cassino, the first Benedictine abbey, above one of the highways of the great folk migrations. This highly symbolic fact not only suggests the initial shift of the scene of the intellectual life from places like the Academy to

the cloisters of Christian monasteries but also marks even more a change in the *dramatis personae*. New nations were about to overrun the Roman Empire and its Hellenistic culture with long-range effects: when, centuries later, for example, one of the great Scholastics, St. Thomas Aquinas, was born, though he was rightly a southern Italian, his mother was of Norman stock, and his Sicilian birthplace was under central European (Hohenstaufen) control.

It was a decisive and astonishing fact that the so-called barbarian peoples who penetrated from the north into the ancient world often became Christians and set out to master the body of tradition that they found, including the rich harvest of patristic theology as well as the philosophical ideas of the Greeks and the political wisdom of the Romans. This learning could be accomplished only in the conquered empire’s language (i.e., in Latin), which therefore had to be learned first. In fact, the incorporation of both a foreign vocabulary and a different mode of thinking and the assimilation of a tremendous amount of predeveloped thought was the chief problem that confronted medieval philosophy at its beginnings. And it is only in the light of this fact that one of the decisive traits of medieval Scholasticism becomes understandable: Scholasticism above all was an unprecedented process of learning, literally a vast “scholastic” enterprise that continued for several centuries. Since the existing material had to be ordered and made accessible to learning and teaching, the very prosaic labour and “schoolwork” of organizing, sorting, and classifying materials inevitably acquired an unprecedented importance. Consequently, the writings of medieval Scholasticism quite naturally lack the magic of personal immediacy, for schoolbooks leave little room for originality. It is therefore misleading, though understandable, that certain polemicists have wrongly characterized Scholasticism as involving no more than the use of special didactic methods or a narrow adherence to traditional teachings.

First of all, if the major historical task of that epoch was really to learn, to acquire, and to preserve the riches of tradition, a certain degree of “scholasticity” was not only inevitable but essential. It is not at all certain that today’s historians would have direct intellectual access to Plato, Aristotle, and St. Augustine had the Scholastics not done their patient spadework. Besides, the progress from the stage of mere collection of given sentences and their interpretation (*expositio, catena, lectio*), to the systematic discussion of texts and problems (*quaestio, disputatio*), and finally to the grand attempts to give a comprehensive view of the whole of attainable truth (*summa*)

was necessarily at the same time a clear progression toward intellectual autonomy and independence, which in order to culminate, as it did in the 13th century, in the great works of Scholasticism's Golden Age, required in addition the powers of genius, of philosophers like St. Albertus Magnus and Aquinas.

On the other hand, the moment had to come when the prevalent preoccupation with existing knowledge would give way to new questions, which demanded consideration and answers that could emerge only from direct experience. By the later Middle Ages, procedures for exploiting and discussing antecedent stocks of insight had been largely institutionalized, and it was an obvious temptation to perpetuate the dominion of those procedures - which could lead only to total sterility. It is widely agreed that this is almost exactly what did happen in the 14th century in what is called the "decline" and disintegration of Scholasticism.

Roots of Scholasticism

From the beginning of medieval Scholasticism the natural aim of all philosophical endeavour to achieve the "whole of attainable truth" was clearly meant to include also the teachings of Christian faith, an inclusion which, in the very concept of Scholasticism, was perhaps its most characteristic and distinguishing element. Although the idea of including faith was expressed already by Augustine and the early Church Fathers, the principle was explicitly formulated by the pivotal early 6th-century scholar Boethius. Born in Rome and educated in Athens, Boethius was one of the great mediators and translators, living on the narrow no-man's-land that divided the epochs. His famous book, *De consolatione philosophiae* (*The Consolation of Philosophy*), was written while he, indicted for treachery and imprisoned by King Theodoric the Goth, awaited his own execution. It is true that the book is said to be, aside from the Bible, one of the most translated, most commented upon, and most printed books in world history; and that Boethius made (unfinished) plans to translate and to comment upon, as he said, "every book of Aristotle and all the dialogues of Plato." But the epithet that he won as "one of the founders of Scholasticism" refers to quite another side of his work. Strictly speaking, it refers to the last sentence of a very short tractate on the Trinity, which reads, "As far as you are able, join faith to reason"-an injunction which in fact was to become, for centuries, the formal foundation of Scholasticism. Instead of "faith," such concepts as revelation, authority, or tradition could be (and, indeed, have been)

cited; and "reason," though unambiguously meant to designate the natural powers of human cognition, could also be granted (and, in fact, has been granted) very different meanings. In any case, the connection between faith and reason postulated in this principle was from the beginning and by its very nature a highly explosive compound.

Boethius himself already carried out his program in a rather extraordinary way: though his *Opuscula sacra* (*Sacred Works*) dealt almost exclusively with theological subjects, there was not a single Bible quotation in them: logic and analysis was all.

Though called the "first Scholastic," Boethius was at the same time destined to be for almost a millennium the last layman in the field of European philosophy. His friend Cassiodorus, author of the *Institutiones*-an unoriginal catalog of definitions and subdivisions, which (in spite of their dryness) became a source book and mine of information for the following centuries-who, like Boethius, occupied a position of high influence at the court of Theodoric and was also deeply concerned with the preservation of the intellectual heritage, decided in his later years to quit his political career and to live with his enormous library in a monastery. This fact again is highly characteristic of the development of medieval Scholasticism: intellectual life needs not only teachers and students and not only a stock of knowledge to be handed down; there is also needed a certain guaranteed free area within human society as well, a kind of sheltered enclosure, within which the concern for "nothing but truth" can exist and unfold. The Platonic Academy, as well as (for a limited time) the court of Theodoric, had been enclosures of this kind; but in the politically unsettled epoch to come "no plant would thrive except one that germinated and grew in the cloister."

The principle of the conjunction of faith and reason, which Boethius had proclaimed, and the way in which he himself carried it out were both based on a profound and explicit confidence in human intellectual capacity-a confidence that could possibly lead one day to the rationalistic conviction that there cannot be anything that exceeds the power of human reason to comprehend, not even the mysteries of divine revelation. To be sure, the great thinkers of Scholasticism, in spite of their emphatic affirmation of faith and reason, consistently rejected any such rationalistic claim. But it must nonetheless be admitted that Scholasticism on the whole, and by virtue of its basic approach, contained within itself the danger of an overestimation of rationality, which recurrently emerged throughout its history.

On the other hand, there had been built in, from the beginning, a corrective and warning, which in fact kept the internal peril of rationalism within bounds, namely, the corrective exercised by the “negative theology” of the so-called Pseudo-Dionysius, around whose writings revolved some of the strangest events in the history of Western culture. The true name of this protagonist is, in spite of intensive research, unknown. Probably it will remain forever an enigma why the author of several Greek writings-among them *Peri theion onomaton* (*On the Divine Names*), *Peri tes ouranias hierarchias* (*On the Celestial Hierarchy*), and *Peri mustikes theologias* (*On Mystical Theology*)-called himself “Dionysius the Presbyter” and, to say the least, suggested that he was actually Denis the Areopagite, a disciple of St. Paul the Apostle (Acts of the Apostles). In reality, almost all historians agree that Pseudo-Dionysius, as he came to be called, was probably a Syrian Neoplatonist, a contemporary of Boethius. Whatever the truth of the matter may be, his writings exerted an inestimable influence for more than 1,000 years by virtue of the somewhat surreptitious quasi-canonical authority of their author, whose books were venerated, as has been said, “almost like the Bible itself.” A 7th-century Greek theologian, St. Maximus the Confessor, wrote the first commentaries on these writings, which were followed over the centuries by a long succession of commentators, among them Albertus Magnus and Aquinas. The main fact is that the unparalleled influence of the Areopagite writings preserved in the Latin West an idea, which otherwise could have been repressed and lost (since it cannot easily be coordinated with rationality)-that of a negative theology or philosophy that could act as a counter-poise against rationalism. It could be called an Eastern idea present and effective in the Occident. But after the Great Schism (1054), which erected a wall between East and West that lasted for centuries, Denis the Areopagite, having become himself (through translations and commentaries) a Westerner “by adoption,” was the only one among all of the important Greco-Byzantine thinkers who penetrated into the schools of Western Christendom. Thus, negative theology was brought to medieval Scholasticism, as it were, through the back door.

The most important book of Denis, which dealt with the names that can be applied to God, exemplified his negative theology. It maintained first of all the decidedly biblical thesis that no appropriate name can be given to God at all unless he himself reveals it. But then Denis showed that even the revealed names, since they must be comprehensible to humans’ finite understanding, cannot possibly reach

or express the nature of God; and that in consequence, every affirmative statement about God requires at once the corrective of the coordinate negation. The theologian cannot even call God “real” or “being,” because he derives these concepts from the things to which God has given reality; and the Creator cannot possibly be of the same nature as that which he has created. Thus, *On Mystical Theology* concluded by finally relativizing also the negations, because God surpasses anything that humans may possibly say of him, whether it be affirmative or negative.

Scholasticism certainly could have learned all of this also from Augustine, who repeatedly warned that “Whatever you understand cannot be God.” But probably an authority of even greater weight than Augustine was needed to counteract a reason that was tending to overrate its own powers; and this authority was attributed, although falsely, to the works of Denis the Areopagite. This impact could, of course, not be restricted to the idea of God; it necessarily concerned and changed humanity’s whole conception of the world and of existence. The influence of Denis is reflected in the noteworthy fact that Aquinas, for instance, not only employed more than 1,700 quotations from Denis the Areopagite but also appealed almost regularly to his work whenever he spoke, as he often did (and in astonishingly strong terms), of the inexhaustible mystery of being. Aquinas, however, who also wrote a remarkable commentary on Denis’s book *On the Divine Names*, is mentioned here only as an example, albeit a most telling example.

At the very end of the medieval era of Scholasticism, the Areopagite emerged once more in the work of a 15th-century cardinal, Nicholas of Cusa, also known as a mathematician and advocate of experimental knowledge, in whose library there are preserved several translations of the Areopagite writings-replete, moreover, with marginal notes in Nicholas’s handwriting. But even without this concrete evidence, it would be quite plain that his doctrine of “knowing nonknowing” is closely linked to the Areopagite’s conviction that all of reality is unfathomable.

The translation into Latin of the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, which was made in the 9th century-i.e., some 400 years after the death of its author-by John Scotus Erigena, is itself worthy of mention, especially because the translator was one of the most remarkable figures of early medieval philosophy. After generations of brave and efficient collectors, organizers, and schoolmasters had come and gone, Erigena,

in his *De divisione natura (On the Division of Nature)*, developed the Dionysian Neoplatonism on his own and tried to construct a systematic conception of the universe, a more or less pantheistic worldview, which (as Étienne Gilson says) for a moment offered the Latin West the opportunity-or the temptation-to choose the way of the East once and for all. The church, though not until centuries later, condemned the book, apparently convinced that any counterpoise to its own position could become dangerous in itself.

Early Scholastic period

If there was any philosophical-theological thinker of importance during the Middle Ages who remained untouched by the spirit of the Areopagite, it was the 11th-century Benedictine St. Anselm of Canterbury, a highly cultivated Franco-Italian theologian who for years was prior and abbot of the abbey Le Bec in Normandy and then became, somewhat violently, the archbishop of Canterbury. In Anselm's entire work there is not a single quotation from Denis; not even the name is mentioned. Consequently, Anselm's thinking, thus freed from the corrective embodied in the Areopagite's negative theology, displayed a practically unlimited confidence in the power of human reason to illuminate even the mysteries of Christian faith; he thus frequently approached a kind of rationalism, which did not shrink from the attempt to demonstrate, on compelling rational grounds, that salvation (for example) through God incarnate was philosophically necessary. To be sure, a theologian such as Anselm certainly would never have subscribed to the extreme thesis that nothing exists that is beyond the power of human reason to comprehend: the two famous phrases, coined by him and expressing again, in a grandiose formulation, the principle of Boethius, "faith seeking to be understood" and "I believe in order to understand," clearly proclaim his faith in the mysteries of revelation as comprising the very basis of all reasoning. Nevertheless, in the case of Anselm, the very peculiar conjunction of faith and reason was accomplished not so much through any clear intellectual coordination as through the religious energy and saintliness of an unusual personality. It was accomplished, so to speak, rather as an act of violence, which could not possibly last. The conjunction was bound to break up, with the emphasis falling either on some kind of rationalism or on a hazardous irrationalization of faith.

That this split did actually happen can be read to some extent in the fate of the "Anselmic argument," which Immanuel Kant, 700 years later, was to reject as the "ontological proof of God"-connecting

it, however, not with the name of Anselm but with that of Descartes, the earliest modern philosopher. It is, in fact, significant that Descartes, in his proof of the existence of God, imagined that he was saying the same thing as Anselm, and that, on the other hand, Anselm would scarcely have recognized his own argument had he encountered it in the context of Descartes's *Discours de la méthode* (1637; *Discourse on Method*), which claims to be "pure" philosophy based upon an explicit severance from the concept of God held by faith. But given Anselm's merely theoretical starting point, that severance was not merely to be expected; it was almost inevitable.

But, also within the framework of medieval Scholasticism, a dispute was always brewing between the dialecticians, who emphasized or overemphasized reason, and those who stressed the suprarational purity of faith. Berengar of Tours, an 11th-century logician, metaphysician, and theologian, who was fond of surprising formulations, maintained the preeminence of thinking over any authority, holding in particular that the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist was logically impossible. His contemporary the Italian hermit-monk and cardinal St. Peter Damian, however-who was apparently the first to use the ill-famed characterization of philosophy as the "handmaid of theology"-replied that, if God's omnipotence acts against the principle of contradiction (according to which it is impossible for a proposition to be both true and false), then so much the worse for the science of logic. Quite analogous to the foregoing controversy, though conducted on a much higher intellectual level, was the bitter fight that broke out almost one century later between a Cistercian reformer, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and a logician and theologian, Peter Abelard. Bernard, a vigorous and ambivalent personality, was in the first place a man of religious practice and mystical contemplation, who, at the end of his dramatic life, characterized his odyssey as that of *anima quaerens Verbum*, "a soul in search of the Word." Although he by no means rejected philosophy on principle, he looked with deep suspicion upon the primarily logical approach to theology espoused by Abelard. "This man," said Bernard, "presumes to be able to comprehend by human reason the entirety of God."

Logic was at that time, as a matter of fact, the main battleground of all Scholastic disputations. "Of all philosophy, logic most appealed to me," said Abelard, who by "logic" understood primarily a discipline not unlike certain 20th-century approaches, the "critical analysis of thought on the basis of linguistic expression." From this viewpoint (of

linguistic logic), Abelard also discussed with penetrating sharpness the so-called “problem of universals,” which asks, Is there an “outside” and objective reality standing, for example, not only for the name “Socrates” but also for such common names as “human,” “canine,” and the like? Or do common concepts (“universals”) possess only the reality of subjective thought or perhaps merely that of the sound of the word? As is well known, it has been asserted that this was the principal, or even the only, subject of concern in medieval Scholasticism—a charge that is misleading, although the problem did greatly occupy philosophers from the time of Boethius. Their main concern from the beginning was the whole of reality and existence.

The advance of medieval thought to a highly creative level was foreshadowed, in those very same years before Abelard died, by Hugh of Saint-Victor (an Augustinian monk of German descent), when he wrote *De sacramentis Christianae fidei* (*On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*), the first book in the Middle Ages that could rightly be called a *summa*; in its introduction, in fact, the term itself is used as meaning a comprehensive view of all that exists (*brevis quaedam summa omnium*). To be sure, its author stands wholly in the tradition of Augustine and the Areopagite; yet he is also the first medieval theologian who proclaims an explicit openness toward the natural world. Knowledge of reality is, in his understanding, the prerequisite for contemplation; each of the seven liberal arts aims “to restore God’s image in us.” “Learn everything,” he urged; “later you will see that nothing is superfluous.”

It was on this basis that the university—which was not the least of the achievements of medieval Scholasticism—was to take shape. And it was the University of Paris, in particular, that for some centuries was to be the most representative university of the West. Though there are usually a variety of reasons and causes for such a development, in this case the importance of the university—unlike that of Bologna and also of Oxford—lay mainly in the fact that it was founded in the most radical way upon those branches of knowledge that are “universal” by their very nature: upon theology and philosophy. It is thus remarkable, though not altogether surprising, that there seems to have existed not a single *summa* of the Middle Ages that did not, in some way or other, derive from the University of Paris.

Strangely enough, the classical theological-philosophical textbook used in the following centuries at the universities of the West was not the first *summa*, composed by Hugh of Saint-Victor, but was instead

a work by Peter Lombard, a theologian who probably attended Abelard’s lectures and who became magister at the cathedral school of Notre-Dame and, two decades later, bishop of Paris. Lombard’s famous *Sententiarum libri iv* (*Four Books of Sentences*)—which, though written one or two decades later than Hugh’s *summa*, belonged to an earlier historical species—contained about 1,000 texts from the works of Augustine, which constitute nearly four-fifths of the whole. Much more important than the book itself, however, were the nearly 250 commentaries on it, by which—into the 16th century—every master of theology had to begin his career as a teacher. In view of this wide usage, it is not astonishing that Lombard’s book underwent some transformations, at the hands, for instance, of its most ingenious commentator, Aquinas, but also (and even more so) at the hands of John Duns Scotus in his *Opus Oxoniense*, which, in spite of being a work of extremely personal cast, was outwardly framed as a commentary on the “Master of Sentences.”

Maturity of Scholasticism

Clearly, the worldview of Western Christendom, on the whole Augustinian and Platonic in inspiration and founded upon Lombard’s “Augustine breviary,” was beginning to be rounded out into a system and to be institutionalized in the universities. At the very moment of its consolidation, however, an upheaval was brewing that would shake this novel conception to its foundations: the main works of Aristotle, hitherto unknown in the West, were being translated into Latin—among them his *Ta meta ta physika* (*Metaphysics*), the *Physike* (*Physics*), the *Ethika Nikomacheia* (*Nicomachean Ethics*), and *Peri psyches*, best known by its Latin title *De Anima* (*On the Soul*). These writings were not merely an addition of something new to the existing stock; they involved an enormous challenge. Suddenly, a new, rounded, coherent view of the world was pitted against another more-or-less coherent traditional view; and because this challenge bore the name of Aristotle, it could not possibly be ignored, for Aristotle’s books on logic, translated and equipped with commentaries by Boethius, had for centuries been accepted as one of the foundations of all culture. During the lifetime of Abelard the full challenge of the Aristotelian work had not yet been presented, though it had been developing quietly along several paths, some of which were indeed rather fantastic. For instance, most of the medieval Latin translations of Aristotle stem not from the original Greek but from earlier Arabic translations.

Within the Western Christendom of the 2nd millennium, a wholly new readiness to open the mind to the concrete reality of the world

had arisen, a view of the universe and life that resembled the Aristotelian viewpoint. The tremendous eagerness with which this new philosophy was embraced was balanced, however, by a deep concern lest the continuity of tradition and the totality of truth be shattered by the violence of its assimilation. And this danger was enhanced by the fact that Aristotle's works did not come alone; they came, in fact, accompanied by the work of Arabic commentators and their heterodox interpretations.

The most influential Arabic commentators were an 11th-century polymath, Avicenna, a Persian by birth, and a 12th-century philosopher, Averroës, born in Spain. Avicenna, personal physician to sovereigns but also a philosopher and theologian, read-according to his own account-Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 40 times without understanding it, until he learned the text by heart. The English historian of philosophy F.C. Copleston called him "the real creator of a Scholastic system in the Islamic world." In the view of Averroës, who was not only a philosopher but also a jurist and a doctor, Aristotle's philosophy represented simply the perfection of human knowledge; and to the West, he himself was to become the preeminent commentator. A third great commentator was a 12th-century orthodox Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides, also born in Spain, who wrote his main works in Arabic. Maimonides was at the same time a vigorous adherent of the Aristotelian worldview and was thus confronted by the same unending task that preoccupied the great teachers of medieval Christendom. At first sight it appears strange that none of these three thinkers had any appreciable influence within his own world (neither Islam nor Judaism knew of any such thing as a "discovery" of Aristotle), whereas on almost every page of the 13th-century Christian *summae* the names of Avicenna, Averroës, and Maimonides are found.

The first theologian of the Middle Ages who boldly accepted the challenge of the new Aristotelianism was Albertus Magnus, an encyclopedic scholar. Although he knew no Greek, he conceived a plan of making accessible to the Latin West the complete works of Aristotle by way of commentaries and paraphrases; and, unlike Boethius, he did carry out this resolve. He also penetrated and commented upon the works of the Areopagite; he was likewise acquainted with those of the Arabs, especially Avicenna; and he knew Augustine. Nevertheless, he was by no means primarily a person of bookish scholarship; his strongest point, in fact, was the direct observation of nature and experimentation. After having taught for

some years at the University of Paris, he traveled, as a Dominican superior, through almost all of Europe. Not only was he continually asking questions of fishermen, hunters, beekeepers, and birdcatchers, but he himself also bent his sight to the things of the visible world. But amid the most palpable descriptions of bees, spiders, and apples, recorded in two voluminous books on plants and animals, Albertus formulated completely new, and even revolutionary, methodological principles—for instance, "There can be no philosophy about concrete things," or, "in such matters only experience can provide certainty."

With Albertus, the problem of the conjunction of faith and reason had suddenly become much more difficult, because reason itself had acquired a somewhat new meaning. "Reason" implied, in his view, not only the capacity for formally correct thinking, for finding adequate creatural analogies to the truths of revelation, but also, above all, the capacity to grasp the reality that humans encounter. Henceforth, the Boethian principle of "joining faith with reason" would entail the never-ending task of bringing belief into a meaningful coordination with the incessantly multiplying stock of natural knowledge, both of humans and of the universe. Since Albertus's nature, however, was given more to conquest than to the establishment of order, the business of integrating all of these new and naturally divergent elements into a somewhat consistent intellectual structure waited for another, his pupil Thomas Aquinas.

To epitomize the intellectual task that Aquinas set for himself, the image of Odysseus's bow, which was so difficult to bend that an almost superhuman strength was needed, is fitting. As a young student at the University of Naples, Aquinas had encountered in the purest possible form both extremes, which, though they seemed inevitably to be pulling away from one another, it was nevertheless his life's task to join: one of these extremes was the dynamic, voluntary poverty movement whose key word was "the Bible"; and the second phenomenon was the Aristotelian writings and outlook, which at that time could have been encountered nowhere else in so intensive a form. And "Aristotle" meant to Aquinas not so much an individual author as a specific worldview, namely, the affirmation of natural reality as a whole, including the bodies and natural cognitive powers of human beings. To be sure, the resulting *Summa theologiae* (1265 or 1266–73), which Aquinas himself chose to leave incomplete, was a magnificent intellectual structure; but it was never intended to be a closed system of definitive knowledge. Aquinas could no longer

possess the magnificent naïveté of Boethius, who had considered it possible to discuss the Trinitarian God without resorting to the Bible, nor could he share Anselm's conviction that Christian faith so completely concurred with natural reason that it could be proved on compelling rational grounds.

In the meantime, the poles of the controversy—the biblical impulses, on the one hand, and the philosophical and secular ones, on the other—had begun to move vigorously apart, and partisans moving in both directions found some encouragement in Aquinas himself. But in his later years he realized that the essential compatibility as well as the relative autonomy of these polar positions and the necessity for their conjunction had to be clarified anew by going back to a deeper root of both; that is, to a more consistent understanding of the concepts of creation and createdness. At Paris, he had to defend his own idea of “a theologically based worldliness and a theology open to the world” not only against the secularistic “philosophism” of Siger de Brabant, a stormy member of the faculty of arts, and against an aggressive group of heterodox Aristotelians around him, but also (and even more) against the traditional (Augustinian) objection that by advocating the rights of all natural things Aquinas would encroach upon the rights of God, and that, besides, the theologian needs to know only that part of creation that is pertinent to his theological subject. The latter idea was supported also by the Italian mystical theologian St. Bonaventure, who, in his earlier days as a colleague of Aquinas at the university, had likewise been enamoured of Aristotle but later, alarmed by the secularism that was growing in the midst of Christendom, became more mistrustful of the capacities of natural reason.

Aquinas answered this objection in somewhat the following way: the benefit that the theologian may derive from an investigation of natural reality cannot be determined in advance, but, in general, faith presupposes and therefore needs natural knowledge of the world; at times, an error concerning the creation leads people astray also from the truth of faith. This may sound like an optimistic rationalism, but the corrective of negative theology and philosophy was also present in the mind of Aquinas. Not only, as he argued in his treatise on God, do humans not know what God is; they do not know the essences of things either.

Late Scholastic period

Aquinas did not succeed in bridging the faith-reason gulf. When he left Paris (1272) and after his death (1274), the gulf became much

more radical. Indeed, on March 7, 1277, the Archbishop of Paris formally condemned a list of sentences, some of them close to what Aquinas himself had allegedly or really taught. This ecclesiastical act, questionable though it may have been in its methods and personal motivations, was not only understandable but unavoidable, since it was directed against what, after all, amounted in principle to an antitheological, rationalistic secularism. Quite another matter, however, were the factual effects of the edict, which were rather disastrous. Above all, two of the effects were pernicious: instead of free disputes among individuals, organized blocks (or “schools”) now began to form; and the cooperative dialogue between theology and philosophy turned into mutual indifference or distrust. Nonetheless, the basic principle itself (“join faith with reason”) had not yet been explicitly repudiated. This was to happen in the next generation.

The negative element, as formulated in the theology of the Areopagite, proved to be insufficient as a corrective to counter the overemphasis of reason, for reason seemed to imply the idea of necessity; Anselm's asserted “compelling grounds” for revealed truths, for example, were akin to such a necessitarianism. A second corrective was therefore demanded, and this took the name of “freedom”—which indeed was the battle cry of Duns Scotus. Scotus used the term primarily with reference to God; consequently, since redemption, grace, and salvation as well as all of creation were the work of God's groundless, absolute freedom, there could be no “necessary reasons,” if indeed any reasons at all, for anything. It was therefore futile to attempt to coordinate faith with speculative reason. Clearly, Scotus's theological starting point made the conjunction of what humans believe with what they know every bit as difficult as it had been in Siger of Brabant's secularistic “philosophism.” From both positions there was only one step to the doctrine of a “double truth”—a step that in fact was taken in the 14th century by the nominalist William of Ockham, to whom singular facts alone were “real” and their coherence was not. This mere factuality, he held, can neither be calculated nor deduced, but only experienced; reason therefore means nothing but the power to encounter concrete reality. And upon such soil only a consistently “positive” theology could thrive. Any collaboration with speculative reason must be rejected as untheological. Faith is one thing and knowledge an altogether different matter, and a conjunction of the two is neither meaningfully possible nor even desirable. Inexorably, and justified by reasons on both sides, a divorce was taking place between faith and reason—to the connection of which the energies of almost 1,000 years

had been devoted. What was occurring was the demise of medieval Scholasticism.

Enduring features

But not all of Scholasticism is specifically medieval and therefore definitively belonging to the dead past; there are perennial elements that are meant for every age, the present one included, three of which may be here distinguished. First, not only has Scholasticism held true to the normal historical rule that ideas, once thought and expressed, remain present and significant in the following time, but the medieval intellectual accomplishments have surpassed the rule and exerted, though more or less anonymously, a quite exceptional influence even on philosophers who consciously revolted against Scholasticism. Modern historical investigations have clearly shown that the classical modern philosophers Descartes, John Locke, Benedict de Spinoza, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz owed much to medieval ideas. Of Descartes, for instance, it has been said, contrary to the usual view, that he could quite well have been “included with the later Scholastics”; and even Charles Sanders Peirce, the originator of American pragmatism, referred not too rarely to Scholastic maxims. Secondly, there have been explicit attempts to go back to Scholastic thinkers and inspire a revival of their basic ideas. Two chief movements of this kind were the Scholasticism of the Renaissance (called *Barockscholastik*) and the Neoscholasticism of the 19th and 20th centuries, both of which were primarily interested in the work of Aquinas.

Renaissance Scholasticism received its first impulses from the Reformation. One of its leading figures, Cardinal Cajetan, whose Dominican name was Tommaso de Vio, had some famous disputations with Martin Luther. Cajetan’s great commentary on Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae* exerted for at least three centuries an enormous influence on the formation of Catholic theology. He was much more than a commentator, however; his original treatise *De nominum analogia* (1498; *On the Analogy of Names*), for example, can even pass as a prelude to modern linguistic philosophy. The so-called Silver Age of Scholastic thought, which occurred in the 16th century, is represented by two Spaniards: Francisco de Vitoria, of the first half of the century, and Francisco Suárez, of the second half, were both deeply engaged in what is now called the “Counter-Reformation.” Although they also commented on the works of Aquinas, the Renaissance Scholastics were much less concerned with looking back to the past than with addressing the problems of their own epoch, such as those of international law, colonialism, resistance to an unjust government,

and world community. Although Suárez was for more than 100 years among the most esteemed authors, even in Protestant universities, Renaissance Scholasticism was eradicated by Enlightenment philosophy and German idealism. This, in turn, gave rise in due time to the Neoscholasticism of the 19th century, one of the most effective promoters of which was a German Jesuit, Joseph Kleutgen, who published a voluminous scholarly apology of patristic and Scholastic theology and philosophy and was also responsible for the outline of the papal encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII (1879), which explicitly proclaimed the “instauration of Christian philosophy according to St. Thomas.” The result, fed of course from many different sources, was that all over the world new centres of Scholastic research and higher learning arose, and a multitude of periodicals and systematic textbooks were produced. The immeasurable educational benefit of this enterprise for several generations of students, however, was as undeniable as the unique contributions of some Neoscholastic thinkers to modern intellectual life. A weak point, on the other hand, seemed to be a somewhat “unhistorical” approach to reality and existence. In any case, it is scarcely a matter of mere chance that, after World War II, the impact of existentialism and Marxism caused a noticeable decline in Neoscholasticism and that the positions of “Scholastic” authors active in the 1970s were already beyond Neoscholasticism.

The third and most important aspect of the enduring significance of the Scholastic movement implies the acceptance of the following fundamental tenets: that there exist truths that humans know, and also revealed truths of faith; that these two kinds of truth are not simply reducible to one another; that faith and theology do not, by means of symbols and sensuous images, merely say the same as what reason and science say more clearly by conceptual argumentation (Averroës, Hegel); that, on the other hand, reason is not a “prostitute” (Luther), but is the natural human capacity to grasp the real world; that since reality and truth, though essentially inexhaustible, are basically one, faith and reason cannot ultimately contradict one another. Those who hold these convictions appear quite unable to refrain from trying to coordinate what they know with what they believe. Any epoch that addresses itself to this interminable task can ill afford to ignore the demanding and multiform paradigm of Scholasticism; but to the problems posed it will have to find its own answer.

Chapter 8

St. Thomas Aquinas and Summa Theologica

Italian Dominican theologian St. Thomas Aquinas was one of the most influential medieval thinkers of Scholasticism and the father of the Thomistic school of theology. Philosopher and theologian St. Thomas Aquinas was born circa 1225 in Roccasecca, Italy. Combining the theological principles of faith with the philosophical principles of reason, he ranked among the most influential thinkers of medieval Scholasticism. An authority of the Roman Catholic Church and a prolific writer, Aquinas died on March 7, 1274, at the Cistercian monastery of Fossanova, near Terracina, Latium, Papal States, Italy.

The son of Landulph, count of Aquino, St. Thomas Aquinas was born circa 1225 in Roccasecca, Italy, near Aquino, Terra di Lavoro, in the Kingdom of Sicily. Thomas had eight siblings, and was the youngest child. His mother, Theodora, was countess of Teano. Though Thomas's family members were descendants of Emperors Frederick I and Henry VI, they were considered to be of lower nobility. Before St. Thomas

Aquinas was born, a holy hermit shared a prediction with his mother, foretelling that her son would enter the Order of Friars Preachers, become a great learner and achieve unequalled sanctity.

Following the tradition of the period, St. Thomas Aquinas was sent to the Abbey of Monte Cassino to train among Benedictine monks when he was just 5 years old. In Wisdom 8:19, St. Thomas Aquinas is described as “a witty child” who “had received a good soul.” At Monte Cassino, the quizzical young boy repeatedly posed the question, “What is God?” to his benefactors. St. Thomas Aquinas remained at the monastery until he was 13 years old, when the political climate forced him to return to Naples.

St. Thomas Aquinas spent the next five years completing his primary education at a Benedictine house in Naples. During those years, he studied Aristotle's work, which would later become a major launching point for St. Thomas Aquinas's own exploration of philosophy. At the Benedictine house, which was closely affiliated with the University of Naples, Thomas also developed an interest in more contemporary monastic orders. He was particularly drawn to those that emphasized a life of spiritual service, in contrast with the more traditional views and sheltered lifestyle he'd observed at the Abbey of Monte Cassino.

Circa 1239, St. Thomas Aquinas began attending the University of Naples. In 1243, he secretly joined an order of Dominican monks, receiving the habit in 1244. When his family found out, they felt so betrayed that he had turned his back on the principles to which they subscribed that they decided to kidnap him. Thomas's family held him captive for an entire year, imprisoned in the fortress of San Giovanni at Rocca Secca. During this time, they attempted to deprogram Thomas of his new beliefs. Thomas held fast to the ideas he had learned at university, however, and went back to the Dominican order following his release in 1245.

From 1245 to 1252, St. Thomas Aquinas continued to pursue his studies with the Dominicans in Naples, Paris and Cologne. He was ordained in Cologne, Germany, in 1250, and went on to teach theology at the University of Paris. Under the tutelage of St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas subsequently earned his doctorate in theology. Consistent with the holy hermit's prediction, Thomas proved an exemplary scholar, though, ironically, his modesty sometimes led his classmates to misperceive him as dim-witted. After reading Thomas's thesis and thinking it brilliant, his professor, St. Albert the Great,

proclaimed in Thomas's defense, "We call this young man a dumb ox, but his bellowing in doctrine will one day resound throughout the world!"

Theology and Philosophy

After completing his education, St. Thomas Aquinas devoted himself to a life of traveling, writing, teaching, public speaking and preaching. Religious institutions and universities alike yearned to benefit from the wisdom of "The Christian Apostle."

At the forefront of medieval thought was a struggle to reconcile the relationship between theology (faith) and philosophy (reason). People were at odds as to how to unite the knowledge they obtained through revelation with the information they observed naturally using their mind and their senses. Based on Averroes's "theory of the double truth," the two types of knowledge were in direct opposition to each other. St. Thomas Aquinas's revolutionary views rejected Averroes's theory, asserting that "both kinds of knowledge ultimately come from God" and were therefore compatible. Not only were they compatible, according to Thomas's ideology, they could work in collaboration: He believed that revelation could guide reason and prevent it from making mistakes, while reason could clarify and demystify faith. St. Thomas Aquinas's work goes on to discuss faith and reason's roles in both perceiving and proving the existence of God.

St. Thomas Aquinas believed that the existence of God could be proven in five ways, mainly by: 1) observing movement in the world as proof of God, the "Immovable Motor"; 2) observing cause and effect and identifying God as the cause of everything; 3) concluding that the impermanent nature of beings proves the existence of a necessary being, God, who originates only from within himself; 4) noticing varying levels of human perfection and determining that a supreme, perfect being must therefore exist; and 5) knowing that natural beings could not have intelligence without it being granted to them by God. Subsequent to defending people's ability to naturally perceive proof of God, Thomas also tackled the challenge of protecting God's image as an all-powerful being.

St. Thomas Aquinas also uniquely addressed appropriate social behavior toward God. In so doing, he gave his ideas a contemporary-some would say timeless-everyday context. Thomas believed that the laws of the state were, in fact, a natural product of human nature, and were crucial to social welfare. By abiding by the social laws of

the state, people could earn eternal salvation of their souls in the afterlife, he purported. St. Thomas Aquinas identified three types of laws: natural, positive and eternal. According to his treatise, natural law prompts man to act in accordance with achieving his goals and governs man's sense of right and wrong; positive law is the law of the state, or government, and should always be a manifestation of natural law; and eternal law, in the case of rational beings, depends on reason and is put into action through free will, which also works toward the accomplishment of man's spiritual goals.

Combining traditional principles of theology with modern philosophic thought, St. Thomas Aquinas's treatises touched upon the questions and struggles of medieval intellectuals, church authorities and everyday people alike. Perhaps this is precisely what marked them as unrivaled in their philosophical influence at the time, and explains why they would continue to serve as a building block for contemporary thought-garnering responses from theologians, philosophers, critics and believers-thereafter.

Major Works

A prolific writer, St. Thomas Aquinas penned close to 60 known works ranging in length from short to tome-like. Handwritten copies of his works were distributed to libraries across Europe. His philosophical and theological writings spanned a wide spectrum of topics, including commentaries on the Bible and discussions of Aristotle's writings on natural philosophy.

While teaching at Cologne in the early 1250s, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote a lengthy commentary on scholastic theologian Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences*, called *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, or *Commentary on the Sentences*. During that period, he also wrote *De ente et essentia*, or *On Being and Essence*, for the Dominican monks in Paris.

In 1256, while serving as regent master in theology at the University of Paris, Aquinas wrote *Impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*, or *Against Those Who Assail the Worship of God and Religion*, a treatise defending mendicant orders that William of Saint-Amour had criticized.

Written from 1265 to 1274, St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* is largely philosophical in nature and was followed by *Summa Contra Gentiles*, which, while still philosophical, comes

across to many critics as apologetic of the beliefs he expressed in his earlier works.

St. Thomas Aquinas is also known for writing commentaries examining the principles of natural philosophy espoused in Aristotle's writings: *On the Heavens*, *Meteorology*, *On Generation and Corruption*, *On the Soul*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Metaphysics*, among others.

Shortly after his death, St. Thomas Aquinas's theological and philosophical writings rose to great public acclaim and reinforced a strong following among the Dominicans. Universities, seminaries and colleges came to replace Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences* with *Summa Theologica* as the leading theology textbook. The influence of St. Thomas Aquinas's writing has been so great, in fact, that an estimated 6,000 commentaries on his work exist to date.

Later Life and Death

In June 1272, St. Thomas Aquinas agreed to go to Naples and start a theological studies program for the Dominican house neighboring the university. While he was still writing prolifically, his works began to suffer in quality. During the Feast of St. Nicolas in 1273, St. Thomas Aquinas had a mystical vision that made writing seem unimportant to him. At mass, he reportedly heard a voice coming from a crucifix that said, "Thou hast written well of me, Thomas; what reward wilt thou have?" to which St. Thomas Aquinas replied, "None other than thyself, Lord."

When St. Thomas Aquinas's confessor, Father Reginald of Piperno, urged him to keep writing, he replied, "I can do no more. Such secrets have been revealed to me that all I have written now appears to be of little value." St. Thomas Aquinas never wrote again. In January 1274, St. Thomas Aquinas embarked on a trip to Lyon, France, on foot to serve on the Second Council, but never made it there. Along the way, he fell ill at the Cistercian monastery of Fossanova, Italy. The monks wanted St. Thomas Aquinas to stay at the castle, but, sensing that his death was near, Thomas preferred to remain at the monastery, saying, "If the Lord wishes to take me away, it is better that I be found in a religious house than in the dwelling of a layperson." On his deathbed, St. Thomas Aquinas uttered his last words to the Cistercian monks who had so graciously attended him: "This is my rest forever and ever: Here will I dwell for I have chosen it." (Psalm 131:14) Often called "The Universal Teacher," St. Thomas Aquinas

died at the monastery of Fossanova on March 7, 1274. He was canonized by Pope John XXII in 1323.

Summa Theologica

Written from 1265-1274, the *Summa Theologica* is St. Thomas Aquinas' greatest work. Originally written for the "instruction of beginners," time has shown that all believers can come to learn from this enriching book. Organized systemically for the clearest way of "setting forth" the "sacred doctrine," Aquinas addresses many of Christianity's most pertinent questions in this multi-volume work. The First Part of the *Summa* begins with the existence and nature of God, before moving to creation and the nature of man. The Second Part contains his examination of morality and law; it also provides his account of the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues, and the seven deadly sins. The Third Part, uncompleted due to Aquinas' death, treats the incarnation and the sacraments. Taken together, the three parts compose one of the most impressive works of Christianity. Indeed, countless people from many centuries have studied and learned from the *Summa*; it has been widely influential from Aquinas' own day to the present. Hence, those with a passing inquiry or a serious question, an existential concern or a philosophical problem, can learn much from reading and studying St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*.

Because the doctor of Catholic truth ought not only to teach the proficient, but also to instruct beginners (according to the Apostle: *As unto little ones in Christ, I gave you milk to drink, not meat* - 1 Corinthians 3:1-2), we purpose in this book to treat of whatever belongs to the Christian religion, in such a way as may tend to the instruction of beginners. We have considered that students in this doctrine have not seldom been hampered by what they have found written by other authors, partly on account of the multiplication of useless questions, articles, and arguments, partly also because those things that are needful for them to know are not taught according to the order of the subject matter, but according as the plan of the book might require, or the occasion of the argument offer, partly, too, because frequent repetition brought weariness and confusion to the minds of readers.

Endeavouring to avoid these and other like faults, we shall try, by God's help, to set forth whatever is included in this sacred doctrine as briefly and clearly as the matter itself may allow.

- Prima Pars: Sacred Doctrine. The One God. The Blessed Trinity. Creation. The Angels. The Six Days. Man. The Government of Creatures.

- Prima Secundæ Partis: Man's Last End. Human Acts. Passions. Habits. Vice and Sin. Law. Grace.
- Secunda Secundæ Partis: Faith. Hope. Charity. Prudence. Justice. Fortitude. Temperance. Acts Which Pertain to Certain Men.
- Tertia Pars: The Incarnation. The Life of Christ. Sacraments. Baptism. Confirmation. The Holy Eucharist. Penance.
- Supplementum Tertie Partis: Penance (continued). Extreme Unction. Holy Orders. Matrimony. The Resurrection. Appendices.

The *Summa Theologica* is divided into three parts, and each of these three parts contains numerous subdivisions. Part 1 deals primarily with God and comprises discussions of 119 questions concerning the existence and nature of God, the Creation, angels, the work of the six days of Creation, the essence and nature of man, and divine government. Part 2 deals with man and includes discussions of 303 questions concerning the purpose of man, habits, types of law, vices and virtues, prudence and justice, fortitude and temperance, graces, and the religious versus the secular life. Part 3 deals with Christ and comprises discussions of 90 questions concerning the Incarnation, the Sacraments, and the Resurrection. Some editions of the *Summa Theologica* include a Supplement comprising discussions of an additional 99 questions concerning a wide variety of loosely related issues such as excommunication, indulgences, confession, marriage, purgatory, and the relations of the saints toward the damned. Scholars believe that Rainaldo da Piperno, a friend of Aquinas, probably gathered the material in this supplement from a work that Aquinas had completed before he began working on the *Summa Theologica*.

The *Summa Theologica*, as its title indicates, is a "theological summary." It seeks to describe the relationship between God and man and to explain how man's reconciliation with the Divine is made possible at all through Christ. To this end, Aquinas cites proofs for the existence of God and outlines the activities and nature of God. Approximately one-half of the *Summa Theologica* then examines the nature and purpose of man. Finally, Aquinas devotes his attention to the nature of Christ and the role of the Sacraments in effecting a bridge between God and man. Within these broad topical boundaries, though, Aquinas examines the nature of God and man in exquisite detail. His examination includes questions of how angels act on bodies, the union of body and soul, the cause and remedies of anger, cursing, and the comparison of one sin with another. Aquinas is attempting to offer a truly universal and rational view of all existence.

Analysis

Adopting Aristotelian principles and concepts, Aquinas attempts to explain the origin, operation, and purpose of the entire universe and the role that everything in the universe plays in the attainment of that purpose. Aquinas never doubts the truth of the tenets of his faith. Rather, he employs techniques of argument that he learned in the *disputations* to state, defend, and elaborate those tenets. The grandiose scope of the *Summa Theologica* derives from Aquinas's belief that a very significant portion of theology can be expressed and codified in a comprehensive and rational system.

Aquinas writes not only as a philosopher who is intellectually interested in the pursuit of truth, he writes primarily as a Catholic who is convinced that the salvation of humanity itself is at stake. This conviction propels him toward a rational exegesis of topics the truth of which is ultimately derived and founded on divine revelation. When a specific topic so allows, Aquinas uses philosophical concepts and vocabulary to examine that topic. The primary topics admitting of such philosophical examination are the existence of God, the nature and limits of human knowledge, and the purpose of man. For most other topics, Aquinas articulates a decidedly Catholic position on issues of Christian interest, such as the Holy Trinity, original sin, and the like.

At first glance, it would seem astonishing and even counterintuitive that Aquinas reframes much of Catholic theology in terms of Aristotle's pre-Christian philosophy. The pursuit of philosophy traditionally requires one to enter into debates with an open mind and to identify and re-examine one's own core assumptions about a given issue, yet Aquinas enlists Aristotle not for his aid in the unbiased critical examination of the tenets of Catholic belief but rather for the explication and defense of those tenets. At the same time, though, Aquinas's enlistment of Aristotle reveals Aquinas to be a remarkably fair, open minded, and indeed tolerant medieval thinker. He apparently believes that the fruits of the exercise of reason are not necessarily corrupt if the thinker is a non-Christian. This suggests that Aquinas believes that every human being, regardless of his or her beliefs, shares in humanity through the possession and use of reason. In this, Aquinas again reveals his indebtedness and allegiance to Aristotle, who had maintained that reason is the essential quality of humanity: it is that without which man cannot be man.

Chapter 9

Franciscan Scholastic Thinkers

Fourteenth-century Scholastic philosopher and controversial writer, born at or near the village of Ockham in Surrey, England, about 1280; died probably at Munich, about 1349. He is said to have studied at Merton College, Oxford, and to have had John Duns Scotus for teacher. At an early age he entered the Order of St. Francis. Towards 1310 he went to Paris, where he may have had Scotus once more for a teacher. About 1320 he became a teacher (*magister*) at the University of Paris. During this portion of his career he composed his works on Aristotelean physics and on logic. In 1323 he resigned his chair at the university in order to devote himself to ecclesiastical politics. In the controversies which were waged at that time between the advocates of the papacy and those who supported the claims of the civil power, he threw his lot with the imperial party, and contributed to the polemical literature of the day a number of pamphlets and treatises, of which the most important are “Opus nonaginta dierum”, “Compendium errorum Joannis Papæ XXII”, “Quæstiones octo de auctoritate summi

pontificis”. He was cited before the pontifical Court at Avignon in 1328, but managed to escape and join John of Jandun and Marsilius of Padua, who had taken refuge at the Court of Louis of Bavaria. It was to Louis that he made the boastful offer, “Tu me defendas gladio; ego te defendam calamo”.

1. William of Ockham

In his controversial writings William of Ockham appears as the advocate of secular absolutism. He denies the right of the popes to exercise temporal power, or to interfere in any way whatever in the affairs of the Empire. He even went so far as to advocate the validity of the adulterous marriage of Louis's son, on the grounds of political expediency, and the absolute power of the State in such matters. In philosophy William advocated a reform of Scholasticism both in method and in content. The aim of this reformation movement in general was simplification. This aim he formulated in the celebrated “Law of Parsimony”, commonly called “Ockham's Razor”: “Entia non sunt multiplicanda sine necessitate”. With this tendency towards simplification was united a very marked tendency towards skepticism—a distrust, namely, of the ability of the human mind to reach certitude in the most important problems of philosophy. Thus, in the process of simplification he denied the existence of intentional species, rejected the distinction between essence and existence, and protested against the Thomistic doctrine of active and passive intellect.

His skepticism appears in his doctrine that human reason can prove neither the immortality of the soul nor the existence, unity, and infinity of God. These truths, he teaches, are known to us by Revelation alone. In ethics he is a voluntarist, maintaining that all distinction between right and wrong depends on the will of God. William's best known contribution to Scholastic philosophy is his theory of universals, which is a modified form of Nominalism, more closely allied to Conceptualism than to Nominalism of the extreme type. The universal, he says, has no existence in the world of reality. Real things are known to us by intuitive knowledge, and not by abstraction. The universal is the object of abstractive knowledge. Therefore, the universal concept has for its object, not a reality existing in the world outside us, but an internal representation which is a product of the understanding itself and which “supposes” in the mind, for the things to which the mind attributes it, that is it holds, for the time being, the place of the things which it represents. It is the term of the reflective act of the mind. Hence the universal is not a mere word, as Roscelin taught, nor a *sermo*, as Abelard held, namely the word

as used in the sentence, but the mental substitute for real things, and the term of the reflective process. For this reason Ockham has been called a “Terminist”, to distinguish him from Nominalists and Conceptualists.

Ockham’s attitude towards the established order in the Church and towards the recognized system of philosophy in the academic world of his day was one of protest. He has, indeed, been called “the first Protestant”. Nevertheless, he recognized in his polemical writings the authority of the Church in spiritual matters, and did not diminish that authority in any respect. Similarly, although he rejected the rational demonstration of several truths which are fundamental in the Christian system of theology, he held firmly to the same truths as matters of faith. His effort to simplify Scholasticism was no doubt well-intentioned, and the fact that simplification was the fashion in those days would seem to indicate that a reform was needed. The over-refined subtleties of discussion among the Scholastics themselves, the multiplication of “formalities” by the followers of Scotus, the undue importance attached by some of the Thomists to their interpretation of the intentional species, and the introduction of the abstruse system of terminology which exceeded the bounds of good taste and moderation—all these indicated that the period of decay of Scholasticism had set in. On the other hand, it must be said that, while his purpose may have been the best, and while his effort was directed towards correcting an abuse that really existed, Ockham carried his process of simplification too far, and sacrificed much that was essential in Scholasticism while trying to rid Scholasticism of faults which were incidental.

2. Bonaventure

St. Bonaventure, known as “the seraphic doctor,” was born at Bagnorea in Tuscany, in 1221. He received the name of Bonaventure in consequence of an exclamation of St. Francis of Assisi, when, in response to the pleading of the child’s mother, the saint prayed for John’s recovery from a dangerous illness, and, foreseeing the future greatness of the little John, cried out “O Buona ventura”—O good fortune!

At the age of twenty-two St. Bonaventure entered the Franciscan Order. Having made his vows, he was sent to Paris to complete his studies under the celebrated doctor Alexander of Hales, an Englishman and a Franciscan. After the latter’s death he continued his course under his successor, John of Rochelle. In Paris he became the intimate

friend of the great St. Thomas Aquinas. He received the degree of Doctor, together with St. Thomas Aquinas, ceding to his friend against the latter’s inclination, the honor of having it first conferred upon him. Like St. Thomas Aquinas, he enjoyed the friendship of the holy King, St. Louis.

At the age of thirty-five he was chosen General of his Order and restored a perfect calm where peace had been disturbed by internal dissensions. He did much for his Order and composed *The Life of St. Francis*. He also assisted at the translation of the relics of St. Anthony of Padua. He was nominated Archbishop of York by Pope Clement IV, but he begged not to be forced to accept that dignity. Gregory X obliged him to take upon himself a greater one, that of Cardinal and Bishop of Albano, one of the six suffragan Sees of Rome. Before his death he abdicated his office of General of the Franciscan Order. He died while he was assisting at the Second Council of Lyons, on July 15, 1274.

Bonaventure wrote on almost every subject treated by the Schoolmen, and his writings are very numerous. The greater number of them deal with philosophy and theology. No work of Bonaventure’s is exclusively philosophical and bears striking witness to the mutual interpenetration of philosophy and theology that is a distinguishing mark of the Scholastic period. Much of St. Bonaventure’s philosophical thought shows a considerable influence by St. Augustine. So much so that De Wulf considers him the best representative of Augustinianism. St. Bonaventure adds Aristotelian principles to the Augustinian doctrine especially in connection with the illumination of the intellect according to Gilson. Augustine, who had imported into the west many of the doctrines that would define scholastic philosophy, was an incredibly important source of Bonaventure’s Platonism. The mystic Dionysius the Areopagite was another notable influence.

In philosophy Bonaventure presents a marked contrast to his contemporaries, Roger Bacon and Thomas Aquinas. While these may be taken as representing, respectively, physical science yet in its infancy, and Aristotelian scholasticism in its most perfect form, he presents the mystical and Platonizing mode of speculation that had already, to some extent, found expression in Hugo and Richard of St. Victor, and in Bernard of Clairvaux. To him, the purely intellectual element, though never absent, is of inferior interest when compared with the living power of the affections or the heart. St. Bonaventure receives the envoys of the Byzantine Emperor at the Second Council of Lyon.

Like Thomas Aquinas, with whom he shared numerous profound agreements in matters theological and philosophical, he combated the Aristotelian notion of the eternity of the world vigorously. Bonaventure accepts the Platonic doctrine that ideas do not exist *in rerum natura*, but as ideals exemplified by the Divine Being, according to which actual things were formed; and this conception has no slight influence upon his philosophy. Due to this philosophy, physicist and philosopher Max Bernhard Weinstein contended that Bonaventure showed strong pandeistic inclinations. Like all the great scholastic doctors, Bonaventura starts with the discussion of the relations between reason and faith. All the sciences are but the handmaids of theology; reason can discover some of the moral truths that form the groundwork of the Christian system, but others it can only receive and apprehend through divine illumination. To obtain this illumination, the soul must employ the proper means, which are prayer, the exercise of the virtues, whereby it is rendered fit to accept the divine light, and meditation that may rise even to ecstatic union with God. The supreme end of life is such union, union in contemplation or intellect and in intense absorbing love; but it cannot be entirely reached in this life, and remains as a hope for the future.

A master of the memorable phrase, Bonaventure held that philosophy opens the mind to at least three different routes humans can take on their journey to God. Non-intellectual material creatures he conceived as shadows and vestiges (literally, footprints) of God, understood as the ultimate cause of a world philosophical reason can prove was created at a first moment in time. Intellectual creatures he conceived of as images and likenesses of God, the workings of the human mind and will leading us to God understood as illuminator of knowledge and donor of grace and virtue. The final route to God is the route of being, in which Bonaventure brought Anselm's argument together with Aristotelian and Neoplatonic metaphysics to view God as the absolutely perfect being whose essence entails its existence, an absolutely simple being that causes all other, composite beings to exist.

Bonaventure, however, is not only a meditative thinker, whose works may form good manuals of devotion; he is a dogmatic theologian of high rank, and on all the disputed questions of scholastic thought, such as universals, matter, the principle of individualism, or the intellectus agens, he gives weighty and well-reasoned decisions. He agrees with Saint Albert the Great in regarding theology as a practical science; its truths, according to his view, are peculiarly adapted to influence

the affections. He discusses very carefully the nature and meaning of the divine attributes; considers universals to be the ideal forms pre-existing in the divine mind according to which things were shaped; holds matter to be pure potentiality that receives individual being and determinateness from the formative power of God, acting according to the ideas; and finally maintains that the intellectus agens has no separate existence. On these and on many other points of scholastic philosophy the "Seraphic Doctor" exhibits a combination of subtlety and moderation, which makes his works particularly valuable.

In form and intent the work of St. Bonaventure is always the work of a theologian; he writes as one for whom the only angle of vision and the proximate criterion of truth is the Christian faith. This fact influences his importance for the history of philosophy; when coupled with his style, it makes Bonaventure perhaps the least accessible of the major figures of the thirteenth century. This is true, not because he is a theologian, but because philosophy interests him largely as a *praeparatio evangelica*, as something to be interpreted as a foreshadow of or deviation from what God has revealed. In a way that is not true of Aquinas or Albert or Scotus, Bonaventure does not survive well the transition from his time to ours. It is difficult to imagine a contemporary philosopher, Christian or not, citing a passage from Bonaventure to make a specifically philosophical point. One must know philosophers to read Bonaventure, but the study of Bonaventure is seldom helpful for understanding philosophers and their characteristic problems. Bonaventure as a theologian is something else again, of course, as is Bonaventure the edifying author. It is in those areas, rather than in philosophy proper, that his continuing importance must be sought

3. John Duns Scotus (1266 - 1308)

John Duns Scotus, along with Bonaventure, Aquinas, and Ockham, is one of the four great philosophers of High Scholasticism. His work is encyclopedic in scope, yet so detailed and nuanced that he earned the epithet "Subtle Doctor," and no less a thinker than Ockham would praise his judgment as excelling all others in its subtlety. In opposition to the prevailing thought in metaphysics that the term "being" is analogical, Scotus argues that it must be a univocal term, a view others had feared would bring an end to metaphysics and natural theology. Scotus's novel account of universals and individuation gained a wide following and inspired brilliant counterarguments by Ockham and Thomist opponents. Despite its flaws, his argument for God's

existence, perhaps the most complicated of any ever written, is a philosophical tour de force. Scotus's distinction between intuitive and abstractive cognition structured much of the discussion of cognition for the rest of the scholastic period. In opposition to such thinkers as Aquinas and Godfrey of Fontaines, Scotus defends a moderate voluntarism in his account of free will, a view that would be influential into the modern period.

No one knows precisely when John Duns was born, but we are fairly certain he came from the eponymous town of Duns near the Scottish border with England. He, like many other of his compatriots, was called "Scotus," or "the Scot," from the country of his birth. He was ordained a priest on 17 March 1291. Because his bishop had just ordained another group at the end of 1290, we can place Scotus's birth in the first quarter of 1266, if he was ordained as early as canon law permitted. When he was a boy he joined the Franciscans, who sent him to study at Oxford, probably in 1288. He was still at Oxford in 1300, for he took part in a disputation there at some point in 1300 or 1301, once he had finished lecturing on the *Sentences*. Moreover, when the English provincial presented 22 names to Bishop Dalderby on 26 July 1300 for licenses to hear confessions at Oxford, Scotus's was among them. He probably completed his Oxford studies in 1301. He was not, however, incepted as a master at Oxford, for his provincial sent him to the more prestigious University of Paris, where he would lecture on the *Sentences* a second time.

Works

Scholars have made considerable progress in determining which of the works attributed to Scotus are genuine. Moreover, many key texts now exist in critical editions: the philosophical works in the St. Bonaventure edition, and the theological works in the Vatican edition. However, others have not yet been edited critically. The Wadding *Opera omnia* is not a critical edition, and the reliability of the texts varies considerably. Despite its title, Wadding's *Opera omnia* does not contain quite all of Scotus's works. Most importantly, what Wadding includes as the Paris *Reportatio* on Book 1 of the *Sentences* is actually Book 1 of the *Additiones magna*e, William of Alnwick's compilation of Scotus's thought based largely but not exclusively on his Parisian teaching. The Parisian *Reportatio* exists in several versions, but most of it only in manuscript. Scholars are still uncertain about the exact chronology of the works.

Early in his career, Scotus wrote a number of logical works: questions on Porphyry's *Isagoge* and on Aristotle's *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, and *Sophistical Refutations*. His Oxford lectures on the *Sentences* are recorded in his *Lectura*, and his disputations at Oxford are recorded in the first set of his *Collations*. Scotus probably began his *Questions on the Metaphysics* in the early stages of his career as well, but recent scholarship suggests that Scotus composed parts of this work, in particular on Books VII-IX, after he left England for Paris, and perhaps late in his career. Scotus also wrote an *Expositio* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and a set of questions on Aristotle's *On the Soul*, but more study is needed to determine their relationship with the rest of Scotus's corpus.

While still at Oxford, Scotus began reworking the *Lectura* into his *Ordinatio*, a fuller, more sophisticated commentary on the *Sentences*. At some point, probably after writing Book 1 d.5, Scotus departed for Paris, where he continued his work on the *Ordinatio*, incorporating into later sections material from his Parisian lectures on the *Sentences*. These Parisian lectures exist only in various versions of student reports, and so are called the *Reportatio Parisiensis*. Scotus's early disputations at Paris are recorded in the second set of his *Collations*. After his inception as master, he held one set of *Quodlibetal Questions*. Scotus's *Logica*, which Wadding's edition mistakenly includes as Question 1 of *Quaestiones miscellaneae de formalitatibus* (although Scotus wrote no such work), is a brief but important investigation of what follows from the claim that a and b are not formally identical, and supplements discussions of the formal distinction in the *Reportatio* and the *Ordinatio*. Scotus composed his famous treatise *De primo principio* late in his career. While it cannibalizes large chunks of the *Ordinatio*, it is nevertheless Scotus's most mature treatment of the central claims of natural theology. Scholars are still uncertain whether one further work, the *Theoremata*, is genuine.

Scotus died just a few years after his inception, leaving behind a mass of works he had intended to complete or polish for publication. Nevertheless, he soon exercised as great an influence as any other thinker from the High Scholastic Period, including Bonaventure and Aquinas. Despite fierce opposition from many quarters, and in particular from Scotus's admiring confrere William Ockham, the Scotist school flourished well into the seventeenth century, where his influence can be seen in such writers as Descartes and Bramhall. Interest in Scotus's

philosophy dwindled in the eighteenth century, and when nineteenth century philosophers and theologians again grew interested in scholastic thought, they generally turned to Aquinas and his followers, not to Scotus. However, the Franciscans continuously attested to Scotus's importance, and in the twentieth century their efforts sparked a revival of interest in Scotus, which has engendered many studies of high quality as well as a critical edition of Scotus's writing, eleven volumes of which are now in print. It remains to be seen whether Scotus's thought will have as great an impact on contemporary philosophy as Aquinas's or Anselm's.

The Subject of Metaphysics

The medieval debate over the subject matter of metaphysics stems from various proposals in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. These include being qua being (*Met.* 4.1), God (*Met.* 6.1), and substance (*Met.* 7.1). The Islamic philosophers Avicenna and Averroes, powerful influences on Christian scholastic philosophy, are divided on the issue. Avicenna rejects the contention that God is the subject of metaphysics on the grounds that no science can establish the existence of its own subject, while metaphysics can demonstrate God's existence. He argues instead that the subject of metaphysics is being qua being. We have a common notion of being applicable to God, substances, and accidents, and this notion makes possible a science of being qua being that includes God and separated substances as well as material substances and accidents. In his rejoinder to Avicenna, Averroes holds that the view that metaphysics studies being qua being amounts to the view that metaphysics studies substance and, in particular, separated substances and God. Because it is physics, and not the nobler discipline of metaphysics that establishes God's existence, there is no bar to holding that God is the subject of metaphysics. Scotus maintains with Avicenna that metaphysics studies being qua being. Of course, among beings, God is preeminent: He is the only perfect being, the being on which all others depend. These facts explain why God occupies the most important place in metaphysics. However, what makes God a proper subject for metaphysics is not that he is God, but that he is a being. Metaphysics also includes the study of the transcendentals, which "transcend" the Aristotelian scheme of the categories. The transcendentals include being, the proper attributes of being ("one," "true," and "good" are transcendental terms, because they are coextensive with "being," each signifying one of being's proper

attributes), and what is signified by disjunctions that are coextensive with "being," such as "finite or infinite" and "necessary or contingent." However, anything capable of real existence also falls under the heading of "being qua being" and so may be studied in metaphysics.

3. Distinctions

On Scotus's view, in order to have an accurate grasp of the structure of created reality and the nature of God, and in order to answer such questions as what individuates substances or how a God with multiple attributes can still be simple, we must first have a clear understanding of the various sorts of identity and distinction that hold among items. What follows is a brief taxonomy of four key sorts of identity and distinction, with particular emphasis on formal identity and distinction, earmarks of Scotistic philosophy. For simplicity's sake, I will speak below only of distinction and not identity.

1. A *real distinction* holds between two individuals, *x* and *y*, if and only if it is logically possible either for *x* to exist without *y* or for *y* to exist without *x*. For example, Ricky the cat and Beulah the cow are really distinct, as are your hand and your foot, and a substance and its accident such as Socrates and his paleness. In these examples, either *x* or *y* in each pair can exist without the other. Even the paleness can exist without Socrates, although only by divine power. However, God and any creature are really distinct, and while God can exist without any creature, no creature can exist without God. Hence for real distinction it is not necessary that both items in the pair be able to exist without the other.

2. A *conceptual distinction* results from intellectual activity and does not mark any distinction in the thing itself. Rather, our intellects create distinct conceptions of what is really the same. For instance, to adapt Frege's famous example, our concept of the Morning Star is distinct from our concept of the Evening Star, and yet the Morning Star and Evening Star are really one and the same thing: the planet Venus.

3. Scotus recognizes the need for a distinction that lies between the real and the conceptual distinction, a distinction that has a foundation in reality and so is mind-independent and yet does not imply real separability. For example, the will and the intellect are really the same, for each is really identical with and inseparable from the soul. However, the will is a free power and the intellect is not, and this is not simply a matter of the way we conceive them. Some sort of less than real but

more than conceptual distinction is needed to capture this fact. Scotus calls this sort of distinction the *formal distinction*. What are distinguished in this case are not things (*res*) but what Scotus calls “formalities” or “realities” or “entities” in one and the same thing. According to Scotus, *x* and *y* are formally distinct if and only if (a) *x* and *y* are really the same and (b) *x* has a different *ratio* (account or character) than *y*, and (c) neither *ratio* overlaps the other. So, although the will and the intellect are really identical, their accounts differ and are mutually non-inclusive, and so they are formally distinct. Likewise, there is a formal distinction between the common nature and the individuator, between a genus and specific difference, between the divine attributes, and between each Person of the Trinity and the Divine Essence.

Scholars are widely agreed that in his early work, at least in the *Lectura*, when Scotus speaks of distinct formalities in a single thing, he means to identify items that are ontologically robust enough to serve as property bearers. Hence, Scotus can explain a single thing’s having even contradictory properties *F* and not-*F* without running afoul of the Principle of Non-Contradiction by contending that the bearer of *F* is a distinct formality from the bearer of not-*F*, although the two formalities are really identical. For instance, human nature is common both in itself and in reality, while the individuator that contracts that common nature into Socrates is individual of itself, even though in Socrates the common nature and the individuator are really the same.

In some of his Parisian works, such as the *Reportatio* (notably 1 d.33) and *Logica*, Scotus appears to grow more ontologically parsimonious, holding that formal non-identity or distinction within a single thing does not imply absolutely distinct formalities in that thing. Gelber [1974] and Adams [1976] suggest that Scotus changes his mind in response to criticisms his teaching on the formal distinction may have sustained at Paris. Scotus’s mediaeval critics, writing after his death, warned that his account would ruin the doctrine of divine simplicity if indeed it posited a plurality of formalities in God. However, it is hard to tell whether Scotus did in fact change his mind. Both the *Reportatio* and the *Logica* maintain that if *x* and *y* are formally distinct, that implies that they are not absolutely but only qualifiedly distinct, for they have only a diminished sort of distinction. It is hard to tell from what Scotus writes, however, whether this diminished distinction is sufficient for allowing qualifiedly distinct formalities to bear properties. There is also some evidence that Scotus raises the

same ontological cautions about formalities in his Oxford writings (see the admittedly ambiguous *Ordinatio* 1 d.2 p.2 q.1-4 nn.404-8), independently of any Parisian criticism targeted at his work.

4. Scotus recognizes yet another sort of extramental distinction, one that applies to such items as the color red, which can be deeper or paler, courage, which can be stronger or weaker, and being, which can be finite or infinite. These items vary in the degree, quantity, or intensity of their perfection, that is, in their intrinsic mode. Scotus calls the distinction between such an item and its intrinsic mode a *modal distinction*, explaining its difference from the formal distinction by contrasting intrinsic modes with differentiae. Each differentia contracting the genus *virtue* (for instance) into its various species has a different formal character from its genus. However, variations in the depth of one’s courage do not create new species any more than do variations in the intensity of red, in the strength of one’s desire, or in degree of being. Pale red and deep red share the same formal character, as do slight and powerful desires for the same object; they differ only in the degree or intensity with which they exhibit this character. The modal distinction, then, is an even lesser one than the formal distinction.

4. The Argument for God’s Existence

Although God is not the object of metaphysics, he is nevertheless its goal: Proving the existence and nature of God is what metaphysics aims at. Scotus offers several versions of his proof of God’s existence, all sufficiently similar in language, structure, and strategy to be discussed together. The summary below will not do justice to this argument, perhaps the most complex in all scholastic philosophy. In what follows, the argument’s structure is broadly sketched and some details are furnished of its most important and distinctive subordinate arguments.

Scotus’s argument unfolds in four stages:

- A. There is (1) a first efficient cause, (2) a preeminent being, (3) a first final cause.
- B. Only one nature is first in these three ways.
- C. A nature that is first in any of these ways is infinite.
- D. There is only one infinite being.

Scotus’s argument begins in a distinctive way. At stage A, he incorporates various strategies his predecessors used for proving God’s

existence into a stage of his single proof: (1) There is a first efficient cause that produced all else but is itself unproduced; (2) there is a preeminent being, one whose nature surpasses all others; and (3) there is a first final cause or ultimate end. At stage B, Scotus argues that a being that has any one of these three primacies will have the other two as well. At stage C, he proves that a being with any of these primacies is intensively infinite. Finally, at D he concludes that there cannot be more than one being with this triple primacy. Since Christianity identifies God as the creator of all but himself, as the being whose causal powers sustain the universe, as the preeminent nature who is infinitely good, wise, and powerful, and as the ultimate end of all things, Scotus identifies the unique being whose existence he takes himself to have proved as the Christian God.

Much of the argument's interest lies in the subordinate arguments for A1, partly because they serve as the foundation for the rest of the proof, and partly because of their intrinsic philosophical interest. Relying on the common scholastic assumptions that (a) no being can produce itself, (b) there cannot be a circle of productive causes, and (c) every production has some cause, Scotus argues as follows:

Argument I: The Non-Modal Argument for a First Efficient Cause

1. Some being x is produced. Therefore,
2. x is produced by some other being y.
3. Either y is an unproduced, first producer or is a posterior producer.
4. A series of produced producers cannot proceed interminably.
5. Therefore, the series stops at an unproduced producer, a first efficient cause that produces independently.

Thus far, Scotus's argument is typical of those found in scholastic philosophy. However, as he recognizes, philosophers such as Aristotle think that infinite causal series are possible, and so premise (4) appears to beg the question. Scotus's defense of this vulnerable premise brings a clarity and articulateness to the discussion of infinite causal regression that his predecessors never could muster. Scotus concedes that there can indeed be an infinite *accidentally ordered* series of produced producers, but there cannot be an infinite *essentially ordered* series of produced producers, and this latter is all he needs to establish to reach his conclusion. In an accidentally ordered series of causes, in which A causes B and B causes C, B depends on A to bring it into existence, but it does not depend on A in order to be the cause of C. For instance, even if Ricky the cat depended on Furry to sire him,

Ricky may now sire kittens himself without any causal contribution from Furry. When philosophers admitted the possibility of infinite causal regresses, it is only accidentally ordered series they had in mind. On the other hand, in an essentially ordered series of causes, B depends on A in order to be the cause of C. For instance, on the mediaeval science that Scotus accepts, a human being depends on the sun's causal activity to generate another human.

From this key difference between accidentally and essentially ordered causal series, two further differences follow. In an accidentally ordered series, A need not act (or even exist) simultaneously with B in order for B to cause C. Furry may be long dead, and yet his son Ricky can sire kittens. In an essentially ordered series, however, A must exist and act at the very time B produces C. Secondly, in an accidentally ordered series, the causes may be of the same nature (*ratio*) and order (*ordo*), while in an essentially ordered series the causes belong to a different nature and order. After all, cause A does not simply bring B into existence, as Furry does Ricky; nor does it make a partial causal contribution, the way Brownie the donkey does when he is hitched to a wagon together with Eeyore. Cause A's current causal contribution is what explains the fact that B is capable of causing C. However, being of a different nature and order does not imply that A is a higher sort of being than B. Because he is alive, Ricky the cat is a higher nature than the inanimate sun, even if the sun, as a more universal cause, belongs to a different order.

Scotus offers several arguments for the conclusion that there must be a first efficient cause of an essentially ordered series, all of them problematic. In one, he argues as follows:

Argument II

1. If there were an infinite series of essentially ordered causes, the totality of things effected would depend on some prior cause.
2. Nothing can be an essentially ordered cause of itself.
3. If this prior cause were part of the totality of things effected, it would be an essentially ordered cause of itself.

Therefore,

4. Even if there were an infinite series of essentially ordered causes, the totality of things effected would be effected by a cause outside the totality.

This argument does not purport to establish that an infinite series of essentially ordered causes is impossible, but rather that even if

there were such a series, there must be a first efficient cause of that series that lies outside the series. However, without further assumptions, the argument does not quite reach its goal: It concludes not that there is a *first* efficient cause, but only that there is an efficient cause prior to this totality.

Scotus's most original argument is the following:

Argument III

1. Being possessed of efficient causal power does not necessarily imply imperfection.

Therefore,

2. It is possible that something possesses efficient causal power without imperfection.

However,

3. If nothing possesses efficient causal power without dependence on something prior, then nothing has efficient causal power without imperfection.

Therefore,

4. It is possible that some nature possesses independent efficient causal power.
5. A nature that possesses independent efficient causal power is absolutely first.

Therefore,

6. It is possible that there be an absolutely first efficient causal power.

Like goodness and wisdom, efficient causal power is a pure perfection, and so it is possible for something to have efficient causal power without imperfection. Because dependence is an imperfection, it is possible for something to have independent causal power. This being would not be a link in an essentially ordered series of causes, but would stand at the head of the series as absolutely first. At this stage, however, Scotus has established only the possibility of an absolutely first efficient causal power. That is because he will use this conclusion as the key premise in another version of his argument for God's existence, in which he will try to demonstrate that an absolutely first efficient causal power actually exists.

Argument IV: The Modal Version

In another objection to what he has written so far, Scotus notes that his argument for a first efficient cause, even if sound, does not count as a genuine demonstration because its premises are merely

contingent, even if they are evident. If an argument is to lead us to *scientia*, the highest form of knowledge, it must be demonstrative: It must contain necessary premises leading to a necessary conclusion. In reply, Scotus offers a reformulated modal argument constructed with necessarily true premises. Scotus reworks his entire non-modal argument for a first efficient cause, but he also notes that we may begin with the conclusion of Argument III:

6. It is possible that there be an absolutely first efficient causal power.
 7. If a being A cannot exist from another, then if it is possible that A exist, A exists independently.
 8. An absolutely first efficient cause cannot exist from another.
- Therefore,
9. An absolutely first efficient cause exists independently.

If an absolutely first efficient cause did not in fact exist, there would be no real possibility of its existing. After all, since it is absolutely first, it is impossible for it to depend on any other cause. Because there is a real possibility of its existing, it follows that it exists of itself.

contradictory aspects. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels adopted Hegel's definition and applied it to social and economic processes. *See also* dialectical materialism.

The Hegelian dialectical formula: A (thesis) versus B (anti-thesis) equals C (synthesis). For example: If (A) my idea of freedom conflicts with (B) your idea of freedom then (C) neither of us can be free until everyone agrees to be a slave. The Soviet Union was based on the Hegelian dialectic, as is all Marxist writing. The Soviets didn't give up their Hegelian reasoning when they supposedly stopped being a communist country. They merely changed the dialectical language to fit into the modern version of Marxist thinking called communitarianism. American author Steve Montgomery explores Moscow's adept use of the Hegelian dialectic in *Glasnost-Perestroika: A Model Potemkin Village*.

Realism

Realism, in philosophy, the viewpoint which accords to things which are known or perceived an existence or nature which is independent of whether anyone is thinking about or perceiving them.

Varieties of philosophical realism

The history of Western philosophy is checkered with disputes between those who have defended forms of realism and those who have opposed them. While there are certainly significant similarities linking the variety of positions commonly described as realist, there are also important differences which obstruct any straightforward general characterization of realism. Many, if not all, of these disputes may be seen as concerned in one way or another with the relations between, on the one hand, human beings as thinkers and subjects of experience and, on the other hand, the objects of their knowledge, belief, and experience. Do sense perception and other forms of cognition, and the scientific theorizing which attempts to make sense of their deliverances, provide knowledge of things which exist and are as they are independently of people's cognitive or investigative activities? It is at least roughly true to say that philosophical realists are those who defend an affirmative answer to the question, either across the board or with respect to certain areas of knowledge or belief-e.g., the external world, scientific theories, mathematics, or morality.

The affirmative answer may seem no more than the merest common sense, because the vast majority of one's beliefs are certainly most naturally taken to concern mind-independent objects whose

Chapter 10

Modern Philosophical Schools

Dialectic, also called dialectics, originally a form of logical argumentation but now a philosophical concept of evolution applied to diverse fields including thought, nature, and history.

Dialecticism

Among the classical Greek thinkers, the meanings of dialectic ranged from a technique of refutation in debate, through a method for systematic evaluation of definitions, to the investigation and classification of the relationships between specific and general concepts. From the time of the Stoic philosophers until the end of the European Middle Ages, dialectic was more or less closely identified with the discipline of formal logic. More recently, Immanuel Kant denoted by "transcendental dialectic" the endeavour of exposing the illusion involved in attempting to use the categories and principles of the understanding beyond the bounds of phenomena and possible experience. G.W.F. Hegel identified dialectic as the tendency of a notion to pass over into its own negation as the result of conflict between its inherent

existence is an entirely objective matter. And this seems to be so whether the beliefs in question are about mundane matters such as one's immediate surroundings or about theoretical scientific entities such as subatomic particles, fundamental forces, and so on. Nevertheless, much argument and clarification of the issues and concepts involved (e.g., objectivity and mind-independence) is required if the realism favoured by common sense is to be sustained as a philosophical position.

Any general statement of realism, however, inevitably obscures the great variation in focus in controversies between realists and antirealists from antiquity to the present day. In some controversies, what is primarily at issue is a question of ontology, concerning the existence of entities of some problematic kind. In others, the opposition, while still broadly ontological in character, concerns rather the ultimate nature of reality as a whole, a historically important example being the controversies generated by various forms of idealism. In yet others the dispute, while not entirely divorced from questions of ontology, is primarily concerned with the notion of truth, either in general or in application to statements of some particular type, such as moral judgments or theoretical scientific claims about unobservable entities.

Realism in ontology

In application to matters of ontology, realism is standardly applied to doctrines which assert the existence of entities of some problematic or controversial kind. Even under this more restricted heading, however, realism and opposition to it have taken significantly different forms, as illustrated in the following three examples.

One of the earliest and most famous realist doctrines is Plato's theory of Forms, which asserts that things such as "the Beautiful" (or "Beauty") and "the Just" (or "Justice") exist over and above the particular beautiful objects and just acts in which they are instantiated and more or less imperfectly exemplified; the Forms themselves are thought of as located neither in space nor in time. Although Plato's usual term for them (*eido*) is often translated in English as Idea, it is clear that he does not think of them as mental but rather as abstract, existing independently both of mental activity and of sensible particulars. As such, they lie beyond the reach of sense perception, which Plato regards as providing only beliefs about appearances as opposed to knowledge of what is truly real. Indeed, the Forms are knowable only by the philosophically schooled intellect.

Although the interpretation of Plato's theory remains a matter of scholarly controversy, there is no doubt that his promulgation of it initiated an enduring dispute about the existence of universals—often conceived, in opposition to particulars, as entities, such as general properties, which may be wholly present at different times and places or instantiated by many distinct particular objects. Plato's pupil Aristotle reacted against the extreme realism which he took Plato to be endorsing: the thesis of *universalia ante res* (Latin: "universals before things"), according to which universals exist in their own right, prior to and independently of their instantiation by sensible particulars. He advocated instead a more moderate realism of *universalia in rebus* ("universals in things"): While there are universals, they can have no freestanding, independent existence. They exist only in the particulars that instantiate them.

In the medieval period, defenders of a broadly Aristotelian realism, including William of Shyreswood and Peter of Spain, were opposed by both nominalists and conceptualists. Nominalists, notably William of Ockham, insisted that everything in the nonlinguistic world is particular. They argued that universals are merely words which have a general application—an application which is sufficiently explained by reference to the similarities among the various particulars to which the words are applied. Conceptualists agreed with the nominalists that everything is particular but held that words which have general application do so by virtue of standing for mental intermediaries, usually called general ideas or concepts.

Although medieval in origin, the latter view found its best-known implementation in the English philosopher John Locke's theory of abstract ideas, so called because they are supposed to be formed from the wholly particular ideas supplied in experience by "abstracting" from their differences to leave only what is common to all of them. Locke's doctrine was vigorously criticized in the 18th century by his empiricist successors, George Berkeley and David Hume, who argued that ideas corresponding to general words are fully determinate and particular and that their generality of application is achieved by making one particular idea stand indifferently as a representative of many.

The problem of universals remains an important focus of metaphysical discussion. Although Plato's extreme realism has found few advocates, in the later 20th century there was a revival of interest in Aristotle's moderate realism, a version of which has been defended with important modifications by the Australian philosopher David Armstrong.

Abstract entities and modern nominalism

In the second half of the 20th century the term *nominalism* took on a somewhat broader sense than the one it had in the medieval dispute about universals. It is now used as a name for any position which denies the existence of abstract entities of any sort, including not only universals but also numbers, sets, and other abstracta which form the apparent subject matter of mathematical theories. In their classic nominalist manifesto, “Steps Toward a Constructive Nominalism” (1947), the American philosophers Nelson Goodman and W.V.O. Quine declared:

We do not believe in abstract entities. No one supposes that abstract entities-classes, relations, properties, etc.-exist in space-time; but we mean more than this. We renounce them altogether... Any system that countenances abstract entities we deem unsatisfactory as a final philosophy.

The term “Platonism” has often been used, especially in the philosophy of mathematics, as an alternative to the correspondingly wider use of “realism” to denote ontological views to which such nominalism stands opposed. Nominalists have often recommended their rejection of abstracta on grounds of ontological economy, invoking the methodological maxim known as Ockham’s razor-*Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem* (“Entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity”). The maxim is problematic, however, for at least two reasons. First, it gives a clear directive only when accompanied by some answer to the obvious question, “Necessary for what?” Although the answer-“Necessary to account for all the (agreed upon) facts”-is equally obvious, it is doubtful that there is sufficient agreement between the nominalist and the realist to enable the former to cut away abstracta as unnecessary. The realist is likely to suppose that the relevant facts include the facts of mathematics, which, taken at face value, do require the existence of numbers, sets, and so on.

But second, even if the facts could be restricted, without begging the question, to facts about what is concrete, it is still unclear that the nominalist will be in a position to wield the razor to his advantage, because it may be argued that such facts admit of no satisfactory explanation without the aid of scientific (and especially physical) theories which make indispensable use of mathematics. Indispensability arguments of this kind were advanced by the American philosopher Hilary Putnam and (relinquishing his earlier nominalism) by Quine.

Other, perhaps weightier, arguments for nominalism appeal to the broadly epistemological problems confronting realism. Given that numbers, sets, and other abstracta could, by their very nature, stand in no spatiotemporal (and therefore no causal) relation to human beings, there can be no satisfactory explanation of how humans are able to think about and refer to abstracta or come to know truths about them.

Whether or not these problems are insuperable, it is clear that, because theories (especially mathematical theories) ostensibly involving reference to abstracta appear to play an indispensable role in the human intellectual economy, nominalists can scarcely afford simply to reject them outright; they must explain how such theories may be justifiably retained, consistently with nominalistic scruples.

Attempts by orthodox nominalists to reinterpret or reconstruct mathematical theories in ways which avoid reference to abstracta have not met with conspicuous success. Following a more radical course, the American philosopher Hartry Field has argued that nominalists can accept mathematical theories under certain conditions while denying that they are true. They can be accepted provided that they are conservative-i.e., provided that their conjunction with nonmathematical (scientific and especially physical) theories entails no claims about nonmathematical entities which are not logical consequences of the nonmathematical theories themselves. Conservativeness is thus a strong form of logical consistency. Because consistency in general does not require truth, a mathematical theory can be conservative without being true.

Possible worlds

One kind of modal realism holds that there is a distinctive class of truths essentially involving the modal notions of necessity and possibility. Since the mid-20th century, however, advances in modal logic-in particular the development of possible-world semantics-have given rise to a further, distinctively ontological dispute concerning whether that semantics gives a literally correct account of the “truth-conditions” of modal propositions. According to possible-world semantics, (1) a proposition is necessarily true if (and only if) it is true not only in the actual world but in all possible worlds; and (2) a proposition is possibly true if and only if it is true in at least one possible world, perhaps distinct from the actual world. If statements 1 and 2 are literally correct descriptions of the truth-conditions of modal propositions, then, if any truths are nontrivially necessary or correctly assert unrealized possibilities, there must exist, in addition to the actual world, many

other merely possible worlds. Modal realism, in the uncompromising form defended by the American philosopher David Lewis, is the view that there exists a (very large) plurality of worlds, each of which is a spatiotemporally (and therefore causally) closed system, disjoint from all others and comprising its own distinctive collection of concrete particulars, replete with all their properties and relations to each other.

Although Lewis's worlds are not, as he conceived them, abstract entities, it is clear that his realism faces epistemological objections similar to those mentioned in connection with abstracta. These, along with other considerations, led some philosophers to propose alternatives designed to secure the benefits of possible-world semantics without the costs of full-blooded realism. The alternatives included a more moderate realism propounded by the American philosopher Robert Stalnaker which denies Lewis's homogeneity thesis (the claim that merely possible worlds are entities of the same kind as the actual world), as well as fictionalism, the view that possible-world theory is literally false but useful.

Realism and idealism

The opposition between idealism and realism, although undeniably ontological in a broad sense, is distinct both from general disputes about realism in ontology and from disputes which turn upon the notion of truth or its applicability to statements of some specified type (*see below* Realism and truth). In its most straightforward and, arguably, basic sense, idealism not only asserts the existence of "ideas" (and perhaps other mental entities) but also advances a restrictive claim about the nature or composition of reality as whole: there is nothing in reality other than ideas and the minds whose ideas they are. So understood, idealism is a form of monism, which is opposed both to other forms of monism (e.g., materialism) and to pluralism, which posits two or more irreducibly distinct kinds of stuff or things (e.g., mental and physical, as in various versions of dualism).

A paradigmatic example of an idealist position is Berkeley's rejection of "brute matter" as unintelligible and his accompanying doctrine that reality consists exclusively of "ideas"-for which *esse est percipi* ("to be is to be perceived")-and "spirits," including finite spirits corresponding to individual human beings and at least one infinite spirit, or God. If idealism in this sense is to be viewed as a kind of antirealism, the realism it opposes must be one which maintains the existence of material things independently of their being perceived or otherwise related to any mind, finite or otherwise.

The 18th-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant recognized that Berkeley's "dogmatic idealism" involved denying the independent reality of space. Berkeley's arguments, he thought, were effective against metaphysical positions which assumed that space is a property of "things in themselves," as opposed to their representations, or "appearances," in the mind. Kant argued to the contrary that space as well as time are forms of "sensible intuition," or the mode in which the mind is affected by sensible objects. Thus, the reality of objects external to the mind (objects in space) is guaranteed, because being in space and time is a condition of being an object of sensible experience at all. Kant's combination of transcendental idealism-the doctrine that what is given in experience are only appearances-with empirical realism-the view that there are objects external to the mind-allowed him to reject the conception of external objects as "lying behind" appearances and as knowable only (if at all) by a problematic and ultimately indefensible inference from what is given in experience to its hidden causes.

The views of G.E. Moore (1873-1958) were appreciably closer to commonsense realism about the external world than were Kant's. Although reacting, especially in his early papers, primarily against the prevailing tradition of 19th-century British idealism, Moore criticized Berkeley's *esse est percipi* doctrine while at the same time rejecting Kant's transcendental idealism.

Realism and truth

As suggested by the prevalence in philosophical discussion of composite labels such as scientific realism, moral realism, and modal realism, realism need not be a global thesis. A realist attitude with regard to one area of thought or discourse (e.g., science) is at least prima facie consistent with an antirealist view with regard to others (e.g., morality or mathematics). Such eclecticism is sometimes motivated by underlying beliefs about what kinds of objects should be accepted as genuinely existing, or as part of the ultimate "furniture of the universe." But sometimes it is not. At least some realist-antirealist disagreements, including several contemporary ones, are better understood as primarily concerned with whether statements belonging to a certain area of discourse really are, as their surface grammar may indicate, capable of objective truth and so capable of recording genuine, mind-independent facts. It is a further question whether, if statements of a given kind are true or false as a matter of objective, mind-independent fact, those statements record facts of some special irreducible type, distinctive of that discourse. Satisfaction of the first

of these conditions (objective and mind-independent truth) is generally accepted as essential to any position worth describing as a form of realism. Realism is widely, but not invariably, taken to require also satisfaction of the second (irreducibility) condition.

Reductionism, error theories, and projectivism

If fulfillment of both of the conditions stated above is taken to be necessary for realism, reductionism in its various guises qualifies as an antirealist position. The reductionist about a given area of discourse (“A-discourse”) maintains that its characteristic statements (“A-statements”) are reducible to-analyzable or translatable without loss of content into-statements of some other type (“B-statements”), which are usually thought to be philosophically less problematic. The reductionist accepts that there are objective facts stated by A-statements but denies that such statements report any facts over and above those stated in B-statements. A-facts are just B-facts in disguise. An example of this approach is logicalbehaviourism, which maintains that statements about mental events and states are logically equivalent to statements which, while typically much more complicated, are wholly about observable behaviour in varying kinds of circumstances. Thus, there are no mental facts over and above physical facts. In this sense, logical behaviourism is a form of antirealism about psychological discourse.

Phenomenalism, the view that statements about material objects such as tables and chairs can be reduced to statements about sense experiences, amounts to a form of antirealism about the external world. The doctrine that all scientific language must acquire meaning via “operational definitions” in terms of measurement procedures and the like constitutes a reductionist form of scientific antirealism. Nominalist attempts to paraphrase or reinterpret mathematical statements so as to eliminate all apparent commitment to numbers, sets, or other abstracta may likewise be viewed as a species of reductive antirealism. Finally, ethical naturalism, which identifies the rightness or goodness of actions with, say, their tendency to promote happiness, thereby reduces moral facts to natural (e.g., psychological) ones. (It should be noted, however, that some contemporary ethical naturalists count their position as a form of realism-as indeed it is, at least in the weaker sense that it maintains the objective truth of ethical judgments.)

In each of these cases, as already noted in relation to traditional nominalism, it is at best questionable that the requisite reductions can be carried through. But antirealists need not nail their colours to the

reductionist mast. Somewhat more radically, they may reject the assumption, which reductionists do not question, that statements belonging to the area in dispute are ever objectively true at all. This may be done in either of two quite distinct ways.

First, the antirealist may agree with the realist about the kind of meaning possessed by statements belonging to the problematic discourse-in particular, about the conditions required for their truth-but decline to accept that those conditions are ever met. If the antirealist goes so far as to deny that the requisite conditions are ever met, his position amounts to an “error theory,” according to which statements of the problematic kind are systematically false. If the claim is, rather, that one can never be justified in taking such statements to be true, the resultant antirealism is better described as a form of agnosticism.

Second, the antirealist may claim that the surface appearance of the problematic statements-their apparent recording of objective facts which obtain independently of human beings and their responses and attitudes to external reality-is misleading; properly understood, those statements discharge some quite different, nondescriptive role, such as expressing (typically noncognitive) attitudes, enjoining courses of action, or, perhaps, endorsing conventions or rules of language. Often, and especially when underpinned by an expressivist account of the problematic statements, antirealism of this second kind amounts to a version of “projectivism,” according to which, in making such statements, one is not seeking to correctly describe features of a mind-independent world but is merely projecting one’s own responses and attitudes onto it.

Such nonreductive forms of antirealism have been opposed to both moral realism and scientific realism and have been defended in several other areas besides. The nominalism of Hartry Field involves an error-theoretic treatment of pure mathematical discourse, as may other fictionalist approaches-e.g., to possible worlds. Hume’s treatment of the idea of “necessary connection” in causality as deriving from the habitual expectation of the effect upon the observation of its cause is a classic example of projectivism, which some of his successors sought to extend to modality in general, including logical necessity. The German mathematician David Hilbert’s differential treatment of the “real” or “contentful” statements of finitary arithmetic, in contrast to the “ideal” statements of transfinite mathematics, has been interpreted as a form of instrumentalism about the latter, broadly akin to that recommended by many thinkers in relation to the theoretical parts of

science (*see below* Scientific realism and instrumentalism). And Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (1956), can be seen as recommending a noncognitivist approach to logical and mathematical statements, according to which they do not record truths of some special kind but rather express rules which regulate the use of more ordinary or empirical statements.

Moral realism

According to moral realists, statements about what actions are morally required or permissible and statements about what dispositions or character traits are morally virtuous or vicious (and so on) are not mere expressions of subjective preferences but are objectively true or false according as they correspond with the facts of morality—just as historical or geographic statements are true or false according as they fit the historical or geographic facts. As with realism in other areas, moral realism faces challenges on two fronts. On the metaphysical front, there is obvious scope for skepticism about whether there is, or even could be, a realm of distinctively moral facts, irreducible to and apparently inexplicable in terms of the facts of nature. On the epistemological front, it has seemed to be an insuperable obstacle to moral realism to explain how, if there really were such a realm of moral facts, human beings could possibly gain access to it. Although reason alone may seem to deliver knowledge of some kinds of nonempirical truths—e.g., of logic and mathematics—it does not seem to deliver the truths of morality, and there appears to be no other special faculty by which such truths may be detected. Talk of “moral sense” or “moral intuition,” though once popular, now seems merely to rename rather than to solve the problem.

On the antirealist side, attempts to reduce moral properties to natural ones (by identifying right actions with, say, those which promote happiness) have found support, but they face difficulties of their own. Indeed, they seem particularly vulnerable to Moore’s celebrated “open question” argument, which points out that, because it is always a substantive and not a tautological question whether some naturalistically specified property is morally good—one can always ask, for example, “Is happiness good?”—the meanings of moral terms like “good” cannot simply be identified with the property in question. Appealing to the intrinsic “queerness” of moral properties as contrasted with natural ones, some theorists, notably the Australian-born philosopher J.L. Mackie, have denied their existence altogether, propounding an error theory of moral discourse.

Other antirealists have sought to rescue moral discourse by reinterpreting it along expressivist or projectivist lines. This approach, which may also be traced back to Hume, is exemplified in the theory of ethical emotivism, which was favoured by (among others) the logical positivists in the first half of the 20th century. According to emotivism, moral statements such as “Lying is wrong” do not record (or misrecord) facts but serve other, nondescriptive purposes, such as expressing a feeling of disapproval of the behaviour or discouraging others from engaging in it. A sophisticated contemporary development of expressivism and projectivism, defended by the English philosopher Simon Blackburn and others under the title “quasi-realism,” seeks to explain how one can properly treat ethical propositions as true or false without presupposing a special domain of nonnatural facts.

Scientific realism and instrumentalism

The dispute between scientific realists and antirealists, though often associated with conflicting ontological attitudes toward the unobserved (and perhaps unobservable) entities ostensibly postulated by some scientific theories, primarily concerns the status of the theories themselves and what scientists should be seen as trying to accomplish in propounding them. Both sides are agreed that, to be acceptable, a scientific theory should “save the phenomena”—that is, it should at least be consistent with, and ideally facilitate correct prediction of, such matters of observable fact as may be recorded in reports of relevant observations and, where appropriate, experiments. The issue concerns whether theories can and should be seen as attempting more than this. Realists, notably including Karl Popper, J.J.C. Smart, Ian Hacking, and Hilary Putnam, along with many others, have claimed that they should be so viewed: Science aims, in its theories, at a literally true account of what the world is like, and accepting those theories involves accepting their ingredient theoretical claims as true descriptions of aspects of reality—perhaps themselves not open to observation—additional to and underlying the phenomena.

Against this, the doctrine of instrumentalism claims that scientific theories are no more than devices, or “instruments” (in effect, sets of inference rules) for generating predictions about observable phenomena from evidence about such phenomena. This claim can be understood in two ways. It could be that theoretical scientific statements are not, despite appearances, genuine statements at all but rules of inference in disguise, so that the question of their truth (or falsehood) simply does not arise. In this case, instrumentalism is akin to expressivism about ethical statements. Alternatively, it could be

that, as far as the aims of science go, what matters when evaluating a scientific theory—given that it meets other desiderata such as simplicity, economy, generality of application, and so on—is only its inferential (or instrumental) reliability; its truth or falsehood is of no scientific concern. A notable development of the latter approach is the constructive empiricism of Bas van Fraassen, according to which science aims not at true theories but at theories which are “empirically adequate,” in the sense that they capture or predict relevant truths about observable matters.

Antirealism about science, both in its earlier instrumentalist form and in van Fraassen’s version, clearly relies upon a fundamental distinction between statements which are, and those which are not, wholly about observable entities or states of affairs. Realists frequently deny the tenability of this distinction, arguing that there is no “theory-neutral” language in which observations may be reported, or at any rate that there is no sharp, principled division between what is observable and what is not. Antirealists may acknowledge that a great deal of language, perhaps even all of it, is theory-laden but claim that this does not require acceptance of the theories with which it is infected; nor does it entail that statements involving theory-infected terms (e.g., “The Geiger counter is reading 7.3”) cannot be true solely in virtue of observable matters. Against the claim that there is no difference in principle between, say, detecting a passing jet airplane by seeing its vapour trail and detecting a subatomic particle by seeing its trace in a cloud chamber, they may reply that indeed there is. While the plane is an observable object—even though, in this case, only its effect is observed—there is no observing the particle itself, as distinct from its supposed effects.

A further argument commonly advanced in support of realism is that it provides the best, or the only credible, explanation for the success of scientific theories. From an instrumentalist perspective, it is claimed, it must be quite mysterious or even miraculous that the world should behave as if the best scientific theories about it were true. Surely, realists argue, the obvious and best explanation is that the world behaves in this way because the theories about it are in fact true (or at least approximately true). Although this argument certainly presents antirealists with a serious challenge, it is not clear that they cannot meet it. In particular, van Fraassen argues that, in so far as the demand for an explanation of science’s successes is legitimate, that success can be explained in terms of the idea that scientists aim to construct theories which are empirically adequate.

Humanism

What sort of philosophy is humanism? To listen to its detractors, one would imagine it to be a doctrinaire collection of social goals justified by an arbitrary and dogmatic materialist-atheist worldview. Leaders of the religious right often say that humanism starts with the belief that there is no god; that evolution is the cornerstone of the humanist philosophy; that all humanists believe in situation ethics, euthanasia, and the right to suicide; and that the primary goal of humanism is the establishment of a one-world government.

And, indeed, most humanists are nontheistic, have a non-absolutist approach to ethics, support death with dignity, and value global thinking. But such views aren’t central to the philosophy. To understand just where humanism begins, as well as discover where such ideas fit into the overall structure, it’s necessary to present humanism as a hierarchy of positions. Certain basic principles need to be set forth first—those ideas that unite all humanists and form the foundation of the philosophy. Once this is done, humanist conclusions about the world can follow—conclusions which, by the nature of scientific inquiry, must be tentative. Then, after that groundwork has been laid, appropriate social policies can be recommended, recognizing the differences of opinion that exist within the humanist community. From this approach people can see humanism in perspective—and in a way that reveals its nondogmatic and self-correcting nature.

The central ideas of humanism, then, can be organized into a practical structure along the aforementioned lines. Even though all humanists don’t communicate the philosophy in this way, it’s fair to say that most humanists will recognize this presentation as accurate.

Basic Principles

1. We humanists think for ourselves as individuals. There is no area of thought that we are afraid to explore, to challenge, to question, or to doubt. We feel free to inquire and then to agree or disagree with any given claim. We are unwilling to follow a doctrine or adopt a set of beliefs or values that doesn’t convince us personally. We seek to take responsibility for our decisions and conclusions, and this necessitates having control over them. Through this unshackled spirit of free inquiry, new knowledge and new ways of looking at ourselves and the world can be acquired. Without it we are left in ignorance and, subsequently, are unable to improve on our condition.

2. We make reasoned decisions because our experience with approaches that abandon reason convinces us that such approaches

are inadequate and often counterproductive for the realization of human goals. When reason is abandoned there is no “court of appeal” where differences of opinion can be settled. We find instead that any belief is possible if one’s thinking is driven by arbitrary faith, authority, revelation, religious experience, altered states of consciousness, or other substitutes for reason and evidence. Therefore, in matters of belief, we find that reason, when applied to the evidence of our senses and our accumulated knowledge, is our most reliable guide for understanding the world and making our choices.

3. We base our understanding of the world on what we can perceive with our senses and comprehend with our minds. Anything that’s said to make sense should make sense to us as humans; else there is no reason for it to be the basis of our decisions and actions. Supposed transcendent knowledge or intuitions that are said to reach beyond human comprehension cannot instruct us because we cannot relate concretely to them. The way in which humans accept supposed transcendent or religious knowledge is by arbitrarily taking a leap of faith and abandoning reason and the senses. We find this course unacceptable, since all the supposed absolute moral rules that are adopted as a result of this arbitrary leap are themselves rendered arbitrary by the baselessness of the leap itself. Furthermore, there’s no rational way to test the validity or truth of transcendent or religious knowledge or to comprehend the incomprehensible. As a result, we are committed to the position that the only thing that can be called knowledge is that which is firmly grounded in the realm of human understanding and verification.

4. Though we take a strict position on what constitutes knowledge, we aren’t critical of the sources of ideas. Often intuitive feelings, hunches, speculation, and flashes of inspiration prove to be excellent sources of novel approaches, new ways of looking at things, new discoveries, and new concepts. We don’t disparage those ideas derived from religious experience, altered states of consciousness, or the emotions; we merely declare that testing these ideas against reality is the only way to determine their validity as knowledge.

5. Human knowledge isn’t perfect. We recognize that the tools for testing knowledge—the human senses and human reason—are fallible, thus rendering tentative all our knowledge and scientific conclusions about the nature of the world. What’s true for our scientific conclusions is even more so for our moral choices and social policies; these latter are subject to continual revision in the light of both the fallible and tentative nature of our knowledge and constant shifts in social conditions.

To many this will seem an insecure foundation upon which to erect a philosophy. But because it deals honestly with the world, we believe it is the most secure foundation possible. Efforts to base philosophies on superhuman sources and transcendent “realities” in order to provide a greater feeling of security only end up creating illusions about the world that then result in errors when these illusions become the basis for decisions and social policies. We humanists wish to avoid these costly errors and have thus committed ourselves to facing life as it is and to the hard work that such an honest approach entails. We have willingly sacrificed the lure of an easy security offered by simplistic systems in order to take an active part in the painstaking effort to build our understanding of the world and thereby contribute to the solution of the problems that have plagued humanity through the ages.

6. We maintain that human values make sense only in the context of human life. A supposed nonhumanlike existence after death cannot, then, be included as part of the environment in which our values must operate. The here-and-now physical world of our senses is the world that is relevant for our ethical concerns, our goals, and our aspirations. We therefore place our values wholly within this context. Were we to do otherwise—to place our values in the wider context of a merely hoped-for extension of the reality we know—we might find ourselves either foregoing our real interests in the pursuit of imaginary ones or trying to relate human needs here to a very different set of nonhuman needs elsewhere. We won’t sacrifice the ethical good life here unless it can be demonstrated that there is another life elsewhere that necessitates a shift in our attention, and that this other life bears some relation and commonality with this one.

7. We ground our ethical decisions and ideals in human need and concern as opposed to the alleged needs and concerns of supposed deities or other transcendent entities or powers. We measure the value of a given choice by how it affects human life, and in this we include our individual selves, our families, our society, and the peoples of the earth. If higher powers are found to exist, powers to which we must respond, we will still base our response on human need and interest in any relationship with these powers. This is because all philosophies and religions we know are created by humans and can’t, in the final analysis, avoid the built-in bias of a human perspective. This human perspective limits us to human ways of comprehending the world and to human drives and aspirations as motive forces.

8. We practice our ethics in a living context rather than an ideal one. Though ethics are ideals, ideals can only serve as guidelines in

life situations. This is why we oppose absolutistic moral systems that attempt to rigidly apply ideal moral values as if the world were itself ideal. We recognize that conflicts and moral dilemmas do occur and that moral choices are often difficult and cannot be derived from simplistic yardsticks and rules of thumb. Moral choices often involve hard thinking, diligent gathering of information about the situation at hand, careful consideration of immediate and future consequences, and weighing of alternatives. Living life in a manner that promotes the good, or even knowing what choices are good, isn't always easy. So when we declare our commitment to a humanist approach to ethics, we are expressing our willingness to do the intensive thinking and work that moral living in a complex world entails.

Tentative Conclusions about the World

1. Our planet revolves around a medium-sized star, which is located near the edge of an average-sized galaxy of as many as 300 billion stars, which is part of a galaxy group consisting of more than thirty other galaxies, which is part of an expanding universe that, while consisting mostly of cold, dark space, also contains perhaps one hundred billion galaxies in addition to our own. Our species has existed only a very short time on the earth, and the earth itself has existed only a short time in the history of our galaxy. Our existence is thus an incredibly minuscule and brief part of a much larger picture.

In light of this, we find it curious that, in the absence of direct evidence, religious thinkers can conclude that the universe or some creative power beyond it is concerned with our well-being or future. From all appearances it seems more logical to conclude that we alone are concerned for our well-being and future.

2. Human beings are neither entirely unique from other forms of life nor are they the final product of some planned scheme of development. The available evidence shows that humans are made from the same building blocks of which other life forms are made and are subject to the same sorts of natural pressures. All life forms are constructed from the same basic elements—the same sorts of atoms—as are nonliving substances, and these atoms are made of subatomic particles that have been recycled through many cosmic events before becoming part of us or our world. Humans are the current result of a long series of natural evolutionary changes, but not the only result or the final one. Continuous change can be expected to affect ourselves, other life forms, and the cosmos as a whole. There appears no ultimate beginning or end to this process.

3. There is no compelling evidence to justify the belief that the human mind is distinct and separable from the human brain, which is itself a part of the body. All that we know about the personality indicates that every part of it is subject to change caused by physical disease, injury, and death. Thus there are insufficient grounds for belief in a soul or some form of afterlife.

4. The basic motivations that determine our values are ultimately rooted in our biology and early experiences. This is because our values are based upon our needs, interests, and desires which, themselves, often relate to the survival of our species. As humans we are capable of coming to agreement on basic values because we most often share the same needs, interests, and desires and because we share the same planetary environment.

Theoretically then, it's possible to develop a scientifically-based system of ethics once enough is known about basic human needs, drives, motivations, and characteristics and once reason and empathy are consistently applied toward the meeting of human needs and the development of human capacities. In the meantime human ethics, laws, social systems, and religions will remain a part of the ongoing trial-and-error efforts of humans to discover better ways to live.

5. When people are left largely free to pursue their own interests and goals, to think and speak for themselves, to develop their abilities, and to operate in a social setting that promotes liberty, the number of beneficial discoveries and accomplishments increases and humanity moves further toward the goal of greater self-understanding, better laws, better institutions, and a good life.

Current Positions on Social Policy

1. As humanists who are committed to free inquiry and who see the value of social systems that promote liberty, we encourage the development of individual autonomy. In this context, we support such freedoms and rights as religious liberty, church-state separation, freedom of speech and the press, freedom of association (including sexual freedom, the right to marriage and divorce, and the right to alternative family structures), a right to birth control and abortion, and the right to voluntary euthanasia.

2. As humanists who understand that humans are social animals and need both the protections and restraints provided by effective social organization, we support those laws that protect the innocent, deal effectively with the guilty, and secure the survival of the needy.

We desire a system of criminal justice that is swift and fair, ignoring neither the perpetrator of crime nor the victim, and considering deterrence, restoration, and rehabilitation in the goals of penalization. However, not all crimes or disputes between people must be settled by courts of law. A different approach involving conflict mediation, wherein opposing parties come to mutual agreements, also has our support.

3. As humanists who see potential in people at all levels of society, we encourage an extension of participatory democracy so that decision making becomes more decentralized and involves more people. We look forward to widespread participation in the decision-making process in areas such as the family, the school, the workplace, institutions, and government. In this context we see no place for prejudice on the basis of race, nationality, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, political persuasion, religion, or philosophy. And we see every basis for the promotion of equal opportunity in the economy and in universal education.

4. As humanists who realize that all humans share common needs in a common planetary environment, we support the current trend toward more global consciousness. We realize that effective environmental programs require international cooperation. We know that only international negotiation toward arms reduction will make the world secure from the threat of thermonuclear or biological war. We see the necessity for worldwide education on population growth control as a means toward securing a comfortable place for everyone. And we perceive the value in international communication and exchange of information, whether that communication and exchange involve political ideas, ideological viewpoints, science, technology, culture, or the arts.

5. As humanists who value human creativity and human reason and who have seen the benefits of science and technology, we are decidedly willing to take part in the new scientific and technological developments around us. We are encouraged rather than fearful about biotechnology, alternative energy, and information technology, and we recognize that attempts to reject these developments or to prevent their wide application will not stop them. Such efforts will merely place them in the hands of other people or nations for their exploitation. To exercise our moral influence on new technologies, to have our voice heard, we must take part in these revolutions as they occur.

6. As humanists who see life and human history as a great adventure, we seek new worlds to explore, new facts to uncover, new avenues for artistic expression, new solutions to old problems, and new feelings to experience. We sometimes feel driven in our quest, and it is participation in this quest that gives our lives meaning and makes beneficial discoveries possible. Our goals as a species are open ended. As a result, we will never be without purpose.

Materialism

Materialism can refer either to the simple preoccupation with the material world, as opposed to intellectual or spiritual concepts, or to the theory that physical matter is all there is. This theory is far more than a simple focus on material possessions. It states that everything in the universe is matter, without any true spiritual or intellectual existence. Materialism can also refer to a doctrine that material success and progress are the highest values in life. This doctrine appears to be prevalent in western society today. Materialism can also refer to the term, Cultural Materialism.

Materialism - Philosophies & Worldviews

Materialism and its theories can be traced as far back as the poem *The Nature of Things*, written in the first century B.C. by Lucretius. Other defining works include *The System of Nature* by Paul d'Holbach, *Force and Matter* by Ludwig Buchner, and the more recent research done by Richard Vitzthum, *An Affirmative History and Definition* (1996).

Materialism as a philosophy is held by those who maintain that existence is explainable solely in material terms, with no accounting of spirit or consciousness. Individuals who hold to this belief see the universe as a huge device held together by pieces of matter functioning in subjection to naturalistic laws. Since materialism denies all concepts of Special Creation, it relies on the Theory of Evolution to explain itself, making beliefs in materialism and evolution interdependent.

The first question this worldview should cause most of us to ask is, "If all that exists is matter only, where did the natural laws that govern it come from?" New scientific discoveries in the areas of biological complexity, cosmological design, quantum physics, and information theory bring these materialistic assumptions into doubt. A massive quantity of evidence demonstrates that the universe and its material aspects are connected by a network of energy, design and information. We now see much more than matter - we see the result of conscious creation.

Materialism - A Question of Belief

Materialism, at its simpler level, involves the focus on material “things” as opposed to that which is spiritual or intellectual in nature. We live in a world surrounded by and composed of matter. It is natural, therefore, that we may become distracted from spiritual or intellectual pursuits by material possessions, but this is frequently where problems occur. We can become obsessed by a desire to obtain them, or simply frustrated by the need to maintain them.

The questions this attitude should cause us to ask are, “Are material things really more important than anything else? Is material success the highest goal? If things are all there are, what’s life all about? Why am I here at all? If life is really just about materialism, why should I even try to live a moral life? What does it matter how I treat others or how I live, as long as I have what I want? Why does what I believe about the origin of life matter?”

In a court of criminal law, a conviction arrived at by any jury requires proof beyond a shadow of a doubt. Current theories of materialism appear to be clouded by shadows and doubts. We needn’t conclude that it is necessary to take a completely opposite view. After all, as C.S. Lewis once said, “God ... likes matter. He invented it.” Consider, instead, how what you choose to believe affects how you live, for as Lewis also said, “different beliefs about the universe lead to different behavior.” What we believe must either be true or false. Before settling on the position you choose, you owe it to yourself to keep seeking the truth about life, death and the universe.

Hedonism

Hedonism is the philosophy that pleasure is the most important pursuit of mankind, and the only thing that is good for an individual. Hedonists, therefore, strive to maximise their total pleasure (the net of any pleasure less any pain or suffering). They believe that pleasure is the only good in life, and pain is the only evil, and our life’s goal should be to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.

Psychological Hedonism is the view that humans are psychologically constructed in such a way that we exclusively desire pleasure. Ethical Hedonism, on the other hand, is the view that our fundamental moral obligation is to maximize pleasure or happiness. It is the normative claim that we should always act so as to produce our own pleasure.

Hedonism usually pre-supposes an individualist stance, and is associated with Egoism (the claim that individuals should always seek

their own good in all things). Epicureanism is a more moderate approach (which still seeks to maximize happiness, but which defines happiness more as a state of tranquillity than pleasure). A similar but more altruistic approach results in Utilitarianism, the position that the moral worth of any action is determined by its contribution to overall utility in maximizing happiness or pleasure as summed among all people.

The Paradox of Hedonism (also called the Pleasure Paradox), points out that pleasure and happiness are strange phenomena that do not obey normal principles, in that they cannot be acquired directly, only indirectly and we often fail to attain pleasures if we deliberately seek them.

The term “hedonism” is derived from the Greek “hedone” meaning simply “pleasure”. In common language, Hedonism has come to mean devotion to pleasure as a way of life, especially to the pleasures of the senses, and is synonymous with sensualism, libertinism, debauchery and dissipation.

Perhaps the earliest example of Hedonism (and one of the most extreme) was the philosophy of the Cyrenaics, an early Socratic school founded by Aristippus of Cyrene, in the 4th Century B.C. (although, arguably, Democritus had propounded a very similar philosophy even earlier). The Cyrenaics emphasized one side only of Socrates’ teaching that happiness is one of the ends of moral action (Eudaimonism), while denying that virtue has any intrinsic value. They maintained that pleasure was the supreme good, especially physical pleasure, which Aristippus considered more intense and preferable to mental or intellectual pleasures, and especially immediate gratification, which he argued should not be denied for the sake of long-term gain.

Epicureanism is considered by some to be a form of ancient Hedonism. Its founder, Epicurus, agreed that pleasure is the greatest good, but he identified pleasure with tranquillity rather than bodily gratification, and emphasized the reduction of desire over the immediate acquisition of pleasure. Thus, for Epicurus, the highest pleasure consists of a simple, moderate life spent with friends and in philosophical discussion. Epicurus was also careful not to suggest that we should live a selfish life which impedes others from obtaining their own pleasure.

During the Middle Ages, Christian philosophers largely denounced Hedonism, which they believed was inconsistent with the Christian emphasis on avoiding sin, doing God’s will, and developing the Christian

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virtues of faith, hope and charity. However, Renaissance philosophers such as Erasmus and Sir Thomas More revived Hedonism to some extent, defending it on the religious grounds that pleasure was in fact compatible with God's wish for humans to be happy.

Libertinism is a philosophy related to Hedonism, which found adherents in the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries, particularly in France and Britain, including the 2nd Earl of Rochester (1647 - 1680), the Marquis de Sade (1740 - 1814) and the occultist Aleister Crowley (1875 - 1947). Libertinism ignores, or even deliberately spurns, religious norms, accepted morals, and forms of behaviour sanctioned by the larger society, and encourages gratification of any sort, especially sexual.

The 19th Century ethical theory of Utilitarianism, propounded by the British philosophers John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, developed and refined Hedonism, concluding that we should perform whichever action is best for everyone ("the greatest good for the greatest number"). Bentham believed that the value of a pleasure could be quantitatively understood, while Mill preferred a qualitative approach dependent on the mix of higher quality pleasures and lower quality, simple pleasures.

Ayn Rand (1905 - 1982), one of the biggest modern proponents of Egoism, has rejected Hedonism as a comprehensive ethical system on the grounds that, although pleasure can be the purpose of ethics, it cannot be the standard or guide to action, as that would result in intellectual and philosophical abdication.

Contemporary Hedonists, as represented by an organization known as Hedonist International, strive first and foremost for pleasure, as did their predecessors, but with an additional emphasis on personal freedom and equality. Christian Hedonism is a recent controversial Christian doctrine, current in some evangelical circles, which holds that humans were created by God with the priority purpose of lavishly enjoying God through knowing, worshiping and serving Him.