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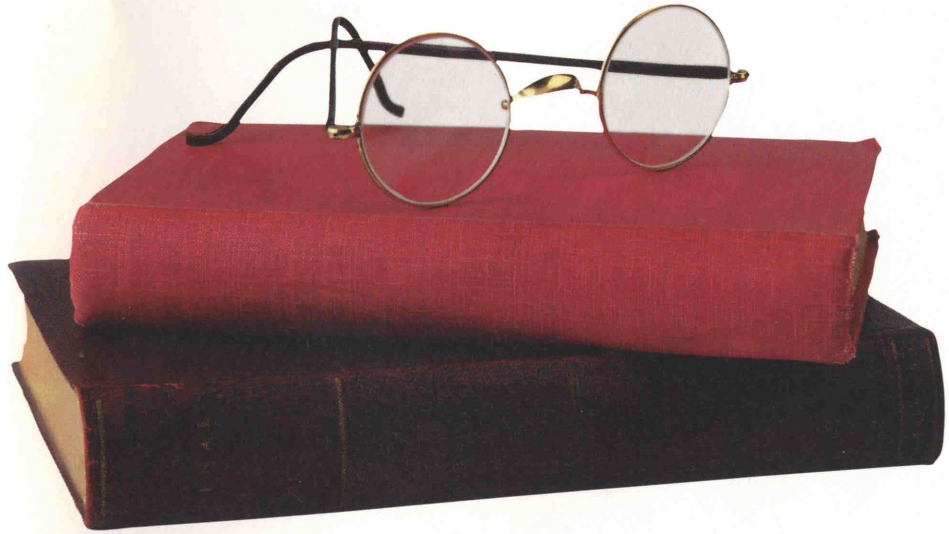
Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part III

The Enlightenment and Its Critics



COURSE GUIDE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Professor Biographies.....1

Course Scope.....6

Lecture One: Locke's Epistemology.....7

Lecture Two: Locke's Political Theory.....10

Lecture Three: Montesquieu and the Beginnings of Political Science.....15

Lecture Four: Berkeley's Idealism and the Critique of Materialism.....19

Lecture Five: Hume's Epistemology.....22

Lecture Six: Hume's Theory of Morality.....25

Lecture Seven: Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.....27

Lecture Eight: Rousseau's Dissent: The Challenge to the Idea of Progress.....31

Lecture Nine: Kant's "Copernican Revolution": Epistemology and the Critique of Metaphysics.....34

Lecture Ten: Kant's Moral Philosophy.....37

Lecture Eleven: Burke and the Birth of Enlightened Conservatism.....40

Lecture Twelve: Naturalism and Materialism: The Boundaries of the French Enlightenment.....42

Glossary.....45

Biographical Notes.....46

Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part III
The Enlightenment and Its Critics

Scope: The lectures in Part III examine the great French and British enlightenment philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These years were a time of growing philosophical skepticism, widespread religious disbelief, expanded faith in science, and early responses to the industrial revolution. The lectures on John Locke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant emphasize the linkage between these thinkers' epistemologies and their theories of morality. Other lectures examine Baron de Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, George Berkeley, and Edmund Burke. Each in his own way, these philosophers exalted the freedom and power of human potential and scientific expansion. Their age was also marked by the rise of the urban middle classes, which increasingly demanded free markets, free speech, and a louder political voice.

Lecture One
Locke's Epistemology

Alan Charles Kors, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines John Locke's empiricist theory of knowledge, which held that the mind is a blank slate ("*tabula rasa*") upon which our experiences write themselves through our sense impressions. Professor Kors distinguishes Cartesian rationalism from Lockean empiricism, especially in reference to the purpose of natural philosophy and the source of our knowledge of the external world. He then examines in detail Locke's epistemological theory, which departed from scholasticism by denying that humans could achieve certain knowledge of anything beyond sense experience. Finally, he considers the influence of Locke's ideas on subsequent theories of epistemology and ethics.

Outline

I. Tension emerged during the seventeenth century between Cartesian rationalism and Baconian/Lockean empiricism.
- **A.** This disjunction is genuine but should not be exaggerated.
  - **1.** Descartes was empirical as well as rationalistic.
    - **a.** He held that reason apprehends that the natural order is governed by fixed laws of motion, although one can discern and understand these laws only through empirical observation.
    - **b.** However, he elevated reason over observation by positing from reason alone his laws regarding inertia and the impossibility of a vacuum.
  - **2.** Locke was rationalistic as well as empirical.
    - **a.** He distinguished between empirical propositions, which are at best probable and thus can be doubted, and propositions that are necessarily true at the level of logical analysis and that the mind perceives as intuitively certain.
    - **b.** Locke held that only the latter sort of propositions confer absolute certainty and denote necessary truth.
- **B.** Two examples illustrate the distinction between Cartesian rationalism and Lockean empiricism:
  - **1.** What is the goal of natural philosophy?
    - **a.** Descartes held that the goal of natural philosophy is true knowledge about the real qualities of the world, i.e., of things in themselves.
    - **b.** Locke held that the goal is useful knowledge about our experience of the world.
  - **2.** What is the source of our ideas about the world?

a. Descartes held that our foundational ideas are innate, implanted by God in the human mind.
b. Locke held that all ideas derive from experience. Intuitively certain truths about relations (e.g., those of mathematics) do not give us knowledge of the phenomena of the world. We know only our experience of things, not the reality of things in themselves. Nor do we know the essence of mind or matter other than as an experience of our own minds.
c. Locke's attitude is one of providential optimism. God has shaped our mental capacities to suit our needs. We do not need to know what things are in themselves, only how they behave.

II. Locke developed an empirical epistemology.

A. According to Locke, all knowledge arises from two sorts of experience:
1. Sensation.
2. Reflection, i.e., the experience of our mind dealing with the ideas of sensation.

B. The mind is a "*tabula rasa*"—a blank slate—on which nature imprints simple ideas gained through experience. Complex ideas are formed from the mind's combination of simple sensations or reflections.

C. Locke claimed that our knowledge is absolutely limited to our experience of the world. We cannot know what underlies or is prior to experience.
1. Thus he rejected the scholastic emphasis on discovering realities (e.g., "substance") that lie beyond human experience.
2. We can know only the "nominal essence" of things (i.e., the "name" that we assign to them), not the "real essence" that transcends our experience of the thing.
3. Locke departed from the Scholastics and Cartesians in holding that we cannot know what the mind is or what underlies the mind. We can know only the mind's behavior, since that is all we experience.
4. Locke's critics accused him of impiety because he denied any knowledge of the soul. Locke responded that it is impious to suppose that God could not endow matter with the power of thought.

III. Locke's theories proved enormously influential.

A. European thinkers embraced Locke's theory of knowledge because it explained and justified the progress of the experimental sciences.
1. Any true proposition must be susceptible to analysis, clarity, and confirmation. That is, it must be capable of being analyzed into clear and simple ideas, and ultimately into the discrete experiences that compose those ideas.

2. The theory invites the empirical confirmation or disconfirmation of all propositions.
3. The world of ideas is thereby demystified and made accessible. All prior claims to knowledge can be analyzed and either confirmed or rejected on the basis of open, communicable human experiences.

B. According to Locke, ethical ideas are also derived from experience. Those things that cause human happiness or well-being, or that we think bring those effects, are "good." Those that bring pain, or that we think bring pain, are "evil."
1. Locke was confident that God has so arranged the world that what we perceive as "good" is also what God wills to be good. God has providentially adapted ethics to real human experience.
2. Through proper use of mind and senses, we can derive appropriate ideas of good and evil.

C. Miracles and prophecy-fulfillment are God's empirical evidence of the truth of Scripture.

Essential Reading:

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* C.E. Puttle, 1994.

Supplementary Reading:

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 604-617).

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Bk. II, Vol. V. Image Books, 1985 (pp. 67-122).

Alexander, Peter. *Ideas, Qualities and Corpuscles.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Ayer, Michael. *Locke* (2 vol.). Routledge, 1991.

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Questions to Consider:

1. According to Locke, are consequences or intentions more important in evaluating the moral content of human actions?
2. Does Locke believe that true knowledge can be acquired through reason alone?

Lecture Two
Locke's Political Theory

Dennis Dalton, Ph.D.

Scope: John Locke was an influential political theorist as well as an epistemologist. He held that all people have a natural right to life, liberty, and property. Just governments, in his view, derive their power from the consent of the governed. Locke's political philosophy greatly influenced the authors of the American Declaration of Independence and other later political thinkers. This lecture combines Locke with Aristotle as political "reformers" and distinguishes them from the idealist tradition represented by Plato and the realist tradition embodied in Hobbes. It also distinguishes the views of Locke and Hobbes regarding man's natural condition, the origins and character of the "social contract," and the purposes of government.

Outline

I. The American Declaration of Independence reflects the ideas of John Locke by proclaiming that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

II. Professor Dalton distinguishes among three types of political theorists: realists, idealists, and reformists.

- **A.** Realists such as Hobbes are concerned primarily with security, while idealists such as Plato are concerned with virtue and justice. Both, however, see man's political situation as one of desperate crisis that requires a desperate remedy: strong central leadership.
- **B.** Reformists, led by Aristotle, assume that man's natural state is not one of crisis, as Plato and Hobbes suggest.
  1. Reformists consider that man's condition is basically good and requires only palliatives rather than radical surgery.
  2. Reformists warn against revolutionary or excessive change. They favor moderate change that respects and builds upon existing institutions, laws, customs, and political culture.
  3. Locke stands to Hobbes as Aristotle stands to Plato. Locke denies that humans are in a state of crisis and require powerful leadership which, as he warns, tends inevitably toward despotism and tyranny. The solution to the imperfections of the human political condition consists above all in respect for institutions and liberty under law.
- **C.** Locke and Hobbes offer differing prescriptions for man's condition.
  1. Hobbes goes to extremes; he creates an all-powerful central state to resolve the perceived crisis facing men in the state of nature.
  2. Locke speaks not of leadership but of institutions, laws, and political culture. His key concern is to fashion a polity that will secure freedom under law. The success of the United States of America in achieving this goal is due not to brilliant leadership but to the quality of its institutions and to its political culture, which discourages extremism.

III. Locke views the state of nature in far more benign terms than Hobbes does.

- **A.** Locke views *power* as the right to make laws for regulating and preserving property (understood both as one's possessions and as life itself). Power can be exercised legitimately only for the public good.
- **B.** According to both Hobbes and Locke, the state of nature is not a historical "golden age." It refers to the intrinsic human impulses that would manifest themselves in the absence of government.
  1. Unlike Hobbes, Locke views the state of nature as an original benign condition of perfect equality and perfect freedom from the arbitrary power of others.
  2. For Locke, liberty in the state of nature is governed by the laws of nature, which enjoin respect for the lives and welfare of others.
- **C.** Locke distinguishes between society and state.
  1. Society is constituted by a benign set of values—freedom, equality, and the obligation of mutual love.
  2. Society is not characterized by Hobbesian crisis, and thus there is no need for an all-powerful state to keep people in awe. According to Locke, a limited government is necessary only to remedy the inconveniences and imperfections of society.
- **D.** Locke's social contract is a compact among free and equal men to exit the state of nature by forming a limited polity.
  1. Locke differs profoundly in this respect from Hobbes, who holds that desperate individuals are driven by fear to create an all-powerful sovereign.
  2. Locke holds that one must consent to become subject to another's power. The majority has the right to rule the minority.
  3. Locke, not Hobbes, marks the beginnings of modern democratic political theory, which emphasizes the rights of the majority.
- **E.** Locke's theory of property begins with the labor theory of value.
  1. Human beings consent to unequal possession of property, based on the labor one expends in acquiring it.
  2. Locke stresses legal equality, not equality of material possessions.

IV. Lockean natural liberty consists not in license but in freedom from another's arbitrary power.

A. Man is free when he is subject only to political authority to which he has given his consent.

B. The purpose of law is to preserve and enlarge liberty. Liberty is impossible without law.

C. The form of government least injurious to liberty vests power in the legislature rather than the monarch.
   1. The legislature is the least likely of the branches of government to abuse power since it represents the middle class, which holds property and is thus unlikely to go to revolutionary or disruptive extremes.
   2. Legislative power is constrained by specific boundaries that apply in all circumstances: the legislature must apply the same rules to all citizens, both rich and poor; its laws must promote the public good; it must not seize private property via taxation without the people's direct and continuing consent.

D. Legitimate political power is exercised only for the common benefit, and it requires continuing consent of the governed. It becomes illegitimate when it is exercised arbitrarily and without regard for the public good. Absolute arbitrary power can and must be resisted.

Essential Reading:

Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government.* Hackett, 1980.

Supplementary Reading:

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 617-647).

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Bk. II, Vol. V. Image Books, 1985 (pp. 123-143).

Dunn, John. *Locke.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

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Franklin, Julian H. *John Locke and the Theory of Sovereignty: Mixed Monarchy and the Right of Resistance in the Political Thought of the English Revolution.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Steinberg, Jules. *Locke, Rousseau, and the Idea of Consent: An Inquiry into the Liberal-Democratic Theory of Political Obligation.* Greenwood, 1978.

Questions to Consider:

1. According to Locke, does the existence of government enhance or diminish individual freedom?
2. According to Locke and Hobbes, what makes political power legitimate? Under what circumstances, if any, may people rightfully rebel against their government?

Lecture Three
Montesquieu and the Beginnings of Political Science

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D

Scope: This lecture examines the political theorist Baron de Montesquieu, whose naturalistic and scientific perspective departed from the classical tradition of Plato and Aristotle. Like Machiavelli, Montesquieu examined governments as they actually are rather than as they should be. Influenced by both Locke and Aristotle, he traced the lineaments of various governmental forms in relation to the geography, religion, climate, and culture of the society in which they were found. He identified three basic forms of government— monarchies, republics, and despotisms—each of which is appropriate under particular circumstances. Although he refused to identify any particular form of government as intrinsically superior, he praised the separation of powers within the British constitutional monarchy as most conducive to respect for individual rights. This lecture will review Montesquieu's political ideas and their influence upon the makers of the American and the French Revolutions.

Outline

I. Montesquieu represented the first attempt to create a social science modeled upon natural science. He tried to discern in a purely naturalistic way how human societies work, what makes human governments function, and what sort of political arrangements are good for people under various circumstances.

- **A.** The rise of modern natural science fundamentally changed Western conceptions of society, morality, and political organization.
- **B.** Montesquieu looked empirically at governments that actually existed either in his own time or historically. He departed from the classical political tradition of Plato and Aristotle by examining actual rather than ideal governments, and by discussing how governments really are rather than how they ought to be.
- **C.** Since practice was his central concern, he tried to analyze all varieties of governments that actually exist.

II. Montesquieu lived in France during the age of absolute monarchy and under a king who claimed to rule by divine right but proved in practice to be an unenlightened despot.

- **A.** His prime concern was how to impose limitations on government in order to protect individual rights, but without undermining all possibility of political authority.
- **B.** His skeptical and secular orientation placed an almost Calvinistic emphasis on human selfishness and the limitations of human potential.

III. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu adopted a naturalistic and scientific perspective on political history. He identified three basic kinds of government, which are characteristic of different climatic, geographic, economic, and demographic conditions.

- **A.** In asserting that different governments are appropriate to different circumstances, Montesquieu departed from Plato and Aristotle, who each identified a single regime type that they regarded as best regardless of circumstances.
- **B.** Montesquieu identified three basic kinds of government: monarchy, despotism, and republic. Each of these regimes is distinguished by the spirit that informs its laws.
  1. Monarchy is best suited for large territories that have no natural boundaries and are thus open to external invasion. Such states are likely to be heavily populated and contain wide disparites of wealth. Such territories can be effectively controlled only through centralized monarchical authority. Montesquieu holds that monarchies are actuated by the principle of honor.
  2. Despotism is rule by a single individual, without law, legitimacy, or restraint. The principle that actuates despotism is not honor but fear (cf., Machiavelli and Hobbes). Montesquieu clearly disapproves of despotism, which he seems to identify with Louis XIV. His normative disapproval of despotism conflicts with the dispassionate, objective, and descriptive tone he tries to maintain elsewhere.
  3. Montesquieu identifies two kinds of republics: democracies and aristocracies.
     - **a.** Democracy is appropriate for small, isolated states (preferably mountainous areas or islands) where there are natural geographic barriers to invasion, where the population is small, and where wealth disparities are minor. The actuating spirit of democracy is virtue among the citizenry, which prevents the decline of social cohesion and a descent into despotism.
     - **b.** Aristocratic republics are characterized by moderation, understood as equilibrium among the three natural segments of society (the one, the few, and the many). The predominance of a strong and moderate aristocracy can help to prevent government from becoming oppressive.

IV. Montesquieu attempted to reconcile the traditional, normative element in political theory with the empirical and skeptical focus of natural science.

A. He held, with David Hume, that human beings have a natural propensity to form polities and systems of morality. This is the "objective" or "positive" element that arises from human nature and holds true across societies.

B. However, the specific form of those polities and moral systems depends upon contingent circumstances of time and place. This is the skeptical or relativistic component in Montesquieu's thought. Thus he disagreed with Plato and Aristotle that any one regime is best regardless of circumstances.

C. Montesquieu stressed the need to maintain the spirit that underlies the laws of one's regime, in order to prevent a decline into despotism.

V. Montesquieu offered practical recommendations for reforming existing governments. His most important contribution was the idea of dividing governmental powers among various societal interests in order to prevent tyranny and disorder.

A. Like Locke, Montesquieu sought to secure individual liberty by dividing government powers among the one, the few, and the many.

B. Montesquieu influenced the American founding fathers.

1. They appropriated Montesquieu's advocacy of the separation of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.
2. However, they rejected his contention that republicanism is appropriate only for small and easily defensible states.

C. Montesquieu's influence reinforced the concern of the American founding fathers to preserve America's republican virtue.

Essential Reading:

Montesquieu, Baron Charles. *The Spirit of The Laws.* Free Press, 1969.

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Book II, Vol. VI. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 9-39).

Hampson, Norman. *Will and Circumstance: Montesquieu, Rousseau, and the French Revolution.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983.

Pangle, Thomas. *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism: A Commentary on the Spirit of The Laws.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Shackleton, Robert. *Montesquieu, A Critical Biography.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Baum, Alan. *Montesquieu and Social Theory.* B. Franklin, 1979.

Questions to Consider:

1. To what extent does Montesquieu represent a departure from the normative and idealistic focus of Plato's political theory?
2. According to Montesquieu, what system of government best avoids internal strife, and why?

Lecture Four
Berkeley's Idealism and the Critique of Materialism

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: George Berkeley's most important philosophical work—*A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710)—established his reputation as one of the three great British empiricists (with Locke and Hume). Berkeley held in this treatise that there is no existence independent of perception. His subjectivist idealism was cogently stated in the Latin phrase "*esse est percipi*" ("to exist is to be perceived"). Locke had argued that human knowledge depends upon the existence of material objects independent of minds. He held that secondary qualities—such as color—arise in the mind, while primary qualities of objects—such as extension—are intrinsic to objects and exist independently of our perception of them. Berkeley argued, by contrast, that both primary and secondary qualities exist only in minds: human minds contain certain ideas, and the mind of God contains all ideas. This lecture examines the extreme idealist conclusions that Berkeley drew from his empiricist premises.

Outline

I. George Berkeley offered an influential critique of Enlightenment philosophy.

- **A.** He oposed the Enlightenment's mechanistic materialism, which he saw as conducive to skepticism and atheism.
- **B.** He adopted the Enlightenment's empiricist epistemology
  1. He shared Locke's view of the mind as a "*tabula rasa*"—all ideas arise from sense perception.
  2. His empiricism and nominalism, however, were more thoroughgoing than Locke's.
     - **a.** Locke rejected the realist view of universals in favor of a conceptualist view that treated universals or "nominal essences" as abstract ideas rather than real subsistent entities.
     - **b.** Berkeley disparaged this notion of abstract ideas as a half-hearted compromise with realism. Only particular ideas can exist, since our sense data are all particular. Abstract ideas are merely names that we apply to individuals.

II. Berkeley argued that consistent empiricism entailed the conclusion that ideas are the only phenomena of which we are aware. Materialism is a dogmatic superstition, and matter is an "occult substratum."

- **A.** All sensible objects are composed of ideas derived from sense. We never actually experience matter, and thus we can have no idea of it.
  1. Matter is a posited substratum held to unify the various simple ideas of sensible particulars or objects.
  2. The various sensed properties of a given object are "constantly conjoined" in the mind of the percipient. They do not inhere in a given quantity of matter.
  3. If all sensible objects are actually ideas, then ideas must have a substratum in which they reside, which is mind.
- **B.** Berkeley attempts to prove that God exists and is the cause of the law-like regularity of ideas.
  1. All the objects of the world are ideas in minds, and only minds are capable of producing or causing ideas.
  2. While we produce the ideas of imagination and reflection, we are incapable of producing the ideas of sense.
  3. Another mind must exist that is capable of producing all the ideas we sense. That mind is what we call God.
  4. If a tree falls in the forest and no person is there to hear it, it still makes a sound because God is everywhere and perceives everything. If God were not present, there would be neither sound, nor tree, nor forest.
- **C.** According to Berkeley, Newtonian physics shows us the law-like regularity in the order of sense impressions that we receive from God.
  1. Those laws allow us to predict behavior but not to explain the causes of behavior.
  2. Thus Newtonian science has no metaphysical implications. It cannot supplant God as the central causal agent of the universe.

III. According to Berkeley, belief in matter conduces to skepticism and atheism.

- **A.** We are separated from the real "material" world by an impenetrable veil of ideas. Skepticism results from our inability to know whether or not our ideas correspond to external material objects.
- **B.** By dismissing the possibility that material objects exist, we remove the cause of skepticism.
- **C.** Berkeley asserts that most people are idealists in practice; they regard as real their own sense perceptions of the world, not some assumed quality of the world that transcends their perception.
- **D.** Materialism promotes atheism by positing an unknowable and occult substratum—matter—that is held to cause experiences and regularities

that actually issue from the mind of God. If we eliminate matter, then God becomes the only possible cause of our ideas.

IV. Berkeley views idealism as liberation from sterile metaphysical speculation.

A. Philosophy is irrelevant to real-life concerns, such as virtue, beauty, and devotion to God.

B. Idealism promotes awareness of God as the source of our ideas.

C. Thus Berkeley can be seen as the first Romantic.

Essential Reading:

Berkeley, George. *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge.* Hackett, 1982.

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick S. J. *A History of Philosophy* , Book II, Vol. V. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 213-257).

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945 (pp. 647-658).

Bracken, Harry. *The Early Reception of Berkeley, 1710-1733.* Kluwer, 1965.

Luce, A. A. *The Life of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne.* Greenwood Reprint of 1949 ed.

Moked, Gabriel. *Particles and Ideas: Bishop Berkeley's Corpuscularian Philosophy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Seth, Andrew. *Scottish Philosophy.* Garland, 1983.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why does Berkeley claim that materialism breeds skepticism? Does his own idealism refute such skepticism?

2. Is Berkeley's empiricism consistent with his idealism?

Lecture Five
Hume's Epistemology

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the empiricist philosophy of David Hume, who held along with Locke and Berkeley that all of our mental representations arise from sense experience. Hume identified relations of cause and effect as the source of all of our knowledge of "matters of fact," but he denied that causation had any objective or logical necessity. Instead, he explained causation as a customary or habitual inference that we draw from the "constant conjunction" of sensed phenomena. We will examine these aspects of Hume's epistemology and his efforts to reconcile necessity with liberty.

Outline

I. David Hume brought to fruition the empiricist epistemology of Locke and Berkeley.

A. Hume categorized all of our mental representations as either impressions or ideas.

1. Impressions are those representations distinguished by their relative phenomenal vivacity and force.

2. Ideas are "copies" of impressions. They are relatively less clear and vivid to the percipient than are impressions.

3. The temporal sequencing between impressions and ideas (the former come before the latter) indicates the causal relationship between them.

B. Hume identifies three principles according to which the mind associates various ideas: resemblance, spatial or temporal contiguity, and cause and effect.

II. All human knowledge can be broken down into one of two classes.

A. Some knowledge involves relations between ideas. This knowledge is either intuitively certain or logically demonstrable. It has no existential implications.

B. Other knowledge involves matters of fact, i.e., propositions that concern existential statements or statements of fact. This sort of knowledge has no necessary logical basis, since counterfactual propositions are logically possible.

1. The critical epistemological question asks how we can know matters of fact that are not supplied by present sense data. Hume's

answer is the principle of cause and effect, which allows us to infer from sensed to unsensed phenomena.

2. Relations of cause and effect are an inference from our experience of constant conjunction.
3. Science confers only provisional knowledge, not absolute or ultimate answers. Hume is concerned to avoid dogmatism.

III. Given that our knowledge of matters of fact is based upon cause and effect, which is based in turn upon experience, what warrants our belief in experience?

A. Reason cannot warrant our belief in experience, since it is logically possible that the future will not resemble the present.

B. Causation cannot warrant this belief, since causation itself depends on experience.

C. Hume concludes that we believe in relations of cause and effect through custom, instinct, or habit. Non-rational beings (e.g., children or certain mentally incompetent adults) act on the basis of cause and effect, although they cannot justify it logically.

IV. If all of our knowledge of matters of fact is based upon cause and effect, which is in turn based upon experience, what is the origin of the synonymous metaphysical doctrines of "power, force, and necessary connection?"

A. There is no logical doctrine of necessary connections in the world, since logical proofs have no existential implications.

B. All ideas must have their origin in sense. If an idea has no sensual basis, then it is a chimera. None of the aforementioned notions, however, arises from sense.

C. Hume concludes that power, force, and necessary connection are thus merely powerful psychological conditions, arising from the constancy of certain conjunction. Our belief in mind and matter is just a common-sense intuition.

V. Hume attempted to reconcile liberty with necessity.

A. Necessity and causation, which are the essence of determinism, are simply the experience of constant conjunctions and the expectation that the future will resemble the past.

B. Liberty is merely the absence of external restraint. It is perfectly consistent with a causally determined universe; i.e., it does not imply a metaphysical doctrine of free will.

1. If our actions were not determined by causal laws (i.e., if they were completely free and uncaused), there would be no basis for evaluating them morally.

2. Hume asserts that everyone believes in causal determinism in practice.

C. Miracles are, by definition, violations of the laws of nature that we discern through observation. There can be no rational grounds for belief in them.

1. Hume seeks to advance human liberation by ridiculing everything, including the sacred.
2. Although Hume denies any logical connection between belief in God and moral behavior, he acknowledges that most people require belief in God as a stimulus to behave morally.

VI. According to Hume, Cartesian skepticism cannot be refuted by logic, but it can be refuted by practical life and common sense. It, along with all philosophy, is irrelevant to real life.

A. Moderate skepticism can be useful, however, in discouraging the dogmatism of rationalistic philosophy and the intolerance of learned Christian orthodoxy.

B. Only with Hume does freedom of opinion come to be regarded as a positive good.

Essential Reading:

Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, A Letter From a Gentleman to His Friend in Edinburgh.* Hackett, 1972 (pp. 1-114).

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick S. J. *A History of Philosophy*, Book II, Vol. V. Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 258-317).

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 659-674).

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Mossner, Ernest C. *The Forgotten Hume, Le Bon David.* AMS Press, 1967.

Seth, Andrew. *Scottish Philosophy.* Garland, 1983.

Stroud, Barry. *Hume.* Routledge, 1981.

Talmor, Ezra. *Descartes and Hume.* Pergamon, 1980.

Taylor, A. E. *David Hume and the Miraculous.* Folcroft, 1927.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the function of skepticism in Hume's philosophy?
2. In Hume's view, what is the ultimate basis of our knowledge of matters of fact about the world?

Lecture Six
Hume's Theory of Morality

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: We turn now to Hume's theory of ethics and morality. Just as Hume located the origins of causation in the constant conjunction of sensed phenomena, he located the origin of our moral judgments in their constant conjunction with a sentiment of approbation or disapprobation. That is, morality is rooted not in rational judgment but in instinct or sentiment. Hume assesses the morality of behavior in terms of its consequences, and especially in terms of its advancement of social utility.

Outline

I. Hume's moral theory represents a transition between the moral sense doctrines of the Scottish school of common-sense philosophy and the consequentialism of the great nineteenth-century utilitarian thinkers.

II. Hume offers a scientific theory of morality.

- **A.** He treats morality as an already existent realm of human judgment and action. He asks how we ever came to make such judgments.
- **B.** He seeks to describe the cause of moral evaluation among the human species and to show in what such judgments consist. He does not prescribe a foundational moral theory.

III. Hume argues that our moral judgments find their origin in a sentiment of approbation or disapprobation.

- **A.** He notes that all our moral judgments are constantly conjoined by a sentiment of approbation that precedes such judgments.
- **B.** Moral judgment cannot be based on rational deliberation, for simpletons and children are capable of moral judgment and virtuous action. Nor is there any evidence that the most rational and intellectually advanced people are more disposed towards moral insight or virtuous behavior.

IV. Hume attempts to answer scientifically the question of what makes us approve of some actions and disapprove of others. He examines the various virtues universally accorded to moral rectitude, searching for a common element that might prompt our instinctual/sentimental approbation. He discovers that the common element is utility.

- **A.** Benevolence is universally acknowledged to be a virtue, and its most distinctive characteristic is that it tends to promote the public good.
- **B.** The only basis of our sentimental approval of the virtue of justice is its obvious social utility.
  1. There is no need for justice in societies of super-abundance or super-scarcity, or in societies of selfless people or thieves.
  2. If we could imagine interaction with creatures every bit as rational as we but entirely weak and unable to resist our force, we would probably suspend our operation of justice towards them because it has no utility for us.
  3. Hume argues that moral progress consists in including more and more people in our sense of community, and thus extending our moral sentiments over a larger domain.
- **C.** All government or political society has its basis in utility. For example, when countries are at war, the laws of nations are not useful and are suspended.

V. Hume argues that utility excites our sentiments of approval as the consequence of an inherent psychological or instinctual disposition.

- **A.** Moral judgment is equivalent to aesthetic judgment. It is a matter of taste.
- **B.** Utility and thus virtuous action have a "natural beauty" that moves us like a calm passion. Virtue is the result not of narrow self-interest but of a well-rounded and pleasant life.
- **C.** The moral quality of an act can be judged on the basis of its intention or its consequences.
  1. Those who believe in final causality will tend to judge actions in terms of their intention.
  2. Those, like Hume, who view acts and agents mainly as efficient causes will judge their morality on the basis of the consequences.
  3. At certain times our moral judgments should be based on the intentions of an act, and at other times they should be based on the consequences.
  4. Consequentialism as the basis of moral judgment is especially appropriate where the consequences of an act affect society as a whole.
- **D.** Although Nietzsche agrees with Hume that morality is an instinct or a psychological disposition, he views it as stupid and dangerous while Hume finds it natural and pleasant.

Essential Reading:

Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals.* Hackett, 1987.

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Bk. II, Vol. V. Image Books, 1985 (pp. 318-353).

Capaldi, Nicholas. *David Hume: The Newtonian Philosopher.* Macmillan, 1975.

Livingston, Donald W. *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Norton, David F. *David Hume: Common Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Seth, Andrew. *Scottish Philosophy.* Garland, 1983.

Questions to Consider:

1. Contrast the approaches of Plato and Hume to moral philosophy.
2. Discuss the relation between Hume's moral and epistemological views.

Lecture Seven
Smith's *Wealth of Nations*

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the thought of the moral philosopher Adam Smith, who along with David Hume and Adam Ferguson was one of the great figures of the Scottish Enlightenment. Smith sought to understand scientifically the requisites and procedures for creating—rather than merely redistributing—wealth. His *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* marked the origins of economics as an academic discipline. The lecture will also touch on Smith's other great work—*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*—in which he located the origins of moral judgment in the benevolence and sympathy that humans naturally feel toward each other.

Outline

I. Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* is one of the great epoch-making works in the history of social science.
   - **A.** Science and scientific approaches to the study of society are central to Smith's concern.
   - **B.** The age of machines and the rise of technology are implicit in the development of modern natural science.
   - **C.** Smith was the founder of economics and one of the first social thinkers to describe its influence on society.
   - **D.** The "rationalization" of society unleashes unprecedented productive forces that create vast and permanent social change.

II. The first two books of *The Wealth of Nations* discuss price theory, capital accumulation, the economic history of the West, mercantilism, and revenue and expenditure.
   - **A.** In the first book, Smith presents his most important discovery, which is that the division of labor is the cause of increased productivity of labor. The division of labor is limited by the extent of the market, which in turn is limited by nature and convention.
   - **B.** The second book attacks mercantilism and analyzes the revenue and expenditures of the sovereign. By justifying expenditures on the grounds of public utility and showing that minimal political interference maximizes wealth, Smith implicitly laid the groundwork for the modern liberal state.

C. The division of labor is limited by the extent of the market. There are two kinds of things that impede the extension of markets: natural causes and conventional causes.
   1. Natural causes are essentially space and time.
   2. Conventional causes include interference by government (e.g, by means of monopolies or protective tariffs).

D. Smith uses the example of the pin factory to show how the division of labor increases human felicity by boosting the productivity of labor.

E. Smith identifies various social consequences of the division of labor.
   1. It can undermine skill and craftsmanship.
   2. It can modify social structure, e.g., by incorporating children and women into the work force.
   3. It will tend to divide society into economic classes with opposed economic interests. Owners of capital will collude to limit the wages of labor.

III. Smith's *homo economicus* is the apotheosis of human heteronomy.

A. Desire is raised to the status of a principle, and reason becomes "the slave of the passions." Reason allows us to maximize the satisfaction of our non-rational desires.

B. A given quantum of wealth may not be sufficient for human happiness but it is surely necessary.

C. Smith does not believe that people are always rational utility-maximizers. He believes that ethical theory is derived from our emotions and has no rational foundation.

D. Smith established the discipline of economics. His perceptions were very influential among Marx and other later critics of capitalism. These critics were concerned more with the distributional consequences of capitalism than with its productive capacity.

Essential Reading:

Smith, Adam. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations.* Hackett, 1993.

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy* Bk. II, Vol. V. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 354-361).

Muller, Jerry. *Adam Smith in His Time and Ours.* New York: Free Press, 1992.

Wood, John. *Adam Smith: Critical Assessments.* Rothman, 1984.

Questions to Consider:

1. Does Smith view government involvement in the economy as always to be avoided?
2. What is the meaning of Smith's metaphor of the "invisible hand"? What conditions must exist in order for this mechanism to function?

Lecture Eight
Rousseau's Dissent: The Challenge to the Idea of Progress

Alan Charles Kors, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines Jean-Jacques Rousseau's critique of Enlightenment thought and of his own society. We begin by noting Rousseau's differences from the other Enlightenment thinkers of his day. Next we examine his critique of the arts and sciences, which held that "civilized" culture degraded virtue and moral progress by encouraging laziness and luxury. We will also examine his contention that man's natural state is one of perfect equality, and that society is the origin of inequality and unhappiness. Finally, the lecture discusses the totalitarian overtones of Rousseau's theory of the "general will."

Outline

I. Introduction: Rousseau had a distinctive identity and distinctive ideas.
   - **A.** He was a self-educated Protestant from Geneva and a solitary man in an age of great sociability.
   - **B.** He was a fervent deist, although he loathed the atheists of the French Enlightenment.
   - **C.** He argued that one must have good faith as well as reason and evidence in order to prove the existence of God.
   - **D.** He believed that most *philosophes* were more eager to pursue reputation and fame than honest truth.
   - **E.** He argued that reason can oppose truth and virtue when it is not tamed by conscience and the heart.

II. Rousseau's *First Discourse* (1749) examined the arts and sciences.
   - **A.** Unlike most Enlightenment philosophers, Rousseau held that progress in the arts and sciences has led us *away* from virtue and moral progress.
   - **B.** He offered historical arguments on behalf of this thesis.
     1. Moral decadence always accompanies cultural progress.
     2. The post-Renaissance culture of cultivation and politeness lost the simple virtues.
     3. The "simpler" Swiss and the American Indians compared favorably on moral terms with the great centers of progress of the arts and sciences (such as France and England).
     4. Sparta lacked the culture of Athens, but its citizens were more self-sacrificing and virtuous.
   - **C.** Reason assists history in showing the linkage between cultural progress and moral decadence. The sciences satisfy not our natural human needs but our vices. They create the desire for luxury and lead to laziness.
   - **D.** Rousseau distinguished between the natural and the artificial (formerly, the natural had been distinguished from the supernatural).
     1. The natural world, created by God, is the one into which we were born and in which we function as nature intended.
     2. The social/cultural world of human creation distracts us from the natural and causes us to live artificial, as opposed to natural, lives.

III. In 1755 Rousseau published his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality.*
   - **A.** Rousseau denied in this essay that inequality is natural.
     1. His poetic and lyrical depiction of primitive humanity shows healthy, morally sound, compassionate beings who live according to natural instinct.
     2. Human beings in their natural state had no private property or division of labor.
     3. Physical differences existed, but they had no social or moral implications.
     4. Natural man had to rely on his senses and wits for survival, while modern man is sedentary and soft. Thus the former was better fit for survival than the latter.
   - **B.** Rousseau offered a social-contract theory of the origins of civilized society.
     1. According to Rousseau, society arose from a perceived need to resolve a temporary problem.
     2. Tragically, that society persisted and came to dominate the lives of those within it, depriving them of freedom and independence.
   - **C.** Social organization is the root of inequality and unhappiness.
     1. Society is the source of inequality, private property, the division of labor, and class divisions.
     2. Society creates and maintains artificial social distinctions that people come to regard as natural.
     3. Civilization creates artificial needs and insecurities that come to dominate people's lives and make them miserable. Natural phenomena (e.g., the desires for food, clothing, and housing) become sources of anxiety, cruelty, misery, and domination.
     4. Society desensitizes people to the needs of others. It encourages people to define themselves in comparison to others.
   - **D.** Rousseau saw the problem created by society as permanent and inescapable.
     1. The goal is to minimize human depravity and maximize original human nature.
     2. Partial reparation can take place through nature-based education.

a. Parents should raise and educate their children as nature intended (e.g., breast-feeding, education by natural discovery rather than rote memorization).
b. Children should learn about God from observing the natural order. Religious education should be postponed until adolescence.
c. Children should learn useful work, not a profession.

E. Rousseau's political theory tended to subsume individuals into the state.
1. The individual flourishes only if the larger community of which he is a part also flourishes.
2. Society can become a means of overcoming the depravity to which civilization gives rise, if it creates institutions that make one's own self-interest dependent on promoting the general welfare.
3. Individuals should alienate their personal freedom to a state that respects absolute legal equality. In this way, the individual will be able to secure his own happiness only by promoting the happiness of the community of which he is an equal member.
4. Only citizens who make decisions on the basis of the "general" rather than the "particular" will are real and moral citizens of the society. This theory has both democratic and authoritarian implications.

Essential Reading:

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Basic Political Writings.* Hackett, 1988.

Supplementary Reading:

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 684-701).

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Bk. II, Vol. VI. Image Books, 1985 (pp. 59-100).

France, Peter. *Rousseau: Confessions.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

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Masters, Roger. *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau.* Books on Demand, 1968.

Questions to Consider:

1. According to Rousseau, what is the origin of social inequality?
2. What does Rousseau regard as the components of a virtuous life?

Lecture Nine
Kant's "Copernican Revolution": Epistemology and the Critique of Metaphysics

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the epistemological theories and enduring influence of the German idealist philosopher Immanuel Kant. Just as Copernicus' heliocentric argument for planetary motion revolutionized cosmology, so Kant revolutionized philosophy by arguing that our experience of the world centers on the "phenomenal" rather than the "noumenal" world. As we learn in this lecture, Kant held that we do not directly experience the external world, but only our representation of it as shaped by certain *a priori* forms present in the mind.

Outline

I. Introduction.
A. Immanuel Kant sought to synthesize the rationalist and empiricist traditions. He viewed experience as necessary but not sufficient for knowledge.
B. For Kant, the critical question of philosophy was whether metaphysics could be a science, and whether it could offer knowledge of God, freedom, and immortality.
C. For Kant, the critical epistemological question is how synthetic *a priori* propositions are possible and true.
1. Synthetic *a priori* judgments provide new information about the world but are not derived from experience.
2. Kant regarded mathematics and metaphysics as synthetic *a priori* knowledge.

II. Kant presented a "Copernican" epistemology in his *Critique of Pure Reason.*
A. Rather than the mind having to correspond to objects, objects must correspond to our knowledge. This makes synthetic *a priori* knowledge of objects possible.
1. Something cannot be an object of knowledge unless it is subject to certain *a priori* conditions or "forms" of the mind.
2. We do not experience *noumena* (the world as itself) but only *phenomena* (our own representation of the world).
B. The *a priori* forms of the mind allow sense experience to be presented in certain definite relations. The two pure forms of sensibility, which

Kant calls "transcendental aesthetic," are space and time. The mind imposes space and time upon the object.

C. Kant offered a "transcendental logic or analytic."

1. Human knowledge is a combination of sensibility and understanding. The forms of understanding are called "transcendental logic."
2. This logic studies *a priori* concepts or "categories," which are necessary conditions for an object to be thought rather than perceived.
3. The four key categories of thought are *quantity* (unity, plurality, totality), *quality* (reality, negation, limitation), *relation* (inherence and subsistence, causality and dependence, community), and *modality* (possibility and impossibility, existence and nonexistence, necessity and contingency). Each of these categories follows the form of thesis-antithesis-synthesis.

D. How do we know which category to impose on particular representations? Kant argues that the imagination works as a mediator between sensibility and the understanding by producing and bearing "schemata" which let us know which categories are applicable for a given appearance.

III. The two pure forms of sensibility and the categories of the understanding comprise a conceptual scheme that we impose on our sense data to form our object or objective world.

A. Metaphysics arises from a natural disposition of the human mind to apply this conceptual scheme transcendentally, i.e., beyond experience. However, metaphysics can provide no certain knowledge about the world, since our conceptual scheme is objective only for phenomena, not noumena.

B. Transcendental ideas can have an important regulative function for phenomenal inquiry. Thus the transcendental idea of the world as a totality prompts us to seek absolute laws of nature.

C. The most important regulative function of transcendental ideas, particularly those of God, freedom and immortality, is moral rather than scientific.

IV. Kant's ideas proved extremely influential.

A. Subsequent absolute idealists questioned the existence of things in themselves, and they held that cultural differences arise from differences in conceptual schemes.

B. Kant promoted pragmatism in holding that "pure ideas" should be accepted on the basis of their utility rather than their truth.

Essential Reading:

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason* (trans. Norman Kemp Smith). New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965 (pp. 63-275).

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick S. J. *A History of Philosophy*, Book II, Vol. VI. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 211-276).

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 701-718).

Cassirer, Ernst. *Kant's Life and Thought.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

Friedman, Michael. *Kant and the Exact Sciences.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Frothingham, Octavius Brooks. *Transcendentalism in New England: A History.* New York: Harper, 1959.

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Questions to Consider:

1. What is the fundamental epistemological problem for Kant?
2. Describe Kant's "Copernican Revolution"?

Lecture Ten
Kant's Moral Philosophy

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Kant asserted in his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) that our moral decisions should be made autonomously and rationally. In making choices, people ought to employ the categorical imperative: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." According to Kant, we should not arrive at ethical decisions through heteronomous appeals to God, sensual desires, or utility. Unlike Hume and Smith, he held that our intentions—and not the consequences of our actions—are the key to determining the morality of our actions.

Outline

I. Kant was bothered by Hume's epistemological skepticism, ontological naturalism, and instrumental conception of reason.
   - **A.** Kant was most upset by the implication of Hume's moral theory that morals are a question of taste, feeling, and sentiment.
   - **B.** According to Kant, Hume's moral theory implied that God's justice, the ultimate divine moral law, is an illusion that does not apply to human beings.
   - **C.** Kant tried to reconcile Christian religious belief and Western culture as influenced by Newtonian mechanics and its social, political, and moral concomitants.

II. In *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant hoped to account for both the natural and the moral, and thus to reconcile his religious views with the new developments in physics in an architectonic philosophical system that charted the perimeter of human reason.
   - **A.** Kant was a metaphysical thinker who split the cosmos into two worlds: the noumenal world and the phenomenal world.
     1. The noumenal world is moral—the world of freedom.
     2. The phenomenal world is the world of sense perception—of space and time.
   - **B.** He argued that human beings had an obligation to develop their natural capacity for rational thought into rational, free, autonomous, and moral action.
   - **C.** He argued that reason could determine rational ends as well as rational means for action.

III. Kant proposed an objective and universal moral law that allows us to establish the goodness or evil of every action by every free, rational, moral agent under all circumstances and regardless of space and time. Kant formulated the law of ultimate moral duty, called the categorical imperative.
   - **A.** Kant's categorical imperative is a universal algorithm for determining the goodness or evil of an action. That determination rests upon the agent's intention.
   - **B.** Kant distinguished his categorical imperative from Hume's hypothetical imperative.
     1. The hypothetical imperative tells one to perform certain actions in order to achieve some benefit, while the categorical imperative tells one to perform those actions for their own sake.
     2. Unlike Hume, Kant believed that we ought to resist the desire to be heteronomous, to act according to the dictates of desire and treat ourselves as exceptions to the moral rules we recognize as universally binding.
   - **C.** The categorical imperative is the logic of good will. It is the Golden Rule dressed up in its logical Sunday best.

IV. The point of Kant's categorical imperative is the possibility of creating free, moral, rational agents. Kant wants us to be more than animals; he wants us to live up to the potentiality of our spiritual nature.
   - **A.** According to Kant, man's ability to control his immediate passionate demands elevates him above the rest of nature and gives him something in common with God and the angels.
   - **B.** For Kant, the categorical imperative is not only universal, but it applies to every rational agent: human beings, nations, and angels. He views nation-states as moral agents that must obey the categorical imperative.
   - **C.** Kant's political theory is an extrapolation from his moral theory and in some respects is a response to Hume's moral theory and political theory.

Essential Reading:

Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals.* Hackett, 1993.

Supplementary Reading:

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 701-712).

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Bk. II, Vol. VI. Image Books, 1985 (pp. 308-348).

Heidegger, Martin. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics.* Books on Demand, 1962.

Cassirer, Ernst. *Kant's Life and Thought.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

Wood, Allen W. *Kant's Rational Theology.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does Kant's intentionalist ethics compare with Hume's moral views?
2. How does Kant's moral theory compare with Plato's

Lecture Eleven
Burke and the Birth of Enlightened Conservatism

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the political thought of Edmund Burke, widely regarded as the father of modern conservatism. We will examine his characteristic moderation, prudence, pragmatism, and attention to the practical consequences of policy measures, all of which shaped his response to the excesses of the French Revolution. Burke was a moderate reformer who defended the cause of the American revolutionaries but assailed the French revolution as driven by dangerous abstract theorizing and heedless of the essential role performed by traditional social and political institutions.

Outline

I. Edmund Burke was a practical politician who was very infleuntial in late eighteenth-century England. His primary concern was to ensure the success of representative government.
   - **A.** Although he is often seen as one of the most conservative thinkers of the Enlightenment, he was also a reform-minded Whig.
   - **B.** He emphasized practice over theory, induction over deduction, sentiment over science, and empiricism over rationalism.
   - **C.** Burke believed that empiricism was risky when applied to political science or reform.
   - **D.** Burke was not a reactionary; he was a conservative who supported gradual reform.

II. Burke criticized the French Revolution in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*
   - **A.** Burke insisted that abstract reasoning about the rights of man and the social contract would lead to revolutionary chaos.
   - **B.** He believed that the rationalistic contempt for tradition and the optimistic anticipation of a secular millennium made the immediate and radical reform of society seem achievable, although in fact it was not.
   - **C.** Even though Burke was not a professional philosopher, he is in the mainstream of English enlightenment thought.

III. Burke's contributions to political thought involved political parties, problems of legislation, legitimate opposition, the theory of virtual representation, and the priority of praxis over theory.

Essential Reading:

Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* Hackett, 1987.

Supplementary Reading:

Cameron, David. *The Social Thought of Rousseau and Burke: A Comparative Study.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973.

Cone, Carl B. *Burke and the Nature of Politics.* University of California Press, 1969.

McPherson, C.B. *Burke.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Wilkins, Burleigh Taylor. *The Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Questions to Consider:

1. According to Burke, under what circumstances is revolution justified?
2. On what basis did Burke approve of the American revolution but criticize the French revolution?

Lecture Twelve
Naturalism and Materialism: The Boundaries of the French Enlightenment

Alan Charles Kors, Ph.D.

Scope: We conclude this group of lectures by examining the efforts of eighteenth-century French thinkers to explain natural phenomena in naturalistic and mechanistic terms rather than in terms of spiritual or divine agency. Although many thinkers of this epoch continued to identify immaterial causes of spontaneous motion, others—notably Mettrie and Diderot—denied the dichotomy between material and spiritual reality and insisted that all bodily and mental phenomena are physical.

Outline

I. Atheistic materialism is one of the most important legacies of the French Enlightenment, although eighteenth-century thinkers did not conceive of the world and human beings as matter alone.
   - **A.** The eighteenth century was an age of naturalistic and mechanistic explanations of natural philosophy.
   - **B.** Spiritual factors were discounted as causes of most physical phenomena.
   - **C.** The willingness of eighteenth-century philosophers to naturalize and mechanize explanations did not extend to human beings.
     1. Humans were seen as unique not because of their physical properties, but because they possessed an immortal and immaterial soul.
     2. Why should the behavior of plants and animals be described as reflexive, while that of humans is explained in terms of a soul?
   - **D.** The eighteenth-century thinkers sought to establish a spiritual reality that could explain physical phenomena.
     1. Many concluded that if mass is inertial, then matter is indifferent to motion or rest.
     2. The cause of motion must be immaterial.
   - **E.** The eighteenth century also had to deal with "spontaneous" as opposed to "acquired" motion. Its existence indicated the permeation of living matter by something immaterial. Growth is a spiritual reality.

II. La Mettrie insisted in *L'Homme Machine* (1749) that a fundamental materialist-spiritualist dichotomy exists in the science of mankind.
   - **A.** To adopt spiritualism is to admit ignorance.
   - **B.** Materialism sets no boundaries to human knowledge.
     1. This view regards "mental" activity as a corporal phenomenon—i.e., as a bodily behavior.

2. It views "soul" as the effect, not the cause, of bodily movement.
3. It regards bodily and mental phenomena as aspects of one physical unity.

C. The transition from animals to men is not categorical but gradual.

D. What moves us is the physical energy of our organs, not a spirit.

III. Diderot was one of many who built dramatically on La Mettrie's work.

A. Genuine explanations of natural phenomena must be based on natural processes rather than appeals to God.

B. Nature consists of blind matter in an ongoing cycle of decomposition and regeneration. Life and death are distinct physical states; i.e., two modes of matter.

C. Diderot regarded human thought as a scientific rather than a theological mystery. It is a product of the complex organization of the brain.

D. The world has no extra-human moral dimension.
1. Humans interpret what is agreeable as "good" and what is disagreeable as "evil."
2. Human happiness consists in coexisting with nature as it actually exists.

E. We are linked to a nature that is indifferent to us. We have only the natural light of our knowledge to guide us.

Essential Reading:

de la Mettrie, Julien Offray. *Man A Machine*. LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1912.

Supplementary Reading:

Crocker, Lester G. *An Age of Crisis: Man and World in Eighteenth-Century French Thought.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1959.

Cassirer, Ernst. *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Bk. II, Vol. VI. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 1-58).

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Gay, Peter. *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation.* New York: Norton, 1977.

Hazard, Paul. *European Thought in the Eighteenth Century From Montesquieu to Lessing.* Peter Smith, 1973.

Wilson, Arthur M. *Diderot.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did some philosophers of the French Enlightenment seek to preserve both physicalist and supernatural explanations of living things?
2. On what basis did some French Enlightenment thinkers argue that human beings do not have souls?

Glossary

a posteriori (Latin): knowable only through experience. The notion is key to the empiricist tradition.

a priori (Latin): knowable independently of experience. The notion is key to Kant and to the rationalist tradition.

autonomy: literally, self-rule. This notion is central to Kantian ethics, where it is bound up or indeed identical with freedom, rationality, and obedience to the moral law.

categorical imperative: Kant's objective and universal moral law by which human beings can establish the goodness or evil of every action by every free, rational, moral agent under all circumstances and regardless of space and time. Kant held that the morality of any act rests ultimately in the agent's intention. He stated the categorical imperative as follows: "Act only on that maxim whereby thou can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."

deontological ethics: ethical systems are said to be deontological if they judge actions not by their consequences but by the moral rule, law, or duty from which they proceed. Kant's system is the prime example.

empiricism: in philosophy, the theory that all knowledge arises from sense experience.

esse est percipi (Latin): To be is to be perceived. The phrase encapsulates Berkeley's idealism.

heteronomy: being determined by something outside oneself, as by the desire for some object. The notion is central to Kantian ethics, wherein it is opposed to autonomy.

impressions: according to Hume, all of our mental representations can be classified as impressions or ideas. Impressions are distinguished by their relative phenomenal vivacity and force. Ideas are "copies" of impressions and are relatively less clear and vivid to the percipient.

noumena: Kant's term for things in themselves, rather than as perceived by human beings. According to Kant, noumena are unknowable except by God.

phenomena: Kant's term for our representation of the world, which is shaped by the *a priori* categories of the mind.

***philosophes*:** any of several intellectuals and writers of the French Enlightenment.

reflection: according to Locke, the experience of our mind dealing with the ideas of sensation; reflection, along with sensation, constitute the two sources of human knowledge.

sensation: according to Locke, the first of the two sources of all human knowledge.

social contract: in the theories of Locke, Hobbes, and Rousseau, the agreement among individuals uniting for various reasons, by which organized societies were established and regulations instituted to govern interrelations among the members.

transcendental aesthetic: the term by which Kant refers to space and time, the two pure forms of sensibility. The mind imposes the properties space and time upon a perceived object.

transcendental logic: Kant's term for the forms of understanding, the most important of which are *quantity* (unity, plurality, totality), *quality* (reality, negation, limitation), *relation* (inherence and subsistence, causality and dependence, community), and *modality* (possibility and impossibility, existence and nonexistence, necessity and contingency).

Biographical Notes

Berkeley, George (1685-1753): Berkeley was born near Kilkenny, Ireland, of English lineage. At age fifteen he enrolled in Trinity College, Dublin, where he studied divinity. In 1707, three years after graduating, he became a Fellow of the College, and in 1709 he published his *Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*. At age 26 he published his most important book, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), which established his reputation as one of the three great British empiricists (with Locke and Hume). During the 1720s he planned (but ultimately failed to establish) a new college in Bermuda to educate Native Americans and the sons of English planters. After his return to Ireland, he was appointed in 1734 the Anglican bishop of the poor and isolated diocese of Cloyne. He died in Oxford, England, in 1753.

Burke, Edmund (1729-1797): Burke was born in Dublin to a Catholic mother and a Protestant father. He was educated at a Quaker grammar school and later studied classics at Trinity College. Having found law not to his liking, he dedicated himself to scholarship and politics. His first two books, *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756) and *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), were respectively a political satire and a book on aesthetics. He also worked for a time on the Annual Register. In 1766 Burke became a member of parliament on the side of Rockingham and the Whig party. During the American Revolution he was heralded by the American colonists for voicing support in Commons for their efforts to win independence. Although he supported the American war for independence, he condemned the French Revolution. His best-known work, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), is an eloquent defense of tradition and an attack upon the excesses committed by the French revolutionaries.

Hume, David (1711-1776): Hume was born into a well-to-do family in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was admitted to Edinburgh University at age eleven but left the university without graduating, however, and spent the following years studying at home. In 1734, Hume moved to France, where he wrote his brilliant *Treatise of Human Nature*. He was greatly disappointed by the widespread neglect and ridicule of the *Treatise* following its publication. To improve the treatise's accessibility to readers, Hume published anonymously *An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature* (1740), and he published reworked sections of the *Treatise* as *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751). In 1752 he published his *Political Discourses* and in 1755 his *Natural History of Religion*. During these years he sought but was denied two professorships, one at Edinburgh and the other at Glasgow, largely because his unacceptable religious views. In 1752 he was appointed librarian to the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh, a position which allowed him to continue work on his six-volume *History of England* (1754-61). In 1767 Hume became

Undersecretary of the Northern Department of the Secretary of State in London, a post which he held for two years. He spent his final years in Scotland.

Kant, Immanuel (1724-1804): was born in Konigsberg, East Prussia, into a devoutly pietistic Christian household. In 1740 he entered the University of Konigsberg, where he remained (except for several years spent tutoring in East Prussia) for the rest of his life. At Konigsberg he studied theology, philosophy and the natural sciences, and he read the works of Newton and Leibniz. He taught logic and metaphysics at Konigsberg for more than thirty years. Kant published a number of works between 1747 and 1781, including his *General History of Nature and Theory of the Heavens* (1755). After a ten-year hiatus in publications, Kant entered the "critical period" of his philosophical efforts in 1781 with the publication of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which espoused his revolutionary "Copernican Revolution in philosophy." He followed this with his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1787) and *Critique of Judgment* (1790). Kant presented his deontological ethics in his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785).

Locke, John (1632-1704). Locke was born in Somerset, England and raised in a Puritan family. He studied and then lectured in Greek, Latin, and moral philosophy at Christ's Church College, Oxford, and went on to obtain a license in medicine from the university. In 1665 Locke traveled to Brandenburg on a diplomatic mission, after which he was offered but refused a secretaryship with the Earl of Sandwich. In 1666 he met Anthony Ashley Cooper, soon the first Earl of Shaftesbury. Shortly thereafter, Locke became Shaftesbury's physician, adviser, and confidant. Having unsuccessfully opposed Charles II's accession to the throne, Lord Shaftesbury was forced to flee England for Holland in the early 1680s. Locke followed his benefactor into voluntary exile in late 1683. He remained there for six years, dedicating himself largely to his philosophical writing and political work. It seems certain that Locke advised William and Mary of Orange on political issues during these years. He accompanied the soon-to-be Queen Mary from Holland to England after the Glorious Revolution of 1689. He spent the remaining years of his life in England, writing and debating publicly on politics and philosophy.

Montesquieu (1689-1755): Charles Louis de Secondat, baron de la Brede et de la Montesquieu, was born near Bordeaux, France. In his youth he read widely in philosophy, the natural sciences, and law. Although his parents were not rich, Montesquieu lived a life of comparative ease after marrying a wealthy heiress and inheriting his uncle's position as president of the *parlement* of Bordeaux. In 1722 he published to great acclaim *The Persian Letters* (1721), a satire of French customs and institutions. With its publication, Montesquieu became a leading literary figure in France. He was elected to the French Academy in 1728, and soon thereafter he toured Europe until 1732. In 1734 he published his pioneering work in the philosophy of history, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and Their Decline*.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712-1778). At sixteen, Rousseau he fled an apprenticeship to an engraver and wandered about for a time, coming under the care of Madame de Warens at Chambery, Savoy. In 1742 Rousseau moved to Paris and became secretary to the French ambassador to Venice. He joined the intellectual circle of the *philosophes* and contributed articles on music to Diderot's *Encyclopedie*. During this time, Rousseau began what was later viewed as a common-law marriage to a barely literate servant. The couple had several children together, but Rousseau abandoned the family. In 1749, in response to a contest held by the Academy of Dijon, Rousseau won first prize with his essay "Discourse on the Arts and Sciences," which argued that the sciences and arts had corrupted and weakened man's natural goodness. He followed this essay with his "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" (1755). He subsequently returned to Geneva, re-converted from Catholicism to Protestantism, engaged in a bitter quarrel with Voltaire, got in trouble with the religious authorities in Geneva, and returned to Paris. In 1762 Rousseau published *The Social Contract*, which provided vastly influential despite its sometimes flawed argumentation. His *Emile*, a work on education, was condemned by religious leaders and burned in both Geneva and Paris. In 1766 Rousseau settled in England, where he began work on his revealing autobiography, *The Confessions* (1782, 1789). By this time he had develoepd a pathological persecution mania and accused David Hume of plotting against him. After two years of increasingly caustic accusations against Hume, Rousseau returned to France. By 1770 he had settled once again in Paris and could be found reading sections of his *Confessions* in Parisian salons.

Smith, Adam (1723-1790): Smith was born at Kirkcaldy, Scotland, and educated at the University of Glasgow and Oxford University. Though known today as the founder of modern political economy, his initial successes were in moral philosophy. His first major work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), was culled from the lectures which he gave as professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow. Smith was a friend of David Hume, who entrusted him with the publication, after Hume's death, of his *Discourse on Natural Religion.* After a brief stint as a lecturer at Edinburgh University, and after a decade as professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow, Smith accepted a position as tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch, with whom he travelled on the Continent between 1764 and 1766. While in Paris he met a number of French physiocrats and began work on *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.* He spent the following decade at home in Kirkcaldy working on the text, which he published in 1776. In 1778 Smith was appointed Commissioner of Customs for Scotland. His *Philosophical Subjects* was published posthumously in 1795.