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## Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part V

## Modernism and the Age of Analysis: Beginnings

COURSE GUIDE


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# Table of Contents

## Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition: Part V

# Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition: Part V

## Scope:

In this series of lectures, we will examine the western philosophical tradition from the late nineteenth century until the post-World War II era. The lectures include contributions from the continental tradition and the Anglo-American tradition. Though it is an introductory course, this series does presuppose a certain amount of philosophical knowledge.

All of the philosophers discussed in these lectures wrestled with certain fundamental modern problems brought out by Nietzsche, Hegel, and Freud. One of these is the problem of representation. This period brought an increasing uncertainty to the idea that language could be an accurate representation of reality. This began with Hegelian historicism and Nietzschean perpectivalism and often led to relativism. In addition, this development also led to the fragmentation of the self and society. Interiority became a major concern for many of these philosophers, while others tried to reformulate ways to speak about the individual and the just society.

The first two lectures take up the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, who saw himself as the destroyer of the western philosophical tradition. He attacked the history of Christian morals as the attempt to favor the weak and inferior at the expense of the strong. This last category of people lived according to the will to power which, according to Nietzsche, led to the superior achievements of civilization, such as creativity and individuality. Yet Christian morality made the will to power "evil." Furthermore, Nietzsche advanced the view that truth did not really exist. Our ideas, language, and cultures simply represent what we impose upon the world. This is called perspectivalism.

The third lecture looks at the writings of the nineteenth-century American philosopher and psychologist William James and the philosophy of pragmatism. James's theory was an Americanized version of Nietzschean perpectivalism. While Nietzsche's writings heralded snobbery, cruelty, and elitism, James's writings emphasized the values of tolerance and democratic egalitarianism. His was a rebellion against accepted authority and truths in favor of the view that human beings constantly remake the world as a result of our experience in it.

Lectures Four and Five return to the continental tradition with Hans-Georg Gadamer and Henri-Louis Bergson. Gadamer introduced the idea of hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, which attempted to find a set of




unifying principles for social science. It attempted to overcome historicism and man's alienation from his cultural traditions. Bergson tried to look at the world in a way that was not analytical (viewing an object from "outside"), but intuitive, seeing the world from the "inside." One example was Bergson's idea of *elan vital*, which was the life force that shaped history.

The American philosopher and educator John Dewey is the focus of Lecture Six. Dewey extends the pragmatic tradition of James with its emphasis on democracy, progress, and openness. Dewey's contribution to pragmatism was his historicization of the western philosophical tradition, showing how philosophical beliefs came into being. Dewey was skeptical of the idea of "truth" and believed that what we call truths are useful in that they are the ideas that work best at this time. Truth then becomes historically contingent.

Lecture Seven returns again to the continental tradition with the writings of the social anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. His writings attempted to create a structural anthropology that would examine the code of language that connects all cultures. Levi-Strauss's theory was a form of cultural relativism. Lecture Eight discusses Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. Husserl's theory was an attempt to examine the human psyche by a "reduction" of the elements of experience. Chapter Nine is an examination of the phenomenological project of Martin Heidegger, whose writings on the nature of "Being" had a great effect on existentialism.

One of the leading Anglo-American positivists was A. J. Ayer, whose theory is the focus of Chapter Ten. Ayer tried to rescue philosophy from the dead end of metaphysics and give language the same rigor as logic and mathematics. For Ayer, philosophy was simply to be a handmaiden of science, interpreting it rules and terms.

Ludwig Wittgenstein was the leading theorist of language in the twentieth century. Lecture Eleven discusses the two stages of Wittgenstein's career. In his early career, he wrote one of the most important positivist texts, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which tried to set rules for what was and was not a meaningful sentence. Later in his life, Wittgenstein reconsidered his youthful text and accepted the inherent fuzziness of language.

The final lecture is an examination of the eclectic Marxist thinkers associated with the Frankfurt School: Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Max Horkheimer. Begun in reaction to the political and social collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of fascism, the Frankfurt School attempted to return a set of ends to political philosophy which they felt was absent in traditional liberal thought, such as capitalism, democracy, and positivism. They substituted a form of Marxism with a teleological end, arguing that freedom from socially imposed truths is the ultimate end of society.

# Lecture One

## Nietzsche's Critique of Christianity: *The Genealogy of Morals*

*Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.*
*Princeton University*

**Scope:** Friedrich Nietzsche is one of the most important philosophers in the tradition of western thought. He is also one of the most artistic, ruthless, and fascinating individuals in the intellectual history of the West. He viewed himself as the end of the Western intellectual tradition and saw himself as the destroyer of metaphysics and Christianity and as a combination philosopher/artist in the tradition of Plato. He offered a comprehensive critique of the Western intellectual tradition, not conceived narrowly as a philosophical tradition, but as a cultural tradition. Nietzsche examined the relationship between Christianity and morality and wanted to get beyond Christianity. He saw himself as the "Antichrist" and thought that he could supplant Jesus in the western tradition.

## Outline

**I.** In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche takes a skeptical approach to moral theory, offers a criticism of Christian values, and tries to replace Christianity with a new code of morals.

- **A.** Nietzsche asks two important questions.
  1. Where does Christianity and its moral values come from?
  2. How do human beings come to have a conscience?
- **B.** Nietzsche wants to see man as part of nature.
- **C.** He identifies two kinds of morality.
  1. The herd morality characteristic of the weak, feeble, inferior, and enslaved (Christianity).
  2. The master morality of the warriors, the predatory humans who make judgements based on their strength rather than their weakness.

**II.** Who created Christianity?

- **A.** It is a revolt of the oppressed slave class in Rome. It was designed to have revenge upon masters and warriors and turn the tables by offering a scale of values that was independent of the master class. The triumph of Christianity is the triumph of the weak.
- **B.** Romans were fierce, independent, warlike men who made their own scale of values based upon power and the desire to dominate and showed no reluctance to inflict pain on the inferior. Nietzsche seeks to revive these values as we get beyond Christianity.
- **C.** The main characteristic of Christianity is the distinction between good and evil.
  1. Good in Christian morality means kindness and love. Nietzsche believes morality means pity, which raises feelings for the weak.
  2. The master morality makes distinction between the good and bad, the capable and incapable, the potent and the impotent. Nietzsche believes this will produce the highest type of human being. He borrows this from Darwin, believing that humans have no intrinsic meaning.
  3. Christianity inhibits the development of genius and creativity because it mythologizes the envy of the inferior.
  4. Nietzsche's master morality is oriented towards doing things. He believes mankind can only be judged by its highest examples.

**IV.** Nietzsche examines the differences between the warrior/aristocrat and the priest.

- **A.** Both types are superior types of men. The warrior/aristocrat will adopt the master morality and will be opposed by the priest. Both have the will to power, but they will express it differently.
- **B.** The warrior takes what he wants, uninhibited by conscience. Nietzsche wants us to reassess our disapproval of such behavior. He argues that there are no moral phenomena, only interpretations of moral phenomena.

**V.** In the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche asks how humans developed their conscience. Man is an animal with a will to power to dominate other people and a desire to cause pain in others. (Relation to Darwin)

- **A.** What happens when you frustrate the will to power? Nietzsche says that when the will to power is frustrated, people begin to impose pain on themselves. This pain is called conscience. In German, it is called "*gewissenbisser*," which means the bite of conscience.
- **B.** When priests come on the scene, this pain of conscience becomes worse. The priests harness slave morality and use if for their own purposes.
- **C.** Priests are dangerous because they control culture and have chosen the slave morality.
- **D.** Christianity explains away human suffering as part of God's plan. The worst thing priests have done is to sell the world on the idea that suffering has meaning. This only makes suffering worse because not

only are the weak being oppressed, but morality teaches that it is their fault. Guilt enters the world.

E. Nietzsche wants to liberate us from this self-imposed misery.

V. Problems with Nietzsche's theory.

A. The ideas of good and bad do not come from ideas of masters and slaves, but they derive from feelings of pleasure and pain.

B. What happens when we go beyond good and evil?

1. "Philosophizing with a hammer." There is a gleeful malice and destructiveness to Nietzsche's thought. It crosses over into intellectual vandalism.
2. Still, Nietzsche's philosophy is one of the most significant developments in moral theory since the Enlightenment. Nietzsche and Plato are the two greatest figures who combine art and philosophy.
3. Is Nietzsche a proto-Nazi? The warrior type easily descends into the barbarian.

VI. Conclusion.

A. Nietzsche's theory fails as history but succeeds as poetry.

B. Nietzsche's poetry offers a multitude of possible interpretations and a freedom from dogma and metaphysics.

C. He forces us to think in ways we had not previously thought. He demands that we have the courage to question our convictions.

**Essential Reading:**

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil.*
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals.*

**Supplemental Reading:**

Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher.*
Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. To what extent are our moral values based on Christianity?
2. What would a society based on the morality of the warrior class resemble?




# Lecture Two

## Nietzsche's Perspectivalism and the Critique of Christianity

*Darren Staloff, Ph.D.*
*City College of New York*

**Scope:** In addition to his critique of morals, Nietzsche also criticized the notion of truth. Instead, he argued from a "perspectivalist" position that regarded our beliefs are merely perspectives that we impose upon the world. Nietzsche's book, *The Gay Science*, is a celebration of the self-created, creative individual, against the herd mentality.

## Outline

I. Nietzsche's *Gay Science* was his most personal book, comprised of a series of aphorisms, poems, jokes, and songs. It was part of Nietzsche's self-created persona.

A. Nietzsche's book attempts to overcome the dreary systematic nature of traditional philosophy.

B. He endeavors to be edifying and playful, offering wisdom rather than "truth."

II. Nietzsche was a systematic think whose central belief was perspectivalism.

A. Perspectivalism is the belief that all of our concepts, language, and cultures represent perspectives we impose on experience to create a "world." There is no "truth," only the perspective which works for each individual. (Ghandi vs. Lawrence Taylor)

B. Perspectivalism runs in two directions: external and internal.

1. Externally, it takes the form of scientific realism. Nietzsche believes science, not "truth," is useful. It is a mask we throw on reality so that we can cope with the world.
2. Internally, perspectivalism undermines the internal realism of the self. Humans wear "masks" every day, but we believe that underneath these masks there is the "real self." Nietzsche finds such a belief dogmatic. Instead, we constantly self-create ourselves. The interesting person artistically and self-consciously creates his own masks.

C. Perspectivalism means that our views of things are interpretations, not correspondence readings. Nowhere is this more true than in reading texts.

III. *Gay Science* is a book about creating and cherishing of individuality against commonality.

A. The book is an allusion to the "Gay Saber" of Provence troubadours. They were the chivalric knights who created love poems, but they were destroyed during a papal crusade. The first people who created "individuals" against authority.

B. The book is a response to Romanticism and a psychological study of Nietzsche's world-weariness and its philosophical results.

C. The text suggests a studied superficiality. Rather than being profound and deep, Nietzsche suggests, we should adore mere appearance.

IV. Explanation of the text of *Gay Science*.

A The major themes of the text are found in the introduction, "Joke, Cunning, and Revenge." It is a series of playful poems.

1. Nietzsche was troubled that in our culture, moral duty trumped other values. Why should our virtues be grave, Nietzsche asked. Morality is not the measure of all things.
2. Nietzsche offered an aesthetic critique of Christianity. Eternity in heaven would be boring because all of the interesting people would be in hell. What is now the decisive argument against Christianity is no longer reason, but our tastes.

B. Book One constitutes a species of shock therapy. Nietzsche is trying to preach tough love.

1. Hatred and evil are indispensable for the survival of the species, but we have reached a point where we cannot even think such bad thoughts and break out of the herd mentality.
2. Nietzsche believes the growth of humanitarianism is a form of happy-go-lucky totalitarianism.
3. Human beings have developed the need to find a purpose for life.
4. Nietzsche believes the noble can also be unjust. They assume that everyone is just like them and do not judge common people by the proper standards. Common people must be judged by their own standards and rationality. The ultimate noble-mindedness is for those who are noble to be the exception and not the rule. The bulk of humanity must be seen as common. And there is nothing wrong with that.
5. Nietzsche is dismissive of unconditional duties, such as Kant's moral imperative.
6. Nietzsche offered a critique of women. When the weak and feminine individuals see a problem, they make it more beautiful and profound. The masculine makes the problem better. Yet, if the feminine had not been abundant in Europe since the Middle Ages, the development of Western Civilization would not have occurred.
7. Nietzsche takes on the "craving for suffering." Young people want suffering to come to them as a dragon so that they can be like chivalrous knights and slay the dragon. They need more suffering because they are bored with themselves. They do not have the ability to create their own authentic suffering and transcend it with art.

V. Conclusion.

A. The greatest wait is Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return. Based on a Hindu concept, everything that happens will happen again. For most people, such a concept is a nightmare. Eternal return is an excellent test of whether you have the ability to be an *ubermensch* who will leap at the chance to live life again. Life is not a problem, but an opportunity for delightful possibilities.

B. The "ubermensch" is not some sort of proto-fascist, but a cultivated, refined person who does not need a spiritual narcotic to get through life. He is compassionate out of strength, not weakness and pity. He judges the weak not as inferior, but as common.

**Essential Reading:**

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher.*
Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Do you believes your values and beliefs represent the truth or merely your own unique perspective?
2. What is the *ubermensch*?

# Lecture Three
# James' Pragmatism

*Darren Staloff, Ph.D.*
*City College of New York*

**Scope:** Influenced by the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James created his theory of pragmatism, which held that the meaning of any idea can only be found in experience. James melded Nietzschean perspectivalism with the American though of Emerson. James's project was a philosophical "Protestant Reformation," with the individual rebelling against the authority of accepted truths and absolutes. The world is not fixed, James argued, but is constantly remade by us. Therefore, it makes independent analysis of the world from *a priori* assumptions impossible.

## Outline

**I.** The pragmatism of William James is one of the most important and enduring philosophical projects of the last hundred years. Richard Rorty has argued that James is not the beginning of the philosophical road, but rather the end of the road.

**A.** James' pragmatism was the American version of Nietzschean perspectivalism. Both James and Nietzsche had many common influences and views.

1. Both were influenced by Ralph Waldo Emerson.
2. Both were influenced by Romanticism.
3. Both were influenced by Darwin.
4. Neither man was a trained philosopher.
5. Both shared an interest in psychology. James was a psychological philosopher; Nietzsche was a philosophical psychologist.

**B.** Both men shared a perspectivalism that argued that reality is somehow unfixed and that the self is a posit. Both were anti-realists. Both looked at truth and culture as a tool for life. Both saw metaphysics hanging on psychological consolation.

**C.** While Nietzsche has a morbid fascination for cruelty, elitism, and a snobbish contempt for the herd, James celebrates tolerance, openness, and democratic egalitarianism.

**D.** What Nietzsche calls perspectivalism, James calls pragmatism. While Nietzsche argues that truth is about the power principle, James argues that truth is a belief's "cash value." Nietzsche sees truth as a lie; James sees the idea of truth as serviceable and helpful. Nietzsche's theory is full of adolescent insights; James's theory is more mature. James is not scandalized by the loss of truth.

**II.** The democratic ethos of *Pragmatism* (1907). The text was originally delivered as a series of lectures pitched to the average lay person. Such people, James felt, should be the ultimate judges of philosophical issues.

**A.** James opened his discussion with the lecture entitled: "The Present Dilemma in Philosophy." He reframed the long-running debate between the rationalist/German idealist and the empiricist/positivist traditions as one between the tender-minded temperament and the tough-minded temperament.

1. Tender-minded people tend to go by principles and *a priori* truths. They are intellectualistic and idealistic. They are optimistic, religious, and believers in free will. They are monistic and dogmatic.
2. Tough-minded people believe only facts count. They do not appeal to rational facilities, but to your senses. They are materialistic, pessimistic, irreligious, pluralistic, and skeptical.

**B.** If Nietzsche's perspectivalism was tough love for the average person, James' pragmatism was tough love for philosophers. They must realize that their texts are nothing more than a reflection of their personalities.

**C.** The rational person wants the good things in both temperaments. Pragmatism allows one to have one's cake and eat it too.

**III.** For James, pragmatism is both a method and a theory of truth.

**A.** The meaning of an expression is determined by the experiences or consequences that would ensue if that expression were true (Charles Sanders Peirce).

1. James tells the story of the man chasing the squirrel around the tree. Does the man go around the squirrel? James argued that it depends on how you define "go around." There is no correct answer.
2. James applies the pragmatic method of truth to a number of philosophical disputes.
   a. Materialism vs. Spiritualism.
   b. Free will vs. Determinism.
   c. God vs. Random design.

**B.** The pragmatic theory of truth is genetic. We invent new truths to cope with anomalous experiences.

1. Such inventions are limited by the desire to change as few of our beliefs as possible (Schiller and Dewey).

2. True beliefs are those that marry new experiences to the old stock of truths. The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief and good for definite, assignable reasons.

C. For James, pragmatism represents a philosophical "Protestant Reformation" or rebellion against authority on behalf of the individual.

IV. James and the pragmatic or "instrumental" theory of truth. James, like Nietzsche, rejected the correspondence theory of truth.

A. True ideas are those we can assimilate, accommodate, corroborate, and verify. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true by events and is not an eternal, fixed goal. True beliefs are instruments of action. This is a Darwinian view of culture.

B. The world is not a fixed given to which we must correspond, but it is made over in our image as we parse it and work on it. It is impossible to weed out the human contribution to the world.

C. We have no awareness of a world that is prior to us.

D. Culture changes according to evolutionary dictates. Beliefs are called true only when they have a survival value for the species.

V. Conclusion.

A. Pragmatism is the mediator between scientific rationality and one's most profound psychological, moral, and spiritual needs.

B. The pragmatic thinker is not someone in a philosophy department, but the average person going about his business in a rational and self-conscious way. It is the philosophy of a democratic culture.

**Essential Reading:**

William James, *Pragmatism.*

**Supplemental Reading:**

David Marcell, *Progress and Pragmatism: James, Dewey, Beard, and the American Idea of Progress.*
Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why is James's pragmatism so distinctively American?

2. Is truth merely those beliefs which work best for a society?




# Lecture Four
# Gadamer: Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences

*Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.*
*Princeton University*

**Scope:** For Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Everything that is, is language." He believed there was no bias-free position from which to interpret the world or a text. The theory of hermeneutics argues that all experience is conditioned by history. It seeks to free interpretation from being science-bound, and instead it sees science as one perspective from which to interpret the world.

## Outline

I. Gadamer's hermeneutic project is an attempt to find a set of unifying principles that connects the soft sciences and avoids historicism and positivism.

A. Effective historical consciousness. Hermeneutics tries to bring a person to a level of understanding that is not entirely consistent with reason. It might be described as a sense of tact, taste, or good judgement. Wisdom over knowledge; judgement over certainty; a sense of proportion over mathematical certainty.

B. The horizon of an individual is linguistically constructed. Gadamer attempts to reassess the formulaic theory of knowledge of positivism and construct a more encyclopedic theory of knowledge, like Aristotle.

II. Gadamer's intellectual sources.

A. From Aristotle he derived the encyclopedic reach and phronesis.

B. He drew on Schliermacher's interpretation of legal and biblical texts and his efforts to extend the domain of hermeneutics.

C. He drew from Schopenhauer and Kant the notion that aesthetic apprehension is not entirely relativistic or subjective.

D. From Dilthey he drew the distinction between nomothetic knowledge (laws) and ideographic knowledge.

E. Gadamer also drew on Husserl's phenomenological investigation of the domain of knowledge, and his critique of positivism and historicism.

F. From Heidegger (Gadamer's teacher), he drew the notions of "*Dasein*" (that being and time are bound together), the Hermeneutic Circle, and the idea of temporality.

III. Definition of hermeneutics.

A. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. The definition of science is in the broader sense of the word, as found in German, as that of an organized body of knowledge.

B. *Dasein* means that we live in temporality. Therefore, we are constantly alienated from cultural traditions and must constantly reinvent, reabsorb, and reinterpret the cultural tradition.

C. Hermeneutics is the constant attempt to overcome this alienation from our cultural tradition. This process holds all of our knowledge together.

D. Gadamer directs us towards a soft form of Hegelianism. The culture progresses not towards some eschaton, but away from our permanent alienation.

IV. *Truth and Method* (1960). Gadamer tries to show that truth exists outside of "method" and that science and positivism hold no special place, but are just one language game among many.

A. Section One is devoted to Art.
   1. Art discloses a human truth that is undeniable.
   2. It emphasizes the ideas of play and re-creation.
   3. The point of our aesthetic activities is the appropriation of cultural tradition such as literature.
   4. The idea of interpretation as the transparency of apprehension. A good interpretation is when you no longer hear or see the interpreter (Vladimir Horowitz).
   5. Positivism is the idea that knowledge is limited. Historicism allows for an extensive domain of knowledge, but one that is relative. Certainty vs. Skepticism. Hermeneutics calls this into question.

B. Hermeneutics is guided by language.
   1. It moves from nature to man and from object to subject.
   2. It moves from *vernuft* to *verstehen*, from reason to understanding, from externality to internality.
   3. The Hermeneutic Circle. The logic of question and answer. We interrogate our culture and get a set of answers. When we get a new answer, we need to reformulate our questions and go back to work.
   4. Science discloses "beings"; hermeneutics discloses "Being," the realm of the truly human.

V. Conclusion. Influences of Hermeneutics.

A. Gadamer wants to achieve *Bildung*, or cultivation.

B. The idea of clarity.




C. Communitarianism.

D. Gadamer offers us a new way out of postmodernism.

**Essential Reading:**

Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method.*

**Supplemental Reading:**
Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason.*
Joel C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Is science objective?
2. What is the difference between reason and understanding?

# Lecture Five
# Bergson's Elan Vital and Vitalism

*Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.*
*Princeton University*

**Scope:** Henri-Louis Bergson's *elan vital* is his definition of the dynamic life force that is the opposite of mere matter. It is a refinement of Darwin's evolutionary theory, which Bergson argued was too mechanistic. He argued that time and space do not represent a continuum and that intuition was the way we truly comprehended the world, unmediated by symbols and grasped from the "inside" rather than understood from an analytical "outside" position.

## Outline

**I.** Bergson's *elan vital* is the life force, the opposite of mere matter. It has a creativity, dynamism, and motion. It is the essence of all living things and constitutes Bergson's answer to Darwin.

- **A.** Bergson tried to distinguish between our scientific knowledge of the world from our knowledge of our immediate experience. He is concerned with the interiority of the self.
- **B.** Bergson's problem is that it is hard to create literal speech about interiority. Therefore, he gives the reader metaphors, images, analogies.

**II.** The following were Bergson's major works.

- **A.** Bergson held in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903) that metaphysics is the science that claims to dispense with symbols.
- **B.** In *Creative Evolution* (1907), he interpreted Darwinian evolution in a non-mechanistic way. The *elan vital* gives evolution dynamism and motion.
- **C.** *Laughter* (1910)
- **D.** In *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson attempts to distinguish between the intuitive versus the analytical approach to religion and morals. One leads to dead, stultifying, static morality and religion. The other leads to openness and creativity.

**III.** Bergson goes back to Zeno's Paradox to show that our scientific conceptions of space and time are inadequate.

- **A.** At each instant in the flight of an arrow, it occupies a space equal to its size. At no instant can it occupy space large than its size, so there is no instant when it can change its location. Zeno concludes that motion is therefore impossible.
- **B.** Bergson believed that time and space do not form a continuum.
  1. Time is heterogeneous. It is irreversible, irreplaceable, unique, and dynamic.
  2. Space is homogeneous. It is reversible, replaceable, not unique, and static.

**IV.** Collingwood theorizes about looking at an event from the "outside" or from the "inside." Intuition is prior to analysis.

- **A.** Analysis looks at an object from the "outside." It moves around the object. Therefore we need measuring instruments, such as clocks, to impose concepts on the external world. These concepts are pragmatic fictions which we use to manipulate the world, but which do not represent the world.
- **B.** Intuition is how we experience the world directly. It enters into the object, which does not need to be mediated by symbols. This is our direct comprehension of the world.

**V.** *Two Sources of Morality and Religion.*

- **A.** *Elan vital* works through history, but it is not mechanistic. It is the *Geist* without the *telos*.
- **B.** The first source of morality and religion is the external world. We impose an analysis on the external world to get what we want.
  1. This analysis generates the first stage of religion: static religion. These are myths manufactured by human intellect to defend against life's misery.
  2. Corresponding to this stage of religion is closed morality. These are the rules generated by human intellect to create the social solidarity necessary for survival.
- **C.** We get the second source of religion from *elan vital* and intuition.
  1. Dynamic religion. Mystics are spiritual pioneers who shatter the conventions of locally useful myths.
  2. Open morality.

**VI.** *Laughter* (1910)

- **A.** Bergson offers an insightful interpretation of comedy. He argued that laughter is a function of intelligence and serves a moral function.
- **B.** Comedy is universal. Tragedy individuates (i.e., Othello, Hamlet), but comedy is about generalities and abstract types of human deformity.
- **C.** Rules for comedy include repetition, inversion of roles, and reciprocity.
- **D.** The essence of comedy is spirit behaving like matter. We laugh at people to remind them that they are souls, rather than bodies.

**VII.** Conclusions

**A.** Bergson's strong points are his aesthetics and insightful metaphors. His weakness is that he never provides the argument that would convince the reader that his theory had any more validity than just his wishful thinking.

**B.** Bergson is optimistic rather than pessimistic. He is respectful of science. He brings together the best and worst aspects of French high culture in the twentieth century: its tendency to undo the distinction between poetry and philosophy which leads us to persuasive images, if not logical certainty.

**Essential Reading:**
Henri-Louis Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion.*

**Supplementary Reading:**

Leszek Kolakowski, *Bergson.*
F. C. T. Moore, *Bergson: Thinking Backwards.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What is the relationship between Bergson's thought and Darwin?
2. What are the weaknesses of Bergson's poet as philosopher?




# Lecture Six

## John Dewey's *Reconstruction in Philosophy*: The Pragmatic Critique of Traditional Philosophy

*Darren Staloff, Ph.D.*
*City College of New York*

**Scope:** John Dewey represents the stereotypical American philosopher. He had influence not just on philosophy, but on American education. His instrumentalist version of pragmatism represented the American values of democracy, progressivism, and optimism. Dewey's main philosophical contribution was his historical deconstruction of philosophy, which showed that certain philosophical theories—such as those of Plato and Aristotle—merely represented the social situation of these philosophers at that time. Dewey was skeptical of truth, believing that what we call "truth" is simply what works best for us at this time. Man's moral ends are not eternal truths, but are formed through customs and habits that change over time.

## Outline

**I.** John Dewey is the prototypical American philosopher. He is democratic, progressive, optimistic, and pragmatic. His thought represents much of what is best in the character of New England liberalism.

**II.** Pragmatism was a philosophical movement founded by Charles Sanders Peirce.

**A.** Pragmatism is based on a theory of meaning, which stated that a meaning of a statement or sentence is based on its logical consequences. If this sentence were true, what would we expect to experience?

**B.** Sentences are true when they successfully predict our experience.

**C.** William James popularized Peirce's theory and added a theistic and morally progressive element to it.

**III.** Dewey's contribution to pragmatism is to historicize philosophy.

**A.** Dewey's project was made difficult because pragmatism is not really a philosophy at all.

1. It rejects the search for eternal truths.
2. It offers no epistemological certainty.
3. It offers no necessary metaphysical doctrines.

**B.** Dewey tries to show how we came to practice traditional philosophy rather than to provide a reason for a particular philosophical system.

**IV.** At the center of Dewey's historical criticism is an interpretation of the origins of philosophy and a critique of the traditional philosophical fixation with the contemplative or spectatorial view of knowledge.

**A.** Philosophy emerges when breakthroughs in practical knowledge come into conflict with traditional beliefs. Philosophy tries to secure a new, more rational foundation for our moral beliefs.

**B.** Dewey finds a problem with the spectatorial view of human knowledge, in which a passive knowing subject is set apart from the inert world of objects.

**C.** Dewey believes this philosophy arose from ancient Greece, where philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle came from an aristocratic group whose members lived lives of aesthetic contemplation. The other group included slaves and artisans who worked with their hands. Therefore, Greek philosophers saw knowledge as akin to aesthetic apprehension. They sought the eternal at the expense of the temporal. This interpretation was inherited by the philosophers of the Middle Ages and later by Descartes.

**D.** This philosophy produces many quandaries.

1. The distinction between a knowing subject and a known object gives rise to the larger distinction between subject and object as metaphysical categories.
2. Since true knowledge as opposed to practical knowledge is purely contemplative, there emerges the distinction between theory, which gives us truth, and practice, which only gets results.
3. Contemplative philosophy also distinguishes between mind and matter. It simply bootstraps us out of nature.

**E.** The result of traditional philosophy has been to divorce inquiry from actual historical conditions and needs, and attempt to stand on fixed moral verities. The problem is that those truths were designed for a different era.

**V.** Dewey's historical deconstruction of traditional philosophy is a preparatory phase to the reconstruction of post-traditional philosophy.

**A.** Dewey's philosophy is naturalistic empiricism or empirical naturalism. It always begins and ends in experience, and it treats the world as natural.

**B.** Dewey wants to replace the distinction between subject and object with a naturalistic relationship between organism and environment.

**C.** Dewey conceives of our culture as part of nature. Knowledge is a natural relation between a biological entity and its environment.




**D.** Dewey is an epistemological idealist who held that the objects of our knowledge are constructed by our inquiry.

**E.** Dewey's epistemological naturalism dramatically changed the traditional philosophical situation.

1. Skepticism, the inevitable consequence of the spectatorial view of things, is finally banished.
2. We are better off forgetting about truth and concentrating on the warranted assertability of sentences or theories.

**F.** Dewey's empiricistic naturalism also has profound effects on the practice of moral and political philosophy.

1. Humans are creatures of habits and disposition. Customs are widespread and useful uniformities of habits. We sometimes outgrow these customs. This sometimes leads to revolutions.
2. There are no fixed and final moral ends. Our ends arise from our culture, customs, and habits, and they change over time.
3. Dewey has his own historically contingent ends, which are progressive and democratic. He believes in change and growth. Dewey's project is that of self-creation of every single member of society.

**VI.** Dewey's pragmatism is a combination of American attitudes towards democracy, work, progress, and practicality and a set of philosophical dispositions that constitute a dissenting theme in the modern philosophical genre.

**Essential Reading:**

John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy.*

**Supplementary Reading:**

Matthew Festenstein, *Pragmatism and Political Theory: From Dewey to Rorty.*
Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. How did Dewey's class and social status influence his philosophy?
2. What role does experience and custom play in the forming of our values?

# Lecture Seven
# Levi-Strauss: Structuralist Anthropology

*Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.*
*Princeton University*

**Scope:** The French social anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss attempted to find the underlying regularities of human behavior. He argued for a structuralist interpretation, rather than a functionalist interpretation. Structuralists want to examine the code of language; functionalists want to examine the message of language. Levi-Strauss wanted to find the code of communication that connects all cultures.

## Outline

**I.** Claude Levi-Strauss is a founder of structuralist anthropology. He attempted to find the underlying regularities of human behavior.

- **A.** The human world is made up not of matter, but of symbols. We construct our symbols according to structural laws.
- **B.** Linguistics is one example of structuralist interpretation.
- **C.** Piaget, the structuralist psychologist, describes the three properties of structural method.
  1. Structures must be wholes.
  2. Structures must be transformable.
  3. Structures must be self-regulating.
- **D.** Vico attempts to grasp the structure of the human mind and historicize it.

**II.** Structuralism is the opposite of functionalism.

- **A.** Functional anthropology was empirical; structural anthropology is abstract and rationalistic.
- **B.** Functionalists ask why the pig is unfit to eat in Israel, why the cow is sacred in India, and why dog is not served in America. There must be some function served by these animals in these countries. Structuralists are interested in the category of the inedible and how it relates to what we are allowed to eat, what it says about us, and whether it is put together according to a set of rules.
- **C.** Functionalists, like Malinowski, see a dog as an animal; structuralists likeLevi-Strauss see a dog as a noun.
- **D.** Functionalists want to examine the message; structuralists want to examine the code.

**III.** Levi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology.

- **A.** He tries to find the unalterable source of human communicative activity that connects all cultures.
- **B.** Levi-Strauss's method is as follows.
  1. Define the phenomenon as a relation between two or more terms.
  2. Construct a table of possible permutations.
  3. Take this table as your general object of analysis.
  4. It is systemic and has ordered transformations.
- **C.** For de Saussure, all of culture is encoded in language. For Levi-Strauss, all of culture is seen as a field of language.
- **D.** Levi-Strauss would come up with a linguistics of action.
  1. Kinship, food, clothing, exchange, and mythology are all symbolic structures
  2. Transgressing the structures is like constructing ungrammatical sentences (or like eating your dessert at the beginning of the meal.)
  3. There are homologies (connections) between the structures.

**IV.** Levi-Strauss's works include the following.

- **A.** *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949)
- **B.** *The Savage Mind* (1962). Since a cultural system is a kind of grammar for constructing different elements, asking which is the best culture is like asking which is the best language.
- **C.** *Totemism* (1962). Within a given culture, the construction of myths is the essential poetic. All myths can be translated into regularly recurring structures (Freud on dreams).
- **D.** *Introduction to the Science of Mythology* (1964-1971). Structures are homologous and they argue for the unity of thought, reason, and consciousness across cultures.

**V.** Problems with Levi-Strauss.

- **A.** He believes that science is just a construct or myth.
- **B.** Cultural relativism is internally incoherent. What is more provincial and western than cultural relativism?
- **C.** Levi-Strauss makes some arbitrary distinctions (i.e., the opposite of honey is tobacco).
- **D.** Structural anthropology is ahistorical. Who created structures, and how were they created?

**Essential Reading:**

Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind.*

**Supplementary Reading:**

Edmund Leach, *Claude Levi-Strauss.*
Jean Piaget, *Structuralism.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Are all cultures equal?
2. Does American cuisine have its own "grammar" or rules?




# Lecture Eight
# Husserl: Phenomenology and the Life-World

*Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.*
*Princeton University*

**Scope:** Edmund Husserl was the founder of the school of philosophy known as phenomenology. He believed that the role of the philosopher was to contemplate the essence of things. To do this, Husserl attempted to bracket the outside world and examine the inner being. Before we know the outside world, he argued, we must know ourselves. Husserl called this phenomenological reduction whereby the philosopher could reflect on the meanings the mind employs in contemplating an object. Phenomenology is a philosophy of interiority that tends toward solipsism.

## Outline

**I.** Like Descartes, Husserl want to create a new foundation for knowledge and create certainty in the face of contingency.

- **A.** Husserl assumes that the self is self-evident and that the knower comes before the known
- **B.** He begins with the ideas of certainty and intuition.
- **C.** He borrows from Brentano the idea of intentionality. The facts of mental life are irreducible and come first.

**II.** *Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man* (1936)

- **A.** Husserl was opposed to historicism, relativism, scientism, and psychologism. He believed that he was renewing the tradition of Greek rationalism in which our *logos* applies to the whole domain of human experience. We must first know ourselves before we can know the external world.
- **B.** The method for examining the psyche is phenomenology. He tries to bracket the external world to examine the psyche. He is left with the pure, raw data of being a human being.
- **C.** Husserl is looking for a descriptive theory of the introcosm. There must be absolute certainty without presuppositions.
- **D.** His method for searching for essences is free imaginative variation. How do we know which predicates or truth conditions are essential?

**III.** Husserl's process of rigorous self-examination is like boiling down the elements of experience.

**A.** Phenomenological reduction is a skeptical suspension of judgment. It excludes from consideration all scientific and logical inferences. Pure phenomena get sifted out and result in purified subjectivity, which yields to absolute certainty. This allows for the disclosure of authentic reality.

**B.** After the phenomenological reduction, the residue is shown to be universal though a process of eidetic reduction.

**IV.** Problems with Husserl's theory.

**A.** Instead of essences being qualities intrinsic to the human mind, they are intrinsic to a particular language. Husserl becomes trapped within the introcosm and can't get out. Phenomenology becomes very nebulous.

**B.** How can we know others' minds? He answers that we do so through empathy, but does not sufficiently explain where empathy comes from.

**C.** It is tempting to see Husserl as German Romanticism "Cartesianized." It ultimately fails to disclose the essential being.

**Essential Reading:**

Edmund Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences and TranscendentalPhenomenology.*

**Supplementary Reading:**

David Bell, *Husserl.*
Emmanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Can our experiences be boiled down and reduced in order to come up with true Being?
2. What is the danger of dwelling in the introcosm?




# Lecture Nine
# Martin Heidegger: Being and Time

*Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.*
*Princeton University*

**Scope:** Martin Heidegger extended Husserl's phenomenological project. He wanted to create a theory of existence or "Being," which he called *Dasein*. Mankind is thrown into a world not of its own making, and it must strive towards authenticity. Heidegger has had a profound influence on existentialists like Sartre with his belief that to really get to the idea of Being, one must confront the angst and *Sorge* associated with the confrontation of death.

## Outline

**I.** The Heideggerian Project.

**A.** Heidegger was a student of Husserl who took Husserl's phenomenology seriously.

**B.** He had an influence on the twentieth-century existentialism of Sartre and Camus.

**C.** Heidegger wants to revive ontology, the science of Being.

**D.** He wants to return to the sophisticated naivete of pre-Socratic thought.

**II.** The Problem of Human Existence: *Dasein.*

**A.** You can only find out about Being from the perspective of a human being, and that is by being a human being. It tends towards circular reasoning.

**B.** *Dasein* has a threefold structure.

1. Understanding. We must accept *Dasein*'s projection of a context of purposes and relationships that lends meaning to any particular experience.
2. Mood. Happiness and sadness are literally modes of existence.
3. Discourse. Language is constitutive of *Dasein*. Things can only be understood when they are formulated in speech and then made subject to our moods.

**C.** Heidegger wants us to give up on little "beings" and search for "Being." His theory retains a hint of theology. Like T.S. Eliot, Heidegger warns of being distracted from distraction by distraction.

**III.** *Being and Time* (1927).

A. Freedom has to be earned by confronting the facts of existence and *Dasein*.

B. Volume One deals with the hermeneutics of Being. It contains an analysis of the unreflective state of being. There are three related aspects to existence.

1. Facticity or *geworfenheit* means that we are thrown into a world not of our own making.
2. Existentiality entails appropriating the world for our own purposes.
3. Forfeiture or *verfallen* means there is something wrong with the human condition. To be human means to confront the world as it is. *Verfallen* resembles original sin.

C. In Volume Two, Heidegger tries to sketch out what an authentic being would look like. He creates a phenomenological deconstruction of prior concepts of ontology. Heidegger wants to examine human existence not from a God's eye view, but from a temporal view and discover what defines human existence.

1. *Amor Fati* is the acceptance of one's fate and death.
2. The importance of conscience. *Dasein* demands a life that faces, and does not deny, death.
3. Death as the horizon of our possibility. Temporality is the main imperative of human existence.
4. Authenticity and angst reveal *Dasein*. *Sorge* or concern is a condition of *Dasein*.
   a. *Dasein* projects itself into the future, causing angst.
   b. *Dasein* projects itself into the past, causing guilt at what we could have been.
   c. We confront Dasein in the present and find out that we have the potential for freedom that we have not completely realized.
5. Historicity of human beings is a great concern to Heidegger. When we are oriented towards the future, we think about nothing.

IV. Heidegger in the Nazi years.

A. Upon Husserl's retirement, Heidegger took over his university chair. In 1933, Heidegger disassociated himself from his mentor, Husserl, because he was Jewish.

B. Heidegger believed philosophy could only be written in German.

V. Problems with Heidegger's theories.

A. Heidegger is so impenetrable that he often comes close to self-parody.




B. The problem of morality, mysticism, and nihilism. When you retreat into interiority, you often end up talking to yourself. Discussions of "nothing" are often very fancy ways of not saying anything.

C. This nebulous collection of insights are a kind of theology with God left out. Our one obligation to ourselves is to be ourselves. This comes close to self-worship and solipsism.

D. Heidegger has had little influence in the Anglo-American world. The one place Heidegger has had influence is in theology (Tillich and Bultmann).

E. The enigmatic being so central to Heidegger's thought might easily be interpreted as the silence of God.

**Essential Reading:**

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*.
Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. How is *Dasein* revealed?
2. What are the Christian influences on Heidegger's theory?

# Lecture Ten

## A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth, and Logic*

*Darren Staloff, Ph.D.*
*City College of New York*

**Scope:** A. J. Ayer was one of the leading logical positivists. In *Language, Truth, and Logic*, Ayer argued that philosophy should abandon the study of metaphysics and take up a detailed analysis of language. He argues that assertions that cannot be verified in empirical experience are "nonsense." Ayer believed that all of our talk of the world is a logical construct of our phenomenal and sensual experience. Philosophy was to be the handmaiden of science and the job of the philosopher would be to explain the meaning of scientific terms and logic.

## Outline

**I.** Ayer is a major proponent of logical positivism. Positivists were reacting to two important developments.

**A.** The first phenomenon was the profusion of speculative metaphysical systems in the post-Kantian epoch. This development threatened to turn philosophy into a laughing-stock. Positivists wanted to preserve philosophy and bring it into the scientific age of the twentieth century. Positivism means pro-science.

**B.** The second phenomenon was the culmination of a revolution in symbolic logic that had begun in the nineteenth century and really took over with the foundational mathematical research of Russell and Whitehead in *Principia Mathematica*. They wanted to give logic the same sense of precision and rigor that one finds in mathematics.

**II.** *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1936) is a young man's book full of bluff and bluster. It is a logical positivist manifesto of the doctrines associated with the Vienna Circle, whose lineage was traced by Ayer to Berkeley and Hume.

**A.** Ayer begins the text with a chapter entitled "The Elimination of Metaphysics." He achieves this by analyzing the forms of metaphysical sentences and demonstrating that they violate the criteria for literal significance and are thus nonsensical.

1. Metaphysical sentences fail to express propositions. Propositions are either factual/synthetic or tautological/analytic.
2. Factual statements must pass the test of verifiability. Given any sentence, would any observation be relevant to the truth or falsehood of that sentence?




3. Factual propositions are empirical hypotheses that provide a rule for prediction of experience.
4. Metaphysical sentences are linguistic expressions without cognitive content. They are neither true nor false. They are literal nonsense. Any sentence is metaphysical if and only if it purports to express a proposition and it is neither a tautology nor an empirical hypothesis.
5. Metaphysics is merely a misconceived view of grammar.

**B.** Having dispatched metaphysics, Ayer argues that real philosophy is critical rather than speculative. It is not a science and can offer no knowledge of the world. Philosophy should analyze various problems and issues and clarify our linguistic uses.

1. The nature of philosophic analysis is to offer definitions for terms. Unlike the lexicographer writing a dictionary, the philosopher does not give explicit definitions that are based on synonymy, but rather definitions in use.
2. Such definitions will translate a symbol into equivalent sentences that contain neither the symbol nor any of its synonyms.

**C.** All meaningful sentences express propositions that are the sole bearers of truth values. Such propositions are either analytic/tautological or synthetic/factual.

1. Analytic, *a priori* propositions are raised for the empiricist by the problem of accounting for mathematics and logic. We hold them to be true because of the conventional rules we have on how to use them. They have no factual content and only tell us how we use symbols according to our semantic rules. Truth as fiat (i.e., 2 plus 2 equals 4, either "p" or not "p").
2. Synthetic propositions are empirical hypotheses. We test such hypotheses by seeing whether it enables us to predict experience. Such predictions do not prove the truth of the hypothesis, but rather they increase its probability. It is rational because it has worked so far. Our grounds for factual beliefs are purely pragmatic.

**D.** Having delimited the range of literally significant sentences, Ayer turns to an analysis of ethics and theology. There are four types of ethical statements.

1. Definitions of ethical terms.
2. Descriptions of moral phenomena. The social sciences.
3. Exhortations to virtue,and commands such as: "Do the right thing!"
4. Ethical judgements. Ayer argues such statements express neither analytic nor synthetic properties. They are meaningless, pseudo-concepts. The same can be said for aesthetical judgements.

5. Ayer proves that it is impossible to prove demonstrably that God exists. The concept of God is neither an analytic proposition nor a synthetic proposition. Whenever you are talking about God, you are either talking about everything or nothing. It is neither true not false, just literal nonsense.

III. Ayer's final chapter is entitled "The Self and the Common World."

A. Ayer constructs "radical reductionism," an attempt to take all sentences about physical objects and translates them into sentences about sense contents.

1. All of our talk of the world is a logical construct of our phenomenal and sensual experience.
2. All of our sense contents are prior to objects. Therefore, mind and body are analytically posterior to sense contents.

B. The self is not a substance, but it is a logical construct that comes out of sense experience. The self is a posit, merely a useful notion.

IV. For Ayer, philosophy is the handmaiden of science.

A. The philosopher shows how the scientist is using the logic of his terms.

B. Science is blind without philosophy; philosophy is empty without science. We should distinguish between the speculative and logical aspects of science. Philosophy must become the logic of science.

**Essential Reading:**

A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic.*

**Supplementary Reading:**

Oswald Hanfling, *Logical Positivism.*
Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What are the flaws in metaphysical statements?
2. What is the relationship between science and philosophy?




# Lecture Eleven
# The Latter Wittgenstein

*Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.*
*Princeton University*

**Scope:** Originally trained in mathematics and engineering, Ludwig Wittgenstein became one of the leading theorists of language in the twentieth century. Wittgenstein's early work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, was an important positivist text that attempted to set hard rules about what a meaningful proposition is. Later in his life, Wittgenstein grew skeptical of his earlier theory and wrote the *Philosophical Investigations,* which gave a more flexible view of the nature of language. Wittgenstein argued that we use language through a series of "language games" which we learn as children. The latter Wittgenstein accepted the fuzziness of language and the impossibility of a perfect, unified theory of language to describe reality.

## Outline

I. Wittgenstein's first published work, the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1921), is one of the great manifestos of positivism. It is decisive in its skepticism in regard to logic and thought. The text is an elaboration of seven sentences.

A. The *Tractatus* is a theory of the declarative sentence, of what can be put into a proposition and what can not. Anything that can be said can be said clearly or not at all.

B. First sentence: "The world is all that is the case." This means that there will be no metaphysics in the book. The simple facts we find around us are what the world is for us.

C. Last sentence: "What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence." Wittgenstein has expelled many different kinds of discourse into the realm of nonsense.

D. The young Wittgenstein believed he had solved all philosophical problems.

II. Later in his career, Wittgenstein had second thoughts about the *Tractatus.* His most important work, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), is an exercise in philosophical humility. Instead of talking about the logical necessity of language, it talks about the logical contingency of language. The text is a series of paragraphs that Wittgenstein admitted was incomplete.

A. Instead of seeing language as a picture, Wittgenstein wants to see language as a game, as a set of social practices that overlap and do not have one universal skeletal key which allows us to open all linguistic doors.

B. The following are two of Wittgenstein's favorite questions.

1. How is a word learned? When you find out about how a word is taught, you learn about what the word means.

2. How is the word used? If you want to know what "x" means, find out what people do with "x." When you find out how people use it, then you will know what it means.

C. Definition of a "language game."

1. When Socrates asks about virtue, he does not want examples of virtue, he wants to know some quality that every virtue has and only virtue has. This is called "essential definition." Wittgenstein believes that many things can not be defined that way.
2. We often learn by being giving examples. Children learn games like checkers, tag, peek-a-boo. But do they have one universal characteristic which allows us to call them all "games"?
3. Plato might ask for logical precision. (The definition of a chair: Is a throne a chair? Is a boulder a chair?) Wittgenstein responds by asking if a fuzzy photo is a photo. Of course it is. Then a fuzzy definition is still a definition. The problem is not with ambiguous definitions or language, but with an unreasonable demand for an unreasonable degree of certainty.
4. Wittgenstein must find a connection between things that holds the world together. This is the idea of family resemblance. Common nouns refer to groups and kinds of things that are united not by a Platonic definition, but by a rough resemblance between them, like that of family members. Philosophy is the battle against bewitchment of our intelligence by language.

III. Problems with Wittgenstein's theory.

A. Whether you understand the word "game" has little to do with your inner psyche. Wittgenstein's theory almost turns into philosophical behaviorism. He drives the ego or psyche back to a level where it is a dimensionless point that takes up no space and contains nothing. It is impossible to know other minds.

B. What about someone who claims to know addition or Swedish without having done it or spoken it? How do we know that he or she is telling the truth, and what criterion can we use since we can't prove it by behavior? This tends to lock us into our own psyche.

C. The investigation into language is incomplete. There is no ultimate finale to the enterprise.




IV. Wittgenstein rescues us from centuries of unnecessary worry. In the *Tractatus*, he held there was no way to express ethical, theological, or aesthetic judgements. Later on, he believes we can talk about these things despite their fuzziness. Is the fuzziness of our discourse an impediment to understanding? No. Wittgenstein represents a retreat from philosophical hubris. Our problems do not lie with language, but with the unreasonable demands for rigor and certitude.

**Essential Reading:**

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations.*

**Supplementary Reading:**

A. J. Ayer, *Wittgenstein.*
Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Does philosophy require absolute certainty?
2. Why is philosophy so concerned with language?

# Lecture Twelve
# The Frankfurt School

*Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.*
*Princeton University*

**Scope:** In 1923, the Institute for Social Research was founded at the University of Frankfurt as a center for the study of Marxist theory. Within a few years, its leading members had partially redirected its focus to include elements of psychoanalysis and existentialism. This intellectual amalgam, which came to be known as "critical theory," emphasized aesthetics and cultural analysis. Prominent members of the Frankfurt School included Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse. During the Nazi takeover of Germany, these scholars dispersed, and many regrouped in New York City. Some returned to Germany at the end of World War II. Soon thereafter, Jurgen Habermas emerged as the leading second generation member of the Frankfurt School.

## Outline

**I.** The Frankfurt School is one of the most important twentieth-century extensions of the traditions of Marxism and continental philosophy.

**A.** To understand the Frankfurt School, one must understand its historical context. It is impossible to understand German intellectual life without understanding this catastrophic political history. Key events in this history include:

1. Germany's humiliation at Versailles in 1918.
2. The Nazi seizure of power in Germany in 1933.
3. The Soviet occupation of eastern Germany in 1945.

**B.** During the Weimer Republic, there was great polarization between the Left and the Right. The Center collapsed.

**C.** Looking at the wreckage of their culture, German intellectuals asked: What went wrong? The Frankfurt School took a teleological approach, believing that rationality can tell us the ends we should achieve.

1. Assess the current problem.
2. Ask what went wrong.
3. Create a theory that will allow us to fix the problem.

**D.** The Frankfurt School treated Fascism and Nazism as the necessary totalitarian development of capitalist society. It was a consequence of the destruction of reason by the ideological necessities of capitalism.

1. Capitalism is a truncated form of reason, called instrumental reason. It tells us what the world is, but not what it ought to be. It creates an ought/is dichotomy.
2. The intellectual forms of capitalism—positivism, neo-classical economics, and liberalism—tell us how to get things done, but not the ends to which they should be directed. They are the *techne* without the *telos*. If you leave out the ought, the Frankfurt School argues, you are left with nihilism, which leads one down the road to Fascism.

**II.** The intellectual heritage of the Frankfurt School.

**A.** Rousseau—Nostalgia for lost innocence before capitalism.

**B.** Kant—Moral universality and teleological reason.

**C.** Hegel—Historicism and the idea that progress is the realization of freedom.

**D.** Marx—Praxis and political voluntarism.

**E.** Freud—Social psychology.

**F.** Heidegger—Technophobia, hatred of mass man, elitism.

**G.** Gramsci/Lukacs—Rejection of the late, positivistic Marx.

**III.** The Frankfurt School's main theme is that freedom is reason.

**A.** Reason is substantive, not formal. It tells you not just how things are, but how things are meant to be.

**B.** Freedom, for the Frankfurt School, is freedom from the socially imposed bondage and necessary illusions of the society into which we were socialized.

**IV.** The leading figures of the Frankfurt School.

**A.** Herbert Marcuse left Germany and emigrated to the United States.

1. *Reason and Revolution* (1941) is a revival of left-wing Hegelianism. In it, Marcuse asks how positivism and scientism came to reign in the twentieth century.
2. *Eros and Civilization* (1955) is a mixture of Freud and Marx, without Freud's pessimism. Marcuse argues that restrictions on our libido only serve society's oppression of the individual.
3. In *Soviet Marxism* (1958), Marcuse rejects Stalinism because it is not true Marxism.
4. *One Dimensional Man* (1964) was mostly written while Marcuse was in California.
   **a.** It points out the false consciousness of American society. Americans think they are happy with liberal democracy. But if they were truly happy, they would not be alienated and chasing after fads.

b. Technological rationality, linguistic philosophy, and liberal politics make domination necessary and unquestionable.

**B.** Theodor Adorno was a musicologist.

1. *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947, co-written with Horkheimer) is a critique of the Enlightenment as a source of mass culture.
2. *Authoritarian Personality* (1950, co-written with others) is a fusion of Marx and Freud and asks what produces the kind of person who follows Hitler. The authors find that Germany was full of authoritarian personalities. They were rigidly conformist, sado-masochistic, and anti-Semitic.
3. *Minima Moralia* (1951) is a series of Nietzschean epigrams.

**C.** Max Horkheimer.

1. *The Eclipse of Reason* is a collection of essays that provide a good introduction to his thoughts.
2. *The Critique of Instrumental Reason* is an attack on Humean, Anglo-American reason.

**V.** Significance of the Frankfurt School.

**A.** The Frankfurt School had a profound effect on Jurgen Habermas, a second-generation leader of the Frankfurt School.

**B.** The Frankfurt School had an effect on the Critical Legal Studies movement, which tried to show the intrinsic biases built into law and tried to get around bourgeois law.

**C.** The Frankfurt school also influenced the trend that has become known as political correctness. Marcuse's *Critique of Pure Tolerance* is an attack on the idea of free speech. Free speech is really a restriction of freedom. He argued that the only way to have real freedom of speech is to restrict speech.

**D.** It helps us to see that the social sciences are the battlegrounds for philosophical arguments in the twentieth century.

**VI.** Problems with the Frankfurt School

**A.** The interpretation of fascism as the final stage of capitalism either ignores liberal democracy in America or it collapses the difference.

**B.** The Frankfurt School claimed universality, but in reality it was very provincial. They never understood American society.

**C.** There is lots of arbitrary dogmatism in the writings of the Frankfurt School. For example, see Adorno's writings on jazz.

**D.** The Frankfurt School is the ideology of German mandarins. Humanistic intellectuals have become superfluous, so they create a theory to explain why the people are stupid. The humanistic elite got left out of the coalition of labor, capital, and technology, and they have plotted their revenge. The implication is that the philosophers must become kings, not because they have a will to power, but rather because autonomous reason requires rule by an intellectual elite saturated in gnostic resentment.

**Essential Reading:**

Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man.*

**Supplementary Reading:**

George Friedman, *The Political Philosophy of the Frankfurt School.*
David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory.*

**Questions to Consider:**

1. How would you compare the political polarization of the Weimar Republic to America today?
2. Are there any benefits to mass culture?

# Glossary

***Dasein*:** Martin Heidegger's description of the spirit of human existence. There is a threefold structure of *Dasein*: understanding, mood, and happiness.

***Elan vital*:** In the philosophy of Henri-Louis Bergson, *elan vital* is the life force that is the opposite of mere matter. *Elan vital* has creativity, dynamism, and motion. It is the essence of all living things and represents Bergson's attempt to modify the mechanistic aspects of Darwinian evolution.

**Hermeneutics:** Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, with science defined in the broader sense of the word, as found in German, as that of an organized body of knowledge. Hermeneutics is the constant attempt to overcome our alienation from our cultural tradition. It is a process that holds all of our knowledge together.

**Logical Positivism:** Logical positivism, also known as scientific empiricism, attempted to introduce the methodology and precision of mathematics to the study of philosophy, much as had been done in symbolic logic. Logical positivists held that metaphysical speculation is nonsensical, that logical and mathematical propositions are tautological, and that moral and value statements are merely emotive. Logical positivists believed that philosophy should merely clarify the terms and language of science.

**Perspectivalism:** Perspectivalism is the belief that all of our concepts, language, and cultures represent perspectives we impose on experience to create a "world." There is no "truth," only the perspective which works for each individual.

**Phenomenology:** The twentieth-century philosophical movement dedicated to describing the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines such as the natural sciences.

**Pragmatism:** A doctrine developed by nineteenth-century American philosophers Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and others. According to pragmatism, the test of the truth of a proposition is its practical utility; the purpose of thought is to guide action; and the effect of an idea is more important than its origin. Pragmatism was the first independently developed American philosophy.

**Structuralism:** Structuralism is the analysis of aspects of culture as interconnected signs that can be studied to reconstruct the underlying systems of relationships (e.g., the formal units and rules of a language, or the elements of myths and how they enable a society to frame an understanding of the world). No single item in such a system has meaning except as an integral part of a set of structural connections.




**Tautology:** A logical statement in which the conclusion is equivalent to the premise.

**Teleology:** Teleology is the study of ends, purposes, and goals. (In Greek, *telos* means "end" or "purpose"). In cultures which have an teleological world view, the ends of things are seen as providing the meaning for all that has happened or that occurs.

***Ubermensch*:** The Nietzschean "superman" is a representative of the warrior class, as distinct from a member of the herd. The *ubermensch* is able to get beyond the dictates of good and evil and resort to man's true nature, before it was corrupted by Christian morality. His basic motivation in life is the "will to power," and Nietzsche believes that this impulse will foster the creativity and individuality that marks superior human beings.

# Biographical Notes

**Adorno, Theodor** (1903-1969). Adorno, the philosopher, sociologist, and literary critic, was a leading member of the Frankfurt School. He obtained a degree in philosophy the University in Frankfurt in 1924. After teaching two years at the University of Frankfurt, Adorno immigrated to England in 1934 to escape the Nazi persecution of the Jews. He taught at the University of Oxford for three years and taught at Princeton (1938-41) and then was co-director of the Research Project on Social Discrimination at the University of California, Berkeley (1941-48). Adorno and Max Horkheimer returned to the University of Frankfurt in 1949 to rebuild the Institute for Social Research and revive the Frankfurt school of critical theory, which contributed to the German intellectual revival after World War II.

**Ayer, Alfred Jules** (1910-1989). Ayer, the British proponent of logical positivism, was born in London. He was educated as a King's scholar at Eton, studied classics at Oxford, and studied philosophy at the University of Vienna where he was affiliated with the Vienna Circle. In 1933, he was appointed to a lectureship at Oxford. After service in the Welsh Guards and in military intelligence during World War II, Ayer returned to Oxford where he was appointed dean of Waldham College. In 1946, he became a professor of philosophy at the University College in London, but returned to Oxford as a professor of logic at New College from 1960 to 1978, and for five years thereafter he was a fellow of Wolfson College. In 1970, Ayer was knighted by the British crown.

**Bergson, Henri-Louis** (1859- 1941). Bergson was born in Paris of Jewish parents and spent most of his life in Paris. He attended the Lycee Condorcet as a youth and later studied at the Ecole Normale Superieure. He subsequently taught at Clermont-Ferrand for five years and, beginning in 1900, at the College of France. In 1914, suffering from arthritis, he resigned his teaching post. During World War I, he was a member of French diplomatic missions designed to persuade the United States to enter the war. After the Treaty of Versailles, Bergson supervised the establishment of the Committee for Intellectual Cooperation (later UNESCO). In 1927, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

**Dewey, John** (1859-1952). Dewey was born in Burlington, Vermont, into a family of modest means. Both his parents were raised on farms in rural Vermont and his father was a grocer. Dewey attended public school and received his undergraduate education at the University of Vermont. After graduation, he taught high school for a few years before going to graduate school at Johns Hopkins University, where he studied philosophy with Charles Sanders Peirce and George Sylvester Morris. He received his Ph.D. in 1884 and accepted a position at the University of Michigan. In 1894, he went to the University of Chicago and in 1904 became a professor of philosophy at Columbia University.




He was a leading figure in the progressive education movement and a prominent social democrat.

**Gadamer, Hans-Georg** (1900- ). Gadamer was born in Marburg, Germany, and educated at the Universities of Breslau, Marburg, Freiberg, and Munich. He studied for a time with Martin Heidegger. He is considered the one of the founders of modern philosophical hermeneutics. He taught philosophy at the Universities of Kiel (1934-1935), Marburg, Leipzig (1939-1946), Frankfurt (1947-1949), and Heidelberg (1949-1968). After his retirement, he was a visiting professor at Vanderbilt University, Catholic University, University of Dallas, Boston College, and McMaster University in Canada.

**Heidegger, Martin** (1889-1976). Heidegger was born in Messkirch, Germany. His father was a Catholic sexton. After finishing high school, he joined the Jesuits as a novice and studied theology and philosophy at the University of Freiburg, where he studied with Husserl and the neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert. Heidegger began to lecture at Freiburg in 1915 and in 1923 became a professor at the University of Marburg. In 1928, he published his seminal work, *Being and Time*. The following year, Heidegger was appointed to Husserl's vacant chair at the University of Freiburg, where he remained until 1951. In the 1930s, Heidegger joined the Nazi Party and gave speeches in support of Hitler. He grew disillusioned with the Nazis and his wartime activities were investigated after the war, but his support of Hitler was not found to be serious and he retained his position at Freiburg.

**Horkheimer, Max** (1895-1973) The German sociologist and member of the Frankfurt School was born in Stuttgart. He was Director of the Institute for Social Research from 1930 to 1958 and rector of the University of Frankfurt (1953-8).

**Husserl, Edmund** (1859-1938). Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology, was born to a Jewish family in Moravia. He studied at the Universities of Berlin, Leipzig, and Vienna and received his doctorate in mathematics in 1882. He then turned his interest to philosophy and psychology and converted to Evangelical Lutheranism. In 1887, he became a lecturer at the University of Halle where he remained until 1901, when he received an appointment at the University of Gottigen. Among his students were Jean-Paul Sartre, Rudolf Carnap, and Martin Heidegger. He retired in 1928, and Heidegger took Husserl's position at the University. When the Nazis took power in 1933, Husserl was excluded from the university and silenced. His relationship with Heidegger ended. He took ill in 1937 and died the following year.

**James, William** (1842-1910). James was born into a wealthy family in New York City. His father, Henry James, Sr., was a member of the New England Transcendentalist movement and a principal supporter of Emmanuel Swedenborg's Church of the New Jerusalem. William James's brother, Henry, became a famous novelist. He studied medicine at Harvard Medical School,

accompanied the naturalist Louis Agassiz to the Amazon River in Brazil, and conducted research in Germany. He was constantly in poor health and lived with his father, doing little but reading until he was thirty. In 1872, James became a lecturer in anatomy and physiology at Harvard, but within a few years switched to teaching psychology and philosophy. He married Alice Howe Gibbens in 1878 and his health began to improve. He retired from Harvard in 1907.

**Levi-Strauss, Claude** (1908- ). Levi-Strauss, the prominent French social anthropologist and leading exponent of structuralism, was born in Brussels, Belgium, and educated at the University of Paris where he studied law and philosophy. For a time he taught high school and was part of the circle of existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre. In 1934, he was appointed professor of sociology at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil, where he did research on the Brazilian Indians. Levi-Strauss was visiting professor at the New School for Social Research in New York City during World War II. From 1950 to 1974 he was director of studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études at the University of Paris. In 1959, Levi-Strauss became professor of social anthropology at the Collège de France.

**Marcuse, Herbert** (1898-1979). A political philosopher and member of the Frankfurt School, Marcuse was born in Germany. His Marxist critical philosophy and Freudian psychological analyses of twentieth-century Western society were popular among student leftist radicals in the late 1960s. Marcuse received his Ph.D. from the University of Freiberg in 1922. He was a co-founder of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Marcuse fled to Geneva and then to the United States the following year where he taught at Columbia University. He became an American citizen in 1940. During World War II, Marcuse served as an intelligence analyst for the U.S. Army and headed the Central European Section of the Office of Intelligence Research after the war. He returned to teach at Columbia in 1951 and then went to teach at Harvard. He later taught at Brandeis University (1954-65) and the University of California at San Diego (1965-76).

**Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm** (1844 -1900). Nietzsche was born in Rocken, Germany, the son and grandson of Lutheran ministers. His father died when he was four years old and he was raised by his mother, grandmother, and two aunts. Trained in theology and classical philology as an undergraduate in Bonn, he received his Ph.D. from the University of Leipzig without writing a dissertation, based on the strength of his published writings. The University of Basel appointed him professor of classical philology and he became a Swiss citizen. There, Nietzsche befriended Richard Wagner. Nietzsche obtained leave to serve as a volunteer medical orderly in August 1870, after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. Within a month, he contracted dysentery and diphtheria, which ruined his health permanently. He returned to Basel to resume teaching, but his health continued to deteriorate. He resigned his professorship and, suffering from migraine headaches and partial blindness, continued to write while living in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. In January 1889, Nietzsche suffered a complete mental breakdown, brought about by syphilis, and spent the last eleven years of his life in a complete vegetative state.

**Wittgenstein, Ludwig** (1889-1951). Wittgenstein was born in Austria to a wealthy family. Though of Jewish descent, Wittgenstein was baptized in the Catholic Church. He was educated at home before studying engineering and mathematics in Linz, Berlin, and Manchester. He soon became interested in pure mathematics and its philosophical foundations and became a pupil of Bertrand Russell at Cambridge in 1912. Wittgenstein served in the Austrian army during World War I and was captured in Italy at the end of the war. During the war, he continued work on the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which was published in 1921. After the war, he gave away his inherited fortune and became an elementary school teacher in Austria. By 1929, Wittgenstein had returned to Cambridge. During this time, he reconsidered his earlier philosophy of the *Tractatus* and wrote voluminously, although he refused to publish anything in his lifetime. His major work of this latter period is his posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). In 1939, he was appointed to the chair of philosophy at Cambridge, succeeding G.E. Moore. During World War II, he worked as an orderly in a London hospital. He resigned his university post in 1947 and died of cancer four years later.

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