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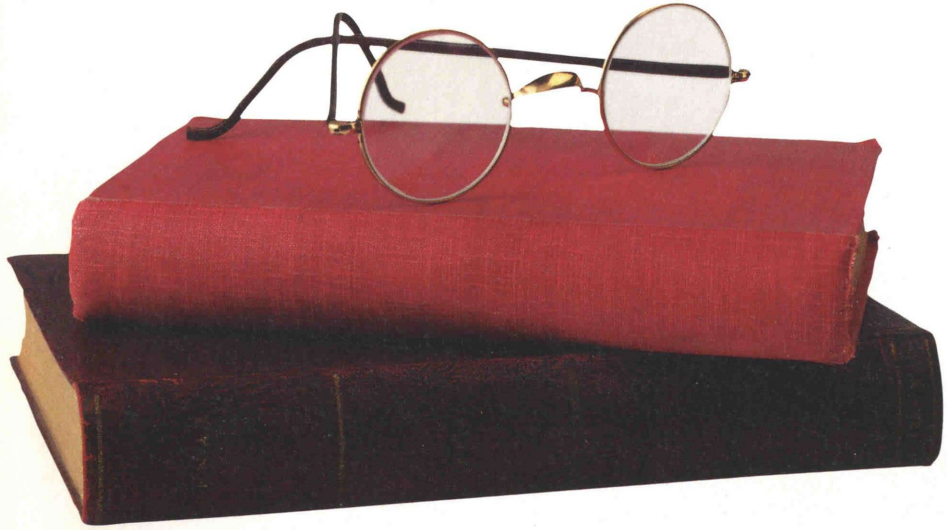
Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part II

The Age of Faith to the Age of Reason



COURSE GUIDE

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Dennis G. Dalton, Ph.D.

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Dennis G. Dalton, Ph.D received his Bachelor's degree from Rutgers University in 1960 and did post-graduate work at the University of Chicago. In 1965, he earned his Ph.D. in political theory from the University of London. Professor Dalton has been honored with numerous scholarships and grants, including a grant in 1975 from the American Council of Learned Societies for research in South Africa a senior fellowship in 1975 with the American Institute of Indian Studies for research in India; and a Gandhi Peace Foundation Grant in 1970 for participation in an International Seminar in Delhi, India. Between 1964 and 1966 he was a review editor for the *Journal of Developmental Studies* (London), and between 1969 and 1975 he served as a U.S. correspondent for the *South Asian Review* (London).

Professor Dalton's fields of interest include political theory (classical and modern, Western and Asian), the politics of South Asia (particularly the Indian nationalist movement), and ideologies of modern political movements with reference to Europe, India, China, and Africa. He has written numerous articles about all of these subjects. He is a member of both the American Political Science Association and the Association for Asian Studies. Professor Dalton has edited and contributed to more than a dozen publications, and he is the author of *The Indian Idea of Freedom* (1982).

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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition, Part II
The Age of Faith to the Age of Reason

Scope: These twelve lectures trace the Western philosophical tradition from St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century to G.W. Leibniz in the early eighteenth century. The first lecture examines Aquinas' synthesis of Christianity with the classical Greek tradition as embodied in Aristotle. Lecture Two examines the utopian system described by the Renaissance humanist and Christian saint Thomas More, discusses its reformist features in the context of contemporary English society, and compares it with Plato's similar utopian scheme. In Lectures Three and Four we examine the path-breaking thought of Niccolo Machiavelli, who broke decisively with the classical tradition of political theory, and Francis Bacon, whose inductive method of scientific inquiry marked a departure from adherence to the received wisdom of Aristotle and other ancient authorities. In Lectures Five through Eight we examine other great thinkers early modern Europe—Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and Baruch Spinoza—who established the bases for modern philosophy. In Lectures Nine and Ten we examine the contributions of Sir Isaac Newton and Giambattista Vico to the modern perception of order and regularity in the cosmos and human history respectively, and in Lecture Eleven we consider Blaise Pascal's faith-based corrective to the rational and skeptical focus of early modern thought. The final lecture examines the metaphysical and epistemological speculations of G.W. Leibniz.

Lecture One
Aquinas and the Scholastic Synthesis

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Saint Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) is the greatest figure of medieval scholasticism. Born outside Naples into the ruling family of Aquino, he was educated as a youth by Benedictine monks and joined the Dominican order at age twenty. As a professor of theology, Aquinas combined Aristotle with Christianity, arguing that reason is both compatible with and subordinate to faith. His greatest philosophical accomplishment, the *Summa Theologiae*, was written between 1265 and 1273 and remains today one of the pillars of Catholic theology. This lecture will explore the significance of Aquinas as a synthesizer of Christianity with classical Greek learning and as a forerunner of the more extensive incorporation of classical thought that characterized the Renaissance.

Outline

I. Overview

- **A.** Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was an Italian Dominican priest whose philosophy, known as "Thomism," reconciled the Greco-Roman and Christian traditions, insofar as was possible given the philosophical texts and tools that were available in the thirteenth century.
- **B.** In the generation before Aquinas, Pope Innocent III tried but failed to dominate Christendom politically. In the mid-13th century Aquinas succeeded in dominating Christianity intellectually.

II. Aquinas was a great synthetic thinker who combined the classical pagan and Christian philosophical traditions.

- **A.** He helped make the University of Paris a center of Scholastic thought that articulated a concrete and encyclopedic "Aristotelian" Christianity, as opposed to the traditional Platonic/Augustinian variant of Christianity upheld at other universities, e.g., Oxford.
- **B.** Aquinas assumed that natural knowledge derived from reason and revealed knowledge derived from scripture are never in conflict.
  1. Faith and reason are never contradictory, if one identifies God as the *logos* spoken of in John's Gospel.
  2. Faith is an Aristotelian "mean" between opinion and knowledge. However, "knowledge falls short of faith."
  3. Philosophy can prove that God exists but cannot prove the doctrine of the Trinity, which is scriptural and thus within the domain of theology.

C. Aquinas held that the classical tradition supports and serves the biblical tradition.
   1. Aquinas borrowed from Aristotle an emphasis on teleology, syllogistic logic, and a system-building tendency of encyclopedic exhaustiveness.
   2. Aquinas borrowed from Plato the Socratic question-and-answer technique (including the use of "straw man" arguments), but his use of the dialectical method was ossified and yoked to un-Socratic dogmatism. Plato's fluidity, playfulness, and provisionality are lost.
   3. Aquinas borrowed from Cicero and Stoicism the idea of natural law, which he Christianized by subsuming it under the eternal law. From Neoplatonism he adopted the idea of God as pure actuality without potentiality.

D. Aquinas had an encyclopedic knowledge of the Church Fathers (he even accepted some, such as Pseudo-Dionysus, who were apocryphal), yet he was judicious in his borrowing.
   1. From Augustine, Aquinas took the idea of evil as privation, and much of his political thinking attempted to reconcile Augustine's *City of God* with Aristotle's *Politics*.
   2. Both Augustine and Aquinas incorporated classical philosophy into the revealed religion of Jerusalem, assuming that each had its proper methodology (revelation for theology, reason for philosophy), and that faith ultimately superseded reason.
   3. Thomism is one of the most intellectually felicitous and institutionally successful attempts to bridge the gap between Athens and Jerusalem.

E. Aquinas' use of concepts developed by the pagan philosopher Aristotle led the Church to condemn his teachings in 1277, although he was subsequently rehabilitated and canonized in 1323.

III. Scholasticism, logic, and the problem of universals.

A. Syllogistic logic was the main intellectual instrument for Scholastic thinkers like Aquinas, and a ready-made set of ontological and epistemological concerns (e.g., the problem of universals) was contained therein.

B. Like Aristotle, Aquinas attempted to find a "mean" between the realism of Augustine and Anselm and the nominalism which was later radically expressed by William of Ockham.

C. Unwilling to allow either for quasi-Platonic Forms or empty nominalist set-names, Aquinas was a "moderate realist" who held that the universal is immanent in the specimen.

IV. The *Summae*.

A. The *Summa Contra Gentiles* is a rational apology for Christianity, directed toward non-Christians.

B. The *Summa Theologiae*.
   1. Like Aristotle and unlike St. Anselm, Aquinas began with sense data rather than an idea. He used Aristotelian concepts to explain that God is Truth *per se*, actuality without potentiality ("Being is"). The existence of the Cause is demonstrable from the effects. Philosophy can demonstrate *that* God exists; theology can demonstrate *what* God is.
   2. Aquinas offered five logical proofs for God's existence.
      a. God is the Prime or Unmoved Mover.
      b. God is the first efficient cause; the cosmos cannot be self-caused.
      c. The existence of possible or contingent beings implies the existence of a necessary being. Like Descartes, Aquinas held that the contingency of phenomena implies the necessity of *noumena*.
      d. Degrees of perfection imply absolute perfection (this argument is reminiscent of Plato).
      e. The argument from design: the natural order of nature and humanity implies the existence of an orderer.
   3. The ontological hierarchy of the "Great Chain of Being" provides theological validation for feudal politics (later reformulated as the Divine Right of Kings).
   4. Aquinas distinguishes four kinds of law:
      a. Eternal Law: God's Providence; the "idea of the government of things."
      b. Natural Law: the means by which rational creatures participate in eternal law.
      c. Positive Law: *nomos* or legislation; the "black-letter law" of particular governments.
      d. Divine Law: Revelation, a product of grace that leads men to faith, hope, love.

V. Conclusion.

A. Thomism is the most self-conscious and successful attempt to harmonize Athens and Jerusalem in the millennium between Augustine and Thomas More. It remains the most important philosophical influence on Catholicism.

B. Aquinas "baptizes" Cicero as well as Aristotle. Despite positivistic disclaimers, natural law theory is alive and well in the twentieth century, as shown by the Nuremberg trials, civil disobedience, "higher law" defenses like those of Gandhi or Martin Luther King, conscientious objection, and human rights.

Essential Reading:

Aquinas, St. Thomas. *On Law, Morality, and Politics.* Hackett, 1988.

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Fredrick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Bk. I, Vol. II. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 312-347, 388-423).

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 452-462).

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Gilbey, Thomas. *The Political Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938.

Hankey, W. J. *God in Himself: Aquinas Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologica.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Steenberghen, F. van, *Thomas Aquinas and Radical Aristotelianism* (trans. Dominic J. O'Meara, *et al*). Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1980.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did Aquinas recast Aristotle to accommodate Christianity?
2. How do Aquinas' political views differ from those of Aristotle?

Lecture Two
More's *Utopia*: Reason and Social Justice

Professor Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: Thomas More's *Utopia* provides a Christian-humanist view of an ideal society. More offers this vision not only as a mental ideal but as one that humans can strive to create in this world. The text is a self-conscious effort by More to offer his readers a Christianization of Plato's *Republic*. This lecture will review the features and significance of More's ideal system, highlighting its similarities to and divergences from Plato's utopia.

Outline

I. Sir Thomas More was a Renaissance man (and subsequently a Christian saint) known for his piety, integrity, learning, and wit. He served as a member of Parliament, diplomat, and Lord Chancellor of England. He was ultimately beheaded for refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of Henry VIII's rule of the Church in England.

II. More's book, *Utopia*, was the last great synthesis of Christianity with the pagan classical tradition.

- **A.** The Christian aspect of More's synthesis is Christ's message of caring for the poor, oppressed, and downtrodden.
- **B.** The Greek aspect of his synthesis is the Platonic republican tradition.
- **C.** More wrote the *Utopia* in a comedic tone, which allowed him to speak his truth while esoterically telling his deeper story.

III. *Utopia* takes the form of a dialogue led by a Socratic wise man named Raphael Hythloday. The first book sets the stage for all that follows, and the second book is an exposition of the communal, social, and political arrangements of the Utopians.

- **A.** Book I discusses the political realm and More's Christian-humanistic critique of sixteenth-century England.
- **B.** More critiques the royal court, the two-facedness of members of the clergy, and the laws.
- **C.** He also critiques the economy of England and the enclosure movement of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in which rich landlords pushed the poor off the common lands and into wretched poverty in the cities.
  1. More critiques early capitalism by observing that useful people, tradesmen, and peasants can no longer subsist on the land.

2. He points out the inanity of exacting the death penalty for property-related crimes.

IV. Book II details the actual workings of the Utopian society.

A. Utopia is very similar to England in its physical topography. This similarity indicates that More's project was not just a "Utopian scheme" but a legitimate form of Christian reconstruction.

B. All property in Utopia is owned by the community, and all production—except agriculture—is located in the household.
1. Trades are assigned on the basis of aptitude and choice.
2. Spiritually corrosive labor—such as butchery—is relegated to slaves.
3. The workday is kept short in order to allow time for leisure pursuits and cultural enrichment.

C. Utopian social life is highly communal
1. Utopians take their meals in common.
2. There is no personal privacy, as indicated by the absence of locks on doors.
3. Restrictions are imposed on travel.
4. People wear uniform, undyed clothing.
5. To ensure against attachment to property, people are required to switch their domiciles every ten years.

D. Utopian society has an enlightened system of governance.
1. To reduce the risk of corrupt bargains, political issues are never spoken of outside of chambers.
2. To promote deliberation, no legislation can be debated on the same day it was introduced.
3. Utopia is governed by an elected parliament and prince (the latter for a life term). Parliament's function is to allocate goods and labor to the individual towns, conduct foreign policy, and create new colonies.
4. Governors are drawn from the educated class.

E. Various principles and criteria govern Utopian foreign policy and warfare.
1. Utopians fight wars for only three reasons: to defend their territory, to defend the territory of an ally, or to liberate oppressed peoples.
2. They refuse to enter into treaties with other states.
3. They wage war either by offering a ransom for the enemy's leader, by buying off the enemy's army, or by employing mercenaries.

F. The Utopians practice religious tolerance.
1. The Utopians promote Christianity but tolerate other religions.
2. Atheists are denied political rights.

3. The Utopians prohibit visual representations of God so as not to favor any one interpretation of Him.
4. The Utopians' moral philosophy is eudaimonistic, i.e., oriented toward altruistic pleasure as the highest good.

V. The communal nature of the Utopian community is at once a Christian-humanistic ideal of beauty and in some respects a harbinger of the twentieth-century total state. The distinction between private life (outside the purview of the government) and public life (that of the community) is almost extinguished.

Essential Reading:

More, Thomas. *Utopia.* New York: Penguin, 1965.

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick S. J. *A History of Philosophy*, Book I, Vol. III. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 320-322).

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 512-522).

Hexter, Jack H. *More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea.* Greenwood, 1952.

Surtz, Edward L. *The Praise of Pleasure: Philosophy, Education, and Communism in More's "Utopia."* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Kautsky, Karl, *Thomas More and His Utopia.* Humanities, 1980.

Questions to Consider:

1. Compare and contrast the governments of More's utopia and Plato's ideal republic.
2. How similar is More's moral eudaemonism to that of the classical Greeks?

Lecture Three
Machiavelli's *The Prince*: Political Realism, Political Science

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: As a premier work of political realism, Machiavelli's *The Prince* marks a sharp departure from the classical idealist tradition associated with Plato. The book's "hero," Cesare Borgia, is a cold-hearted, unscrupulous, calculating despot. The word "Machiavellian" has come to refer to a sinister, cunning person who ruthlessly pursues personal power in the manner described in *The Prince*. This lecture will explain Machiavelli's purposes in writing *The Prince*, and it will outline his practical advice for gaining and keeping political power.

Outline

I. Machiavelli's *The Prince* represents the rebirth of the classical tradition of empirical political speculation.

- **A.** His purposes in writing *The Prince* were to urge the Medici to unify Italy and expel the "barbarian" invaders, and to ingratiate himself with the Medici in the hope of winning public office.
- **B.** *The Prince* is a practical work on how to acquire, secure, hold, and improve princely power. It avoids normative observations. Its stark realism and proto-nationalism prefigure political thinking and practice in subsequent centuries.

II. Machiavelli offers the following advice to the prince.

- **A.** All principalities are either based on inheritance or are newly founded. The former are easy to maintain as long as the prince respects tradition. The latter are somewhat harder to control; the precise difficulty in such a situation depends on certain fundamental circumstances.
  1. If the prince has the same language as the kingdom he seeks to obtain, he must simply eliminate all members of the old royal family.
  2. Acquisition and retention of a new kingdom having a different language and culture are more difficult and require the exercise of skill. The prince should reside in the new territory, plant colonies at strategic locations within it, and ally with his less powerful neighbors against his more powerful rivals.
- **B.** All principalities are governed with the aid of either appointed ministers or hereditary barons. The prince will always have more power over the former than the latter.
  1. Regimes with appointed ministers are difficult to conquer but easy to hold.
  2. Regimes with barons are easy to conquer but difficult to hold.
- **C.** Free cities are very difficult to conquer and hold because of their traditions of independence and liberty. Once the prince acquires such a city, he can either despoil it, take up residence within it, or give it autonomy under a friendly local elite while taking tribute.
- **D.** Private citizens can become princes either through their own efforts and abilities, or through fortune and the efforts of others.
  1. The former find it difficult to acquire new possessions because of the new rules they are forced to impose. Once obtained and reformed, however, these territories are easy to hold.
  2. Those who become princes through fortune or the efforts of others have an easy ascent to power, but they have difficulty retaining power.
- **E.** Some princes rise to power through coups d'êtat, while others are elevated to that position by fellow citizens.
  1. In the first case, the prudent ruler will commit all acts of cruelty at once, and subsequently he will soften his rule.
  2. A prince elevated by his fellow citizens will have to play off the nobles against the people.
  3. The prince should ensure that the people always need him and become dependent economically upon him. He will more easily gain the loyalty of the *demos* than of the nobility.
- **F.** In addition to good laws, the basic foundation of any regime is good arms.
  1. The prince must study the military arts and their historical practice.
  2. Armies are either made of mercenaries, auxiliaries (the forces of allied nations), or a national militia. The militia is the only safe form of army.
- **G.** It is better for a prince to have the reputation for stinginess than to be too liberal with his resources.
  1. Excessive liberality will require the prince to impose high taxes, which incurs hatred and disgrace.
  2. Miserliness will incur resentment but not hatred.
- **H.** It is sometimes better for the prince to show cruelty than clemency.
  1. It is always better for him to be feared than loved. Fear need not and should not bring hatred.
  2. The key to avoiding hatred is not to take the property of citizens.
- **I.** The prince should have the reputation for honesty, integrity, and religion, but not always the reality. For princes, the end justifies the mean.

Essential Reading:

Machiavelli, Niccolo. The Prince (Hackett, 1995)

Supplementary Reading:

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 504-512).

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Bk.I, Vol. III. Image Books, 1985 (pp. 315-320).

Gilbert, Felix. *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence.* New York: Norton, 1984.

Pitkin, Hanna. *Fortune is a Woman: Gender Politics in the Thought of Nicolo Machiavelli.* University of California Press, 1984.

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Strauss, Leo. *Thoughts on Machiavelli.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Questions to Consider:

1. What does Machiavelli regard as the main duty of a prince? What must the prince do in order to fulfill this duty?
2. How can one reconcile Machiavelli's praise of republicanism in *The Discourses* with his championing of monarchical rule in *The Prince*?

Lecture Four
Bacon's *New Organon*: The Call for a New Science

Alan Kors, Ph.D.

Scope: Francis Bacon wrote more than thirty works of philosophy and many other tracts on law and science. He is regarded by many as the father of British empiricism. In his *Novum Organum* (1620), he presents a "new method" for acquiring knowledge that abandons the traditional deference toward the received wisdoms of Aristotle and other classical sources and advocates inductive, theory-free observation by the senses. This lecture will examine the main features of Baconian scientific inquiry (chastity, holiness, and legality); Bacon's criteria for assessing the merit of philosophical ideas (usefulness and charity); the main themes of Bacon's *Instauratio Magna*; and his identification of obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge.

Outline

I. Francis Bacon sought to acquire useful knowledge. He took a distaste for Aristotle and Scholasticism while a student at Trinity College.

II. Bacon rebelled against the regnant Western philosophical tradition.

- **A.** He attacked it for confusing religious and natural knowledge and for emphasizing concern for words rather than concern for things.
- **B.** He sought to reorient rational inquiry toward existing things; i.e., the natural world. This inquiry must be:
  1. Chaste—i.e., without ornamentation or self-indulgence.
  2. Holy—i.e., undertaken with Christian humility and reverence, and directed toward charitable use.
  3. Legal—i.e., it must follow the correct method for acquiring knowledge.
- **C.** Bacon intended his *New Organon* to move European thought away from the worn and tortured Aristotelian system. He insisted on two new tests for judging the success of a system of knowledge:
  1. Philosophical (including scientific) ideas should be judged on the basis of their capacity to expand human power over nature and, by extension, to improve human well-being.
  2. Philosophical ideas should be judged by the religious value of their capacity to increase human charity.

III. Bacon's "Great Instauration" has four main themes.

A. Knowledge is power.
   1. Knowledge must have the goal of increasing human power over the thing known.
   2. The goal of human dominion over nature is charity (rather than private gain). We must be humble in the face of nature.

B. Natural philosophy is distinct from theology.
   1. Scripture cannot dictate the methods or conclusions of science.
   2. Bacon defends himself against accusations of impiety by insisting that God would have written a better book of science than Scripture if He had meant to write science.

C. Bacon advocates use of the inductive method of scientific inquiry.
   1. He launches a dramatic assault on Aristotelian syllogistic argumentation based on deduction from a general principle assumed to be true. The major premises are derived from authority, and knowledge is extended by application of these general rules to particular cases.
   2. Bacon argued that knowledge of nature is derived from induction, i.e., experience of particular cases, from which generalizations are derived. This claim reversed the hierarchy of knowledge, elevating the careful observation of particular facts over clever manipulation of general rules.

D. Knowledge is cooperative and progressive. Because observation of facts in the world is the source of knowledge, no one human mind can know the final truths about nature. Science must be a dynamic, cooperative, and cumulative undertaking.

IV. Bacon formulated a metaphor for describing three kinds of mind.

A. The ant accumulates things indiscriminately.

B. The spider weaves intricate systems of its own devising.

C. The honeybee appropriates things from nature, which it mixes with its own content, producing something useful and sweet.

V. Bacon identified several obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge

A. We can be misled by our emotions, erroneous sense impressions, and equivocal words.

B. We worship "false idols."
   1. "Idols of the Tribe" are the general tendencies inherent in human nature (uncritical reliance on sense perception; overgeneralizing; perceiving order where none exists).
   2. "Idols of the Cave" are distortions arising from our particular perspectives.
   3. "Idols of the Marketplace" are distortions arising from faulty communication, and especially from ambiguous words.
   4. "Idols of the Theater" are errors introduced by abstract theories, especially those of Aristotelianism and of systems that mix theological and scientific notions.

Essential Reading:

Bacon, Francis. *The New Organon.* New York: Macmillan, 1985.

Supplementary Reading:

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Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 541-545).

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Jardine, Lisa. *Francis Bacon: Discovery and the Art of Discourse.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

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Wallace, Karl R. *Francis Bacon on the Nature of Man.* Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967.

Questions to Consider:

1. What are Bacon's main objections to Aristotelian science? How did Bacon's own method differ from that of Aristotle and his Scholastic followers?
2. Describe and distinguish among Bacon's four "idols of the mind." Is it possible to overcome these "idols," and if so, how?

Lecture Five
Descartes' Epistemology and the Mind-Body Problem

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: Rene Descartes is widely regarded as the first modern philosopher. His philosophical method centered on radical doubt of all received knowledge and the search for an indubitable first principle upon which to found all knowledge. This lecture will review the four steps of Descartes' method for gaining certain knowledge; his argument for assuring himself of his own existence (the "*Cogito, ergo sum*"); his rationale for distinguishing mind from body; the philosophical problems created by this mind-body dualism; and the answers to these problems proposed by Descartes' followers.

Outline

I. Rene Descartes is known as the father of modern philosophy.
   - **A.** He refused to appeal to the authority of the great classical thinkers. Instead, he tried to build an entirely new and complete philosophical system on foundations that were purely rational and logically certain.
   - **B.** Descartes' philosophy was modern in its search for absolute certainty that rested upon science and logic rather than the authority of the ancients.

II. The "Cartesian Method" was the basis of Descartes' philosophy.
   - **A.** Descartes claimed that his method, if followed correctly, would produce absolute certainty.
   - **B.** The Cartesian Method comprised four different steps or operations:
     1. The first step consists of systematic doubt of anything that can be doubted and is therefore logically unnecessary. Such propositions should be rejected as merely probable. Only that which is certain ought be accepted as a philosophical starting point.
     2. The second step is analysis—each problem or issue should be analyzed (i.e., broken down) into its smallest constituent parts.
     3. The third step is synthesis—complex wholes or issues should be logically reconstructed from their constituent elements.
     4. The final step is to recapitulate the argument—such reconstruction should be carefully composed and copied down in the manner of Euclidean or other mathematical proofs.

III. Descartes extended systematic doubt to the existence of the physical world and all mathematical knowledge.
   - **A.** Since the only things we apprehend immediately are our own cognitive states, how can we be certain that an external reality corresponds to our perceptions?
   - **B.** If one can doubt his own physical existence, then he must necessarily exist, for there must be something that possesses the cognitive state of doubting. Thus, "*Cogito, ergo sum*"—I am thinking, therefore I am. I am a thinking being or mind.
   - **C.** The *Cogito* is an intuitively clear and distinct idea, and thus it is indubitably true. Geometrical and logical proofs and our idea of God are also clear and distinct and hence indubitably true.
   - **D.** We know that God exists because He is infinitely perfect, which implies that He must exist. Because God is infinitely good and thus is not a deceiver, we have reason to believe that an external physical world corresponds to our perceptions of it.

IV. Descartes distinguished between mind and body.
   - **A.** Since two things are identical if and only if they both possess the same properties, the mind (which cannot be doubted) is distinct from the body (which is doubtable). The universe is thus composed of two distinct substances, mind and body. Man, who possesses both mind and body, is thus a microcosm of the universe.
   - **B.** Descartes' mind-body dualism poses two logical problems:
     1. How can mind and body causally interact, since they are two distinct substances that have nothing in common? Some Cartesians posit "parallelism" (mental and bodily activities occur simultaneously) or "occasionalism" (God intervenes to ensure that our cognitive states correspond to physical realities).
     2. Statements about belief are "referentially opaque"; i.e., they refer not to things in themselves but to our statements about things.

Essential Reading:

Descartes, Rene. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy.* Hackett, 1993.

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy,* Bk. II, Vol. IV. New York: Doubleday, 1963 (pp. 63-123).

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 557-568).

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Rosenfield, Leonora. *From Beast Machine to Man Machine.* Hippocrene Bks., 1968.

Watson, Richard A. *The Breakdown of Cartesian Metaphysics.* Humanities, 1986.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why is Descartes regarded by many as the first modern philosopher?
2. Did Descartes' mind-body dualism constitute a break with the classical and Scholastic traditions? Why or why not?

Lecture Six
Hobbes' *Leviathan*: Of Man

Professor Dennis Dalton, Ph.D.

Scope: In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes describes in splendid detail his philosophy of materialism. This lecture will review Hobbes' materialist explanation of human behavior and emotion, and it will consider how his view of human psychology distinguishes his political theory from Plato's. Whereas Plato held that both the individual human soul and the state should be ruled by reason, Hobbes holds that reason serves the passions, the strongest of which are the desire for security and the fear of violent death. His materialistic ethics regards as "good" what brings pleasure and as "evil" what brings pain.

Outline

I. The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes was born in 1588, a time of immense turmoil. The circumstances of his birth is significant because they constitute a metaphor for his whole political philosophy.

II. Hobbes' great work of political theory is *Leviathan.*

- **A.** *Leviathan* is a brilliant book because of its systematic, logical tightness.
- **B.** Its main theme is the commonwealth, which men regard with awe and against which they seek protection.
- **C.** Its specific themes include the material composition of human nature, the social covenant, and the power and authority of the sovereign.
- **D.** Hobbes discerns two key passions in human nature: desire and fear.

III. Hobbes's political theory departs sharply from the Platonic tradition.

- **A.** Unlike Plato, who held that human behavior should be governed by reason, Hobbes argues that reason cannot rule because humans are sensual and passionate animals, not rational types.
  1. All thought arises from sense perception
  2. Reason calculates which passion is the strongest and how to satisfy it.
- **B.** Unlike Plato, who held that reason allows the creation of a state based on virtue, Hobbes holds that states arise from the passion of fear and that they exist only to provide security.

IV. Hobbes groups passions into two categories: appetites or desires (those that we move toward) and aversions (those which tell us to move away).

- **A.** Hobbes attributes "good" to appetites and desires (representing pleasure) and "bad" to aversions (representing pain). Happiness consists of nothing more than continual success in satisfying one's desires.
- **B.** The strongest human passions are the desire of power and the fear of violent death.
  1. The struggle for power ends only in death; it cannot lead to permanent tranquility.
  2. Humans in the state of nature fear each other as potential murderers; they are driven by fear to seek ever more power, which frightens others into seeking power for their own self-defense. The inability to attain total security arises from this vicious cycle of fear-defense-fear, not from any innate human aggressiveness or avariciousness.
  3. Constant fear of death thus motivates our chronic state of insecurity and anxiety.

V. Hobbes describes the human predicament in the state of nature as a futile search for peace, security, and order.

- **A.** He insists that the general law of peace and peace-seeking is at the bottom of all human behavior.
- **B.** Humans in the state of nature fail to attain peace and security because their efforts to do so instill fear in others, trapping all in a vicious cycle.
- **C.** According to Hobbes, the only way to escape this cycle is to create a higher authority—an all powerful state that can obtain greater safety and security for human beings.
- **D.** Whereas Plato would use education to transform people's attitudes, Hobbes relies not on reason but on human passions to rescue people from their condition of pervasive insecurity.

Essential Reading:

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan.* New York: Penguin Classics, 1968 (pp. 74-222).

Supplementary Reading:

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 546-557).

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Bk.II, Vol. V. Image Books, 1985 (pp. 1-31).

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Questions to Consider:

1. Compare and contrast the views of Plato and Hobbes on the interaction between reason and the passions or appetites. How do their differing views of human nature contribute to their differing political conclusions?
2. How does Hobbes's materialism influence his understanding of ethics and moral choice?

Lecture Seven
Hobbes' *Leviathan*: Of the Commonwealth

Dennis Dalton, Ph.D.

Scope: In this lecture we consider Hobbes' dramatic departure from the classical tradition in political theory. His social-contract theory of government rejected the medieval idea that the monarch derives his authority from God and the Platonic idea that justice is objectively rooted rather than a matter of convention. Hobbes discovered the roots of justice in individuals' fear of domination by others, and he held that government should be based upon the rational self-interest of its constituents. We will examine Hobbes' explanation of the origin of political society and his reasons for favoring absolute monarchy as the best form of government.

Outline

I. In the second part of *Leviathan*, Hobbes sets forth the finest and most logical and systematic statement of political realism in Western political philosophy.

- **A.** Hobbes agrees with Plato that a healthy society requires the concentration of leadership and power in the right hands. Both Hobbes and Plato begin with a perception of crisis arising from civil war.
- **B.** Locke stands to Hobbes as Aristotle stands to Plato. Both Locke and Aristotle are "reformers" who warn that concentration of power can lead to despotism.
- **C.** Hobbes's analysis of human nature, his theory of leadership, and his concept of sovereignty surpass those of Machiavelli. Hobbes further develops Machiavelli's realism.

II. Hobbes restates the critique of justice offered in *The Republic* by Glaucon, the first exponent of social contract theory.

- **A.** According to Glaucon, human beings—who individually are too weak to dominate each other—form a contract to ensure their own self-preservation. Justice consists in their agreement not to attempt to dominate each other.
- **B.** Glaucon's key assumption—which Hobbes also accepts—is that the nature and origin of justice are rooted not in any transcendent objective standard but in convention. Justice is the result of fear of domination by others.
  1. Thus social contract theory as expounded by Glaucon and Hobbes rests upon moral relativism.
  2. Exit from the state of war comes not through reason or education, but through fear. Individuals who are desperate for a resolution arrive at a covenant.

III. Hobbes desribes the origins of the state.

- **A.** He asserts in his discourse on "The Natural Condition of Mankind" that human beings in the state of nature are radically equal—the weakest are capable of killing the strongest.
  1. Thus no one in the state of nature enjoys security.
  2. The condition of war exists whenever there is no common power to keep people in awe.
- **B.** Hobbes does not view the state of nature as a purely historical period or condition. We can revert to the state of nature at any time.
- **C.** The passions that incline men to seek peace are fear of death and desire for security.
- **D.** Humans cannot ensure their own peace and security by themselves. They must fashion a covenant under which they transfer their rights and power to a sovereign.
  1. The contract establishes a common power that will leave the people in awe and direct their actions toward a common good.
  2. Men can achieve peace, order, and security only by conferring all of their power and strength upon one man or assembly, thereby reducing their multiple wills to one.
- **E.** Individual human beings authorize the sovereign to assume and exercise all of their rights and powers for the sake of ensuring their own peace and security.
  1. The sovereign is not a party to the social contract, and thus its power is not limited by its terms.
  2. The sovereign holds all executive, legislative, and judicial powers. It has power over all private and public property. (Locke views the right to property as unalienable.)

IV. The legitimacy of the contract depends upon the sovereign's ability to ensure personal security.

- **A.** Each subject retains the right to his own life.
- **B.** Individuals can withdraw from the contract if the sovereign fails to ensure security.
- **C.** Hobbes has established the principles of legitimacy (rooted in the self-interest of each person) and liberalism (rooted in his perception that the people are the source of the sovereign's power to maintain peace and security).

Essential Reading:

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan.* Hackett, 1994 (pp. 223-408).

Supplementary Reading:

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 546-557).

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*, Bk.II, Vol. V. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 32-51).

MacPherson, Crawford B. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1962.

Oakeshott, Michael. *Hobbes on Civil Association.* University of California Press, 1975.

Warrender, Howard. *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: His Theory of Obligation.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.

Questions to Consider:

1. How might one reconcile Hobbes's preference for absolute monarchy and his apparent predilection for authoritarianism with his reputation as one of the founders of liberalism?
2. According to Hobbes, what is the source of legitimate political authority? In what does this legitimacy consist and how, if at all, can it be lost?

Lecture Eight
Spinoza's *Ethics*

Darren Staloff, Ph.D

Scope: This lecture will examine the metaphysical and ethical ideas of Baruch Spinoza, one of the most brilliant and challenging thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition. Spinoza's principal work, the *Ethics*, offers a brilliant expression of his metaphysical monism. He argues that the universe is reducible to a single substance, which he identifies as monads, rather than to two two discrete substances—mind and body, as Descartes had it. Spinoza asserts that Nature is not the creation of a supernatural God. Rather, he identifies Nature *as* God. Spinoza believes that what is, is of necessity. Knowledge of this necessity gives power and virtue to individuals. Escape from desires through understanding is one of the benefits of the ethical life.

Outline

I Baruch Spinoza is one of the most challenging thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition. His arguments are extremely abstruse and technical, and in many ways they are antithetical to the mainstream European intellectual tradition.

- **A.** Spinoza was the first modern philosopher completely to reject, in the name of science and reason, the traditional Judeo-Christian notion of a personal God.
- **B.** Spinoza rejected any teleological interpretation of nature and man. He held that the world's operation do not reveal any intelligence, purpose, or moral content.

II. Spinoza advocated a metaphysical monism.

- **A.** Spinoza was profoundly influenced by Descartes's philosophy. Given Descartes's epistemology and definition of substance, Spinoza concluded that it is logically impossible for there to be more than one substance, and hence he subscribed to metaphysical monism.
- **B.** This one substance is the universe itself, which Spinoza identified as "God" or "nature." This pantheistic reverence for being represents Spinoza's attempt to offer a purely rational and scientific form of spiritual nurturance.
- **C.** Spinoza rejected Descartes's mind-body dualism and argued instead that mind and body are two different attributes of the same substance (described as either intellective or extended).
  1. That is, mind and body comprise distinct descriptive protocols or different ways of talking about the same events or phenomena.

2. The mind of God exists only within nature and is identifiable with human rationality (and thus also with the human body, since mind and body are not distinct).

III. Spinoza advocated monistic determinism.

A. Given the Cartesian epistemological view that intuitively clear and distinct ideas are true (i.e., they correspond to objective reality), Spinoza concluded that the causal nexus is identical to logical implication. Therefore, all causes are logically necessary.

B. Since every change and event has a cause, then everything is determined. Consequently, there is no chance or accident in the universe.

C. Since all natural events have a cause, and humans are part of nature, then all human actions are determined and thus free will is a logical impossibility and absurd.

D. Positing only the instinct of *conatus* (i.e., desire for survival) and the principle of association, Spinoza, like Hobbes, demonstrated that human emotions are causally necessary responses to external stimuli.

IV. Spinoza argued that the well-being or happiness of humans is a function of their relative empowerment through their environment.

A. The capacity of the environment to induce powerful psychological states or emotions is the cause of human bondage.

B. Insofar as our disposition is caused by external events, these events control us and we are merely passive.

C. Spinoza's way of salvation is predicated on achieving control over one's emotions by using reason to understand their necessary causes and thereby therapeutically eliminate their control over one's mind/body.

D. Human salvation, or blessedness, consists in understanding the necessity of each event that occurs in life and facing each with equanimity.

1. Such a quasi-Buddhistic enlightened person can transcend hatred, revere being, and manifest his empowerment through a universal rational love.
2. By loving everything (even one's enemies), one demonstrates his freedom from control of his emotions by outside stimuli. Happiness and love become a demonstration of one's power.

Essential Reading:

Spinoza, Baruch *The Ethics and Selected Letters* (trans. and ed. Seymour Feldman). Hackett, 1982 (pp. 1-226).

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick S. J. *A History of Philosophy*, Book II, Vol. IV. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1985 (pp. 214-263).

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 569-580).

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Grene, Marjorie, and Debra Nails, eds. *Spinoza and the Sciences.* Kluwer A.C., 1986.

Willis, R. *Spinoza: His Life, Correspondence and Ethics.* Gordon, 1977.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does Spinoza reconcile his rigid determinism with his emphasis on freedom as the goal of his philosophy?
2. How does Spinoza resolve the Cartesian problem of soul-body interaction?

Lecture Nine
The Newtonian Revolution

Alan Charles Kors, Ph.D.

Scope: In this lecture we will examine the scientific discoveries of Isaac Newton and assess their profound philosophical, cosmological, and theological implications. The lecture examines the emergence during the seventeenth century of learned societies for scientific research, and it reviews Newton's stunning discoveries during his stay in the country in 1665 and 1666. We will also examine the Cartesians' accusation that Newton "feigned hypotheses" regarding gravitation after the manner of Aristotle, and we will assess Newton's response to this charge.

Outline

I. Various learned societies were formed in seventeenth-century Europe to study "natural philosophy."

- **A.** These societies arose, especially in England, as centers for the study of new empirical sciences, since the universities remained beholden to Aristotelian Scholasticism.
- **B.** Among the most important of these societies was the Royal Society.
  1. In the 1640s, students and professors began meeting informally to discuss "experimental philosophy."
  2. In 1662, this group was chartered as the Royal Society. It regarded both experimentation and publication of one's findings as essential for the advancement of knowledge.
  3. In 1664, the Royal Society divided into committees, each devoted to a different scientific discipline.
  4. Newton published his research on optics in the first published volume of the Society's proceedings.

II. The life and achievements of Isaac Newton.

- **A.** Newton was born in 1642 and entered Cambridge University at the relatively advanced age of 19 in 1661. Although the Aristotelians dominated Cambridge, Newton entered Trinity College, a center of Cartesian physics and higher mathematics.
- **B.** Cambridge was evacuated in 1665 due to the plague, and Newton returned home, where over the next eighteen months he made numerous scientific discoveries.
  1. Newton asked how the moon maintains its orbit around the earth. All seventeenth-century physicists and astronomers believed that natural inertial motion is circular; Descartes regarded inertial motion as straight but held that a whirlpool of matter maintained the moon in its orbit. Newton formulated his Law of Gravity to explain the moon's motion.
  2. He also developed differential and integral calculus, formulated his Three Laws of Motion (or Thermodynamics), discovered the composition of light, and set the foundation for modern optics.
  3. He shared none of these discoveries with anyone else for several years.

III. Newton's great scientific work is entitled the *Principia*.

- **A.** In 1684, Newton showed his work on gravity to the astronomer Halley, who encouraged him to publish it. Newton did so in the *Principia* of 1687.
- **B.** The *Principia* was a staggering achievement. It made the universe seem lucid, structured, and understandable. The human mind appeared able to understand God's design for the universe.
  1. The action of gravity and inertia upon matter served to explain both terrestrial and celestial motion, thereby unifying both types of physics. Humans can understand and predict both earthly and celestial motion.
  2. The achievements of empirical observation and mathematical technique gave dramatic confirmation to the claims of empiricism. Before, "nature and nature's laws lay hid in night; God said 'let Newton be,' and all was light" (Alexander Pope).
- **C.** The Cartesians attacked Newton's theory of gravity.
  1. They regarded Newton's doctrine regarding the earth's gravitational power of attraction as a throwback to teleological Aristotelian explanations of motion via "occult forces." They regarded gravity as an occult and unprovable posit that failed to demonstrate the mechanism by which one mass acts upon another at a distance.
  2. Newtonians replied that the force of gravity is demonstrable by its effects and that its action is predictable. There is no need to feign hypotheses to explain what it is.
  3. Newton's response is in keeping with Locke's empiricism; only observable facts can be known. The irreducible "qualities" of things cannot be known, nor would awareness of them be useful.
- **D.** Newton's discoveries had profound implications.
  1. Nature is knowable—the universe is ordered, and it operates according to laws knowable through reason.
  2. The pursuit of natural knowledge is pursuit of the knowledge of God, and thus science is a species of piety.

Essential Reading:

Newton, Isaac. *Newton's Philosophy of Nature: Selections from His Writings.* Hafner Press, 1974.

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy* Bk. II, Vol. V. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 143-156).

Bricker, Phillip, ed. *Philosophical Perspectives on Newtonian Science.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.

Force, James. *Essays on the Context, Nature, and Influence of Isaac Newton's Theology.* Kluwer, 1990.

Hurlbutt, Robert H. *Hume, Newton, and the Design Argument.* Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.

Manuel, Frank E. *The Religion of Isaac Newton.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Westfall, Richard S. *Never at Rest: A Biography of Isaac Newton.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did Isaac Newton's discoveries change the way people looked at the heavens?
2. Compare and contrast Newton's scientific method with that of Galileo and Descartes.

Lecture Ten
The Early Enlightenment and the Search for the Laws of History: Vico's *New Science of History*

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the efforts of the historian Giambattista Vico to use Newton's scientific method to discern regular and constant laws of historical causation and human behavior. We will review Vico's argument for the possibility of attaining certain knowledge of history, and we will examine his cyclical theory of history, according to which class struggle propels history from the Age of Gods through the Age of Heroes to the Age of Men. Finally, we will consider some implications of Vico's "new science" of history.

Outline

I. Vico proposed a new science of man.
   - A. The early Enlightenment sought to apply Newton's scientific method to the study of humanity; to replace considerations of entelechy with regular and constant laws.
   - B. The "science of man" took two forms.
     1. Scientific psychology, which sought to taxonomize and explain the laws of human behavior.
     2. Identification of the laws of historical causation.
   - C. Giambattista Vico combined both of these approaches.

II. Vico redefined the epistemological status of history.
   - A. Cartesian epistemology precluded any possibility of scientific history, since the objects of historical inquiry are not "clear and distinct" and not susceptible to experimentation.
   - B. Vico offered a critique of the Cartesian depreciation of scientific history.
     1. Clarity and distinctness are not universal criteria of truth. These attributes apply only to mathematical objects, since they are wholly conceptual and lack empirical referents—i.e., they are human creations. We attain knowledge of scientific objects through experiment rather than deduction, and thus our knowledge of them is practical and incomplete.
     2. Vico replaced the "*cogito*" with his own principle of "*verum factum*"—we know the truth about objects that we have cognitively constructed or "made." Since history is made exclusively by men, it can be known by them with scientific certainty.

III. Vico proposed a new theory of history.

A. In his view, history is cyclical.

1. All nations undergo a common course of development through three stages, each of which represents a distinct level of cultural activity and consciousness.
2. Class struggle is the mechanism that moves any culture through these stages.
3. Each stage is increasingly popular, humanistic, and democratic. When the cycle has run its course, the whole process begins anew.
4. The scope of Vico's theory is the history of the post-deluvian gentiles, and its primary focus is the history of Hellenic classical Greece and Rome, which is taken as the archetypal pattern.

B. According to Vico, history passes through three stages.

1. The first stage is the Age of Gods.
   a. History begins with the establishment of the "family state."
   b. Augury is the principal form of wisdom and law.
   c. The patriarch has absolute power as king, judge, and priest.
   d. This stage of history is characterized by three main institutions: religion, marriage, and the burial of the dead.
   e. The mentality of this epoch is crude, superstitious, and based on sense.
2. The second stage is the Age of Heroes.
   a. Some primitive men seek refuge from their more violent fellows in the "asylums" (forest clearings) of the patriarchs, where they work the land and ultimately become serfs. A feudal social order emerges.
   b. The patriarchs unite against the serfs and create aristocratic commonwealths. Patrician and plebeian orders emerge, each defined in opposition to the other.
   c. The mentality of this stage is characterized by imagination and poetic creativity.
3. The third stage is the Age of Men.
   a. The plebes continue to fight for their rights, especially those of sacred marriage, citizenship, and access to political office. This process culminates in the rise of democratic republics and recognition of every man's inherent dignity as a rational being.
   b. Democracy degenerates into disorder. An ambitious leader restores order through constitutional monarchy, but culture continues to degenerate. A madman arises who destroys the state.
   c. The overall mentality of this period is characterized by a hyperrationalism that eventually becomes purely skeptical and critical. Legal and social humanism gives way to luxury and decadence. The society loses the common bonds of religion and regard for the public good.

C. Once a culture or nation has run its course, it continues to degenerate until it can recover the religious and primal spontaneity of the primitive mind, which is expressed as contact with God. For instance, the early Christian Church heralded a new "Age of the Gods" among Europeans, followed by an "Age of Heroes" in medieval Europe, which was in turn followed by an "Age of Reason" which announced the next "Age of Men" in Europe.

IV. Vico's theory has important implications.

A. Each historical stage represents a new stage in human mentality.

B. Artifacts such as Homer's *Iliad* and heraldic paraphernalia are sources for reconstructing a worldview or culture.

C. The state should reflect the stage of cultural development of the nation over which it presides.

D. History teaches us the psychological nature of man, and it is the true science of man.

Essential Reading:

Bergin, Thomas Goddard and Fisch, Max Harold, trans. *The New Science of Giambattista Vico.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968 (pp. 60-256,335-393).

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick S. J. *A History of Philosophy*, Book II, Vol. VI. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 151-163).

Berlin, Isaiah. *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas.* Hogarth, 1995.

Bodani, Gino. *Vico Revisited: Orthodoxy, Naturalism , and Science in the Scienza Nuova.* Burg, 1989.

Questions to Consider:

1. Compare and contrast the explanations offered by Vico and Hobbes.for the origin of society.
2. How does Vico's philosophy of history avoid the fatalism of cyclical or eternal return?

Lecture Eleven
Pascal's *Pensees*

Michael Sugrue, Ph.D.

Scope: Blaise Pascal's religious writings were published posthumously as *Pensees de M. Pascal sur la Religion et sur Quelques autres Sujects* (1670), in which he asserted the insufficiency of either rationalism or skepticism to solve men's problems or realize their hopes. Instead, Pascal argued, we must give ourselves over to the mysteries of faith if we are to achieve comfort and true understanding. This lecture will review Pascal's scientific achievements, his turn toward religious speculation and introspection, his attraction to Jansenism, his efforts to undermine his contemporaries' attachment to rationalism and skepticism, and the purpose of his famous "Wager" argument in favor of religious belief.

Outline

I. Blaise Pascal was a mathematician, mystic and apologist for Christianity.
   A. Acclaimed as a scientific and mathematical prodigy, he made original contributions to the theory of probability, the philosophy of science, and experimental physics (air pressure and the vacuum).
   B. Pascal gave up his scientific and mathematical pursuits following his conversion experience. His scientific contributions have been eclipsed by an unfinished work, *An Apology for the Christian Religion* (published as *Pensees*), in which he sets forth his conception of Christianity.

II. Pascal recalled his conversion experience as the "night of fire."
   A. In 1646 he became attracted to Jansenism (a Catholic heresy that emphasized the depravity of the human condition) and spent long hours reading the Bible and meditating upon the mysteries of faith.
      1. He became associated with the Jansenist convent of Port-Royal.
      2. In his *Provincial Letters*, he attacked the casuistry and hypocrisy of the Jesuit enemies of Jansenism.
   B. On November 23, 1654, Pascal had a conversion experience which he called the "night of fire"—a direct apprehension of God. His interests subsequently shifted from science and mathematics to charitable works, apologetics, and morbid introspection.

III. Pascal's intellectual milieu.
   A. Pascal sought to undermine both Cartesian rationalism and the complacent skepticism of Montaigne and his ilk.
      1. He wrote for an educated audience that no longer took religion seriously and had drifted toward either hubristic rationalism or self-indulgence.
      2. He sought to show the insufficiency of both Cartesian arrogance and Montaigne's skepticism and complacency for achieving true knowledge and happiness. Both rationalism and skepticism bring moral endangerment.
   B. Pascal hoped both to stimulate a search for religious enlightenment by rousing his audience to a frenzied despair, and to undermine scientific naturalism as an alternative stance toward Being.
      1. Tradition, as well as reason, is an important source of knowledge and authority.
      2. Reliance on reason alone brings frustration and misery.

IV. Theology for Accountants: The Wager.
   A. Pascal sought to atone for his earlier misuse of probability theory (through gambling) by putting it to good use in encouraging belief in and obedience to God.
   B. The major premise of Pascal's wager is that God either does or does not exist.
      1. If an atheist denies a nonexistent God, he gains little, since human life is nasty, brutish, and short. If an atheist denies a real God, he is damned for all time.
      2. If a believer accepts a nonexistent God, he loses nothing in the afterlife, since there is none, and nothing in this life, since it is wretched without God, an aimless meandering toward extinction. If a believer accepts a real God, he gains salvation.
   C. Pascal did not intend his "Wager" argument to serve as a rational proof of God's existence.
      1. The existence of the inscrutable *Deus abscondita* cannot be proven mathematically, as blasphemous Cartesians suggested. The Wager is propadeutic, not conclusive; it is a stimulus to religious inquiry.
      2. The motive for belief that underlies the Wager, however, is self-interest rather than disinterested love of God. What if God prefers the intellectual honesty of the agnostic to the calculation of those who adopt belief out of prudence rather than inspiration? Pascal responds that suicide is the only rational alternative to belief in God.

V. "Distracted from Distraction by Distraction" (T.S. Eliot).
   A. Pascal had an Augustinian view of human depravity, which foreshadowed the contemporary-sounding idea that human life is meaningless.
      1. Without God, the world is meaningless and the human condition is wretched.
      2. Pascal believed (probably correctly) that there was no political solution to the human condition. Human aspiration and activities

merely divert our attention from our corruption, contingency, and mortality.

B. Pascal had Hamlet's problem but he devised his own solution—a dive into faith, using mathematics as a springboard.

VI. Conclusion: Esprit d'Kierkegaard or Esprit d'Nietzsche

A. One's evaluation of Pascal depends upon one's stance toward Being—i.e., whether one is a spiritual citizen of Athens or Jerusalem, a child of Job or Prometheus.

1. Pascal's morbid and overwrought religious enthusiasm resembled that of Kirkegaard.

2. Nietzsche wrote: "I will never forgive Christianity for what it did to Pascal." Pascal's shift from science to theology is symptomatic of what Nietzsche believed was worst in Christianity.

B. Pascal was great because he swam against the current of the Enlightenment. Instead of going from God to Nature, he reversed the sequence.

Essential Reading:

Pascal, Blaise. *Pensees.* New York: Penguin, 1978.

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy,* Bk. II Vol. IV. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp.153-173).

Coleman, Francis. *Neither Angel Nor Beast: The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal.* Routledge, 1980.

Goldmann, Lucien. *Hidden God.* Humanities, 1976.

Rescher, Nicholas. *Pascal's Wager: A Study of Practical Reasoning in Philosophical Theology.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

Questions to Consider:

1. Does Pascal's rejection of Cartesian rationalism imply a corresponding rejection of reason as a means of attaining knowledge? Why or why not?

2. What is the purpose of Pascal's wager argument? What conclusions can one legitimately draw from it?

Lecture Twelve
The Philosophy of G. W. Leibniz

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture examines the epistemological and metaphysical theories of G.W. Leibniz. It examines the Cartesian roots of Leibniz's central philosophical assumptions and concerns, and it considers how Leibniz anticipated Kant's distinction between external reality and how we perceive it. We will also investigate Leibniz's theory of monads, his four proofs of the existence of God, and the rationale for his optimistic conclusion that we inhabit the best of all possible worlds.

Outline

I. Introduction to the life and works of G. W. Leibniz (1646-1716).

A. Leibniz led an interesting life, held fabulous doctrines, and was a precursor of many interesting later developments in philosophy.

1. His progressive view of history prefigured Vico and Hegel.

2. His understanding of the relativity of space and time prefigured Kant.

B. Although he was a very logical thinker, Leibniz never synthesized his work into a published treatise or system. The following account is based primarily on his published views in the *Monadology* and *Discourse on Metaphysics.*

II. The assumptions and problematic that underlay Leibniz's thought came from Descartes. These assumptions and problems included:

A. Syllogistic logic and its implications for the distinctions between substance/accident and necessity/contingency.

B. Mind-body dualism.

C. Rationalist epistemology of clear and distinct ideas, and the problem of mind-body interaction.

D. The problem of skepticism: how do we know that our mental states correspond to external reality?

III. Leibnizian philosophy reflects mind-body dualism and skepticism.

A. Leibniz argued from the dualism of mind and body toward a proto-Kantian distinction between the world as it really is and as it appears to us.

B. Also like Kant, Leibniz argued that space, time, and extension are mentally constructed and not "things in themselves."

1. Space is relative to the perspective of the viewer.

2. Time is a human construct by which we organize our mental states.
3. Extension is posited by humans as an attribute of things that are contiguous

IV. Leibniz propounded a new metaphysics.

A. He held that the ultimate entities of the universe are non-extended metaphysical points that he called monads. As in atomism, the physical objects of our experience are in fact merely aggregates of these monads.
1. Monads are simple substances and thus lack divisibility and extension.
2. Monads possess entelechies or substantial forms. They are composed of "mind."
3. Monads have "perception" in the sense that their activity reflects the activity surrounding them.
4. Monads have "appetition"—the exercise of an inner potency that determines their activity. It refers to the monad's internal inclination or disposition to develop in a particular way.

B. Every organic body has a dominant monad called the "soul." The dominant monad of a human body is a spirit or rational soul.
1. The dominant monad accounts for the relationship between monads of the body and of the mind.
2. There is a hierarchy of consciousness among dominant monads—from those of plants to those of humans.

C. Leibniz held that the monads seem to interact with each other, but in fact they do not.
1. Each monad is autonomous and a microcosm of the entire universe. Each develops according to its own internal entelechy, which is perfectly attuned to the development of everything else in the universe.
2. The universe contains an infinite number of autonomous monads that seemingly interact in causal relation to one another but in fact operate independently, much like a series of perfectly tuned clocks.
3. This doctrine, which Leibniz called "pre-established harmony," allowed him to reconcile final and efficient causality. The former relates to the universe of monads while the latter relates to the phenomenal world of appearances.

D. Leibniz offered four arguments for the existence of God:
1. The ontological argument—we can imagine God as the perfect being and thus He must exist, since existence is an attribute of perfection.
2. The argument from "eternal truths"—an eternal mind must exist to contain necessary or eternal ideas.
3. The cosmological argument—everything that occurs has a cause, and God is the uncaused first cause.

4. The argument from the pre-established harmony—God ensures the perfect harmony of all monads.

E. According to Leibniz, there must be a sufficient reason why every event or state occurs as it does. All that occurs, does so for some necessary reason.
1. This law raises troubling questions about determinism and freedom of the will. It also raises the question of the sufficient reason for the existence of the world.
2. Leibniz proposes the following answer is the principle of perfection: God could have created any of an infinity of possible worlds, but He created the one that maximizes perfection. God acts for the best, and this is the best of all possible worlds. Evil is a consequence of human free will, which is itself a good.

V. Leibniz's theory poses some problems.

A. How do we know that any external reality corresponds to our perceptions?

B. Leibniz draws completely logical but utterly implausible deductions from the Cartesian problematic. By raising questions about Cartesian rationalism, Leibniz signals the need for a new paradigm.

Essential Reading:

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Discourse on Metaphysics, Correspondence with Arnauld, Monadology* (trans. George Montgomery). Open Court, 1993 (pp. 1-63, 251-272).

Supplementary Reading:

Copleston, Frederick S.J. *A History of Philosophy,* Book II, Vol. IV. New York: Doubleday, 1985 (pp. 273-332).

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972 (pp. 581-595).

Russell, Bertrand. *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz.* Humanities, 1958.

Meyer, R. W. *Leibniz and the Seventeenth Century Revolution.* Garland, 1985.

Hooker. Michael ed. *Leibniz: Critical and Interpretive Essays.* Books on Demand, 1982.

Yost, Robert. *Leibniz and Philosophical Analysis.* Books on Demand, 1954.

Questions to Consider:

1. How might Leibniz's theory of monads reinforce the attitude of skepticism and doubt regarding the external world that was characteristic of the Age of Enlightenment?

2. Is Leibniz's solution to the problem of mind-body interaction any more satisfactory than that offered by Descartes and his followers?

Glossary

analysis: the process of breaking a concept down into simpler parts, so that its logical structure is evident.

appetition: in the philosophy of Leibniz, the quas-psychological impulse or aspiration that constitutes the principle of change in monads.

deduction: a process of reasonoing in which a conclusion is drawn logically from a set of premises.

divine law: according to Aquinas, divine law is the revealed law of God, a product of grace that leads men to faith, hope, love.

dualism: the ontological position that there are two sorts of things: generally, minds and bodies or physical objects. Descartes is the most famous dualist.

entelechy: the informing spirit that gives life to something, or the active power that generates motion in material things.

eternal law: according to Aquinas, the eternal law is God's plan for the governance of the universe.

induction: a process of reasoning that draws empirical conclusions as generalizations from empirical premises.

Jansenism: a reformist and quasi-Calvinist tendency within seventeenth-century Catholicism that emphasized predestination and the need for personal holiness and reliance on God's saving grace. One of the greatest Jansenists was Blaise Pascal.

materialism: the view that all reality consists of matter. The philosophical concept of materialism originated with the ancient atomists and received one of its classic modern statements in the work of Thomas Hobbes.

monad: in the philosophy of Leibniz, monads are extensionless, indivisible mental entities of which all material reality is composed. They are capable of perceptions and appetitive states, but each is self-sufficient and develops independently of any other.

natural law: according to Aquinas, natural law is the means by which rational creatures participate in eternal law. It is a set of moral principles accessible by reason or by observation of the world (independently, that is, of scripture).

nominalism: with regard to the problem of universals, nominalism holds that only particular things exist and that universals pick out sets of such things in virtue of their similarities with one another. William of Ockham, Hobbes, and Hume are nominalists.

Organon: a system of principles for investingating the world. The term is associated with Aristotle's system. Bacon put forward a "New Organon" with the intention of replacing scholasticism with empirical science.

pantheism: the view that God and nature, or God and the universe, are identical. The position is associated with Spinoza, among others.

positive law: according to Aquinas, positive law refers to legislation promulgated by earthly authorities.

rationalism: a philosophical movement characterized by emphasis on reason as a source of knowledge and by deductive method. Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz are classical rationalists.

scholasticism: the philosophy taught in church schools and theological training institutions since the high middle ages. It was the dominant philosophical school in Europe from the 11th century until the 16th century, and it combined religious doctrine, study of the Church Fathers, and Aristotelian philosophical concepts.

synthesis: the process of reconciling a thesis and antithesis, or the outcome of such a reconciliation.

Thomism: the philosophical and religious thought of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Biographical Notes

Aquinas, St. Thomas (1224-1274): Known as the Angelic Doctor, Aquinas is the greatest figure of Scholasticism. He was born outside Naples into the ruling family of Aquino and was educated by Benedictine monks. At age twenty he joined the Dominican order while a student at the University of Naples. His family was disappointed by his religious commitments, hoping instead that he would assist them in their political endeavors. Kidnapped by his brothers and held prisoner for a year in the family castle, Aquinas escaped in 1245 and made his way to Paris to study with the Dominican theologian Albertus Magnus. He taught theology at Paris, Cologne, and Rome, combining Aristotle with Christianity and arguing that reason is subordinate to faith and does not contradict faith. His greatest philosophical accomplishment is the *Summa Theologiae*, which remains today one of the pillars of Catholic theology. Aquinas died on March 7, 1274 at a monastery between Naples and Rome.

Bacon, Francis (1561-1626): Bacon was born in London and educated at Cambridge University. His father, Sir Nicholas Bacon, served at Queen Elizabeth's court, and his position opened many political and intellectual opportunities for his son. At age sixteen Bacon was an assistant ambassador to France, and at twenty-five he became a member of Parliament. His early years in Parliament included participation in the Queen Elizabeth's Learned Council. Knighted in 1603, he subsequently became attorney general and, in 1618, Lord Chancellor. In 1621 he was banished from court after having pled guilty to taking bribes. He dedicated the remaining five years of his life to writing philosophy and literature.

Descartes, Rene (1596-1650): Descartes was born in France and educated by the Jesuits at the College of La Fleche and at Poitiers. After a university training that included the study of rhetoric, philosophy, theology, and mathematics, Descartes joined the army of Prince Maurice for the sole purpose, as he later wrote, of continuing his education. After leaving the army he traveled throughout Europe, living for a time in Paris and then in Holland. During his early years in Holland, he wrote a study of physics, but upon hearing of Galileo's condemnation by the Catholic Church he judged it prudent not to publish the work. In 1649 he moved to Sweden to tutor Queen Christina, and he died there the following year.

Hobbes, Thomas (1588-1679): Hobbes graduated from Oxford University at age twenty, and for many years thereafter he served the Cavendish family. This lifelong connection afforded Hobbes many opportunities. As tutor for the family's children, he twice toured the Continent. On the second tour (1634-1637), he joined the intellectual circle surrounding the mathematician Mersenne, a group that included Descartes. Hobbes fled England in 1640, in the midst of rising political turmoil that would culminate in the English Civil War. He lived during the next decade in France, serving for a time as tutor to Charles II. Returning to England in 1651, he again served the Cavendish family as tutor, advisor, and secretary. He

spent the remainder of his ninety-one years writing and debating prominent religious figures, mathematicians, and scientists.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm (1646-1716): Leibniz was born in Leipzig into an academic family. In 1676 Leibniz became librarian to the Duke of Brunswick at Hanover, a position which he held until his death forty years later. In 1700 Leibniz was appointed president for life of the Berlin Society of Sciences. He maintained a wide correspondence throughout much of his life with mathematicians, scientists, and theologians. Leibniz is best known for his invention (independently of Sir Isaac Newton) of the calculus. His notation is used in the calculus today. Leibniz is credited with laying the foundations for the first system of symbolic logic. He also made major improvements to Pascal's calculating machine, laid the groundwork for the branch of mathematics known as topology, and set out to write a universal history.

Machiavelli, Niccolo (1469-1527): Born in Florence into an impoverished branch of a distinguished family, Machiavelli became a major figure in Renaissance political philosophy. As a Florentine diplomat, he learned about power politics and met many of the figures about whom he subsequently wrote—among them Cesare Borgia, Pope Julius II, and the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. When the Medici took power in Florence in 1512, Machiavelli was dismissed from his post and withdrew to his home in the countryside. In 1513 he was briefly imprisoned and tortured for his alleged role in a conspiracy against the Medici.

More, Thomas (1478-1535): More was educated at Oxford University and subsequently became a successful London lawyer and a diplomat in the court of Henry VIII. After serving the king in a number of important governmental positions, he was appointed Lord Chancellor in 1529. More resigned this position in 1532, and was soon thereafter imprisoned in the Tower of London for refusing to swear allegiance to Henry VIII as head of the Church of England. Beheaded in 1535, More died a celebrated martyr in the Roman Catholic Church.

Newton, Isaac (1642-1727): Newton was born at Woolsthorpe, England, and attended Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1664 the university was forced to close temporarily due to plague, and Newton returned home to Woolsthorpe where, during the following eighteen months, he made his revolutionary discoveries in gravitation, calculus, and the composition of light. At the urging of the astronomer Edmund Halley, Newton published his theories regarding gravity and other subjects in his famous *Principia* in 1687. Newton was Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, and he was president of the Royal Society from 1703 until his death in 1727. Although a pious man, he was also deeply interested in alchemy and numerology, writing many more pages on these pseudoscientific subjects than on his scientific and mathematical insights. Newton was very sensitive to criticism, and he engaged in numerous intellectual quarrels, the most famous of which was his debate with Leibniz over which of them had been the first to invent the calculus.

Pascal, Blaise (1623-1662). Pascal was born in Clermont, France. At a young age, he proved especially able in mathematics and science. At age sixteen he wrote an innovative essay on conic sections, and at nineteen he devised a mechanical calculating machine (regarded by some as the first computer). He is also acknowledged as the founder of modern probability theory and as a contributor, through his work on the cycloid, to the development of calculus. His experiments in the physics of atmospheric pressure and vacuums gave rise to "Pascal's Law." From an early age Pascal and his sister, Jacqueline, were adherents of Jansenism. Following the death of his father and his own extreme illness, Pascal underwent a mystical conversion experience in 1654. Religion remained his central concern during the duration of his short life.

Spinoza, Baruch (1632-77): Born in Amsterdam of Jewish parents who had fled the Portuguese Inquisition, Spinoza was one of the preeminent philosophers of the seventeenth century. He was educated at the Rabbinical School, where he studied Hebrew, the Old Testament, the Talmud, and the works of Maimonides, Rene Descartes, and Thomas Hobbes. In 1656, Spinoza was excommunicated from the orthodox Jewish community in Amsterdam for expressing doubts about orthodox Judaism. Largely cut off from the Jewish community in Holland, he spent the rest of his life in several Dutch towns, grinding lenses and developing his philosophy. At age forty he was offered but declined a chair in philosophy at the University of Heidelberg, preferring his quiet life in Holland. Spinoza died of tuberculosis, his illness likely worsened by the dust from grinding lenses.

Vico, Giambattista (1668-1744): Vico was born in Naples, where as a youth he could often be found studying in the seclusion of his father's bookshop. Vico attended a Jesuit college, and subsequently he tutored for some years the nephews of the bishop of Ischia. In 1699 Vico was named professor of rhetoric at the University of Naples, a post which he held until shortly before his death. Vico is regarded by many as the first modern historian, a great philosopher of history, and a brilliant social theorist. His major work, *Scienza Nuova* (*The New Science*), portrays history as offering descriptions of the creation and development of human cultures and institutions. Vico's work seems to have been largely unacknowledged during the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, however, his work influenced the French historian Jules Michelet and was esteemed in England by the poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Arnold. In the twentieth century, his work has been admired and written about by such intellectuals as Benedetto Croce and R.G. Collingwood.