

Philosophical Theology 1 (TH5)

Logic, Truth & Epistemology

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Philosophical Theology 1 (TH5)

Aug. 15 – Intro to Philosophical Theology; Logic

Aug. 22 – Truth & Epistemology

Aug. 29 – Metaphysics

Sept. 5 – ***No Class***

Sept. 12 – Philosophy of Religion; Philosophy of
Science

Sept. 19 – Human Nature; Philosophy of
Politics

Sept. 26 – Ethics: What is Right?; Aesthetics:
What is Beautiful?

October 3 – Conclusion; Final Exam

What is philosophy?

- Literally, it is *a love of wisdom* – *phileo* is Greek for “love,” *sophos* means “wisdom.”
- Philosophy is the critical examination of our foundational beliefs concerning the nature of reality, knowledge and truth; and our moral and social values.
- Philosophy is the means and process by which we examine our lives and the meaning in our lives.
- **Philosophy is the attempt to think rationally and critically about life’s most important questions in order to obtain knowledge and wisdom about them.**

Why is philosophy important?

- Ideas matter. The ideas one believes largely determine the kind of person one becomes.
- We all have a worldview – what we believe about the world and our place in it. Philosophy, rightly done, can give us a better worldview.
- Philosophy examines assumptions, asks questions, seeks to clarify and analyze concepts, and seeks to organize facts into a rational system – for ALL disciplines.
- Philosophy gives us a clearer understanding of life and what is important in life by teaching us to examine our core beliefs and ideas.
- Philosophy makes us more human. Socrates said “An unexamined life is not worth living” – which meant that being able to examine our lives, to analyze and think critically, is necessarily at the core of what it means to be human.

The principles of Formal Logic

- The **Laws of Logic** are a set of tools that help us think more clearly. If these laws (*or first principles*) of logic are not true, then nothing else can make sense. They are (and must be) inherently self-evident and undeniable, requiring no further proof beyond themselves.
- **1st Law – The Law of Identity, $P = P$**
 - Something is what it is. Or, All true propositions are true, and all false propositions are false.
- **2nd Law – The Law of Non-Contradiction, $\neg (P \wedge \neg P)$**
 - Something cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect. Or, Something cannot be both true and false at the same time and in the same respect.
- **3rd Law – The Law of the Excluded Middle, $P \vee \neg P$**
 - Something either is or it is not. Or, A proposition is either true or false, it cannot be both.

The principles of Formal Logic

- Logic employs established rules for correct reasoning.
- In reasoning, an **argument** is a group of reasons which together achieve a conclusion.
- An argument consists of a group of **propositions** – some are **premises** which establish the terms of the argument, in order to try to prove a final proposition called a **conclusion**.
- The **inference** is the evident relationship between the premises and the conclusion
 - All men are mortal.
 - Socrates is a man.
 - Therefore, Socrates is mortal.
- An argument without a clear inference, even if it has true premises and a conclusion, is called a **non sequitur** – “it does not follow.”
 - John Adams was the second president of the United States.
 - The square root of 81 is 9.
 - Therefore, I love pizza.

➤ What is Truth?

- ❖ “Is anything true?” is the central philosophical question of the postmodern age.
- ❖ Modern culture promotes the idea that truth is relative (not absolute). **Relativism** takes two popular forms:
 - ❖ **Subjectivism** – truth is whatever a person decides it is, and all people can therefore be right even when they contradict one another.
 - ❖ **Conventionalism** – truth is merely a social construct define by cultures, rather than by individuals.
- ❖ **Objectivism** is the belief that truth is not merely a matter of subjective or cultural preference, but is a real feature of the world and is independent of what anyone may think about it.
- ❖ Since philosophy is usually understood as an effort to discover what is true, if the Relativists are correct then philosophy is probably irrelevant anyway!

➤ What is Truth?

- ❖ Saying (as the Relativists do) “There are no absolute truths!” is self-defeating, as this is a statement of supposed absolute truth! So it must be false.
- ❖ Saying “There are no absolute truths to me, but this may not be true for you” is meaningless – it simply does not say anything - there is no propositional content. That is, it’s like saying the sky may or may not be blue – it doesn’t go anywhere.
- ❖ Saying “All truth claims are socially conditioned” is exactly like “No absolute truths for me, but this may not be true for you” – there is no propositional content.
- ❖ SO – the Relativist claim that there are no absolute truths is either self-defeating or meaningless, so it must be false that there is no truth. Therefore, there must be such a thing as objective truth.

➤ What is meant by Truth?

- ❖ Three major philosophical theories about the meaning of “truth.”
 - ❖ ***Correspondence Theory of Truth*** – A proposition is true if and only if it corresponds to the way things actually are. (Note: this is about whether a proposition IS true; not about whether we KNOW it is true. A thing can be true whether we know it is true or not.)
 - ❖ ***Coherence Theory of Truth*** – A proposition is true if and only if it coheres with the set of beliefs that person holds.
 - ❖ ***Pragmatic Theory of Truth*** – A proposition is true if and only if it is useful to the believer in achieving desirable results.
- ❖ As both Coherence and Pragmatic Theories are relativistic (allowing for contradictory statements to be subjectively or contextually accepted as truth), and – as we have seen – Relativism is either self-defeating or meaningless, Christianity holds to the Correspondence Theory of Truth.

➤ What is Knowledge?

- ❖ **Epistemology** is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge and the justification of beliefs.
- ❖ **Rationalism** – the belief that all knowledge ultimately comes through reason alone. (distrust of the **a posteriori** – experiential – knowledge from the senses; in favor of **a priori** – innate or inherent – knowledge)
- ❖ **Rene Descartes** (1596-1650) – questioning how we could be *certain* of what we know, Descartes reduced everything down to what he believed he *could know* for certain – which was that he existed, or else he could not be asking the question. “*Cognito, ergo sum*” – “*I think, therefore I am.*” In other words, I cannot be deceived (by the “evil genius” or otherwise) unless I exist.
- ❖ **Skepticism** – the philosophical view that we cannot know anything for certain, or that our knowledge is at best very limited.

➤ What is Knowledge?

- ❖ ***Empiricism*** – the belief that all knowledge ultimately arises from experience.
- ❖ **John Locke** (1632-1704) – proposed we have two kinds of empirical experience:
 - ❖ ***Sensation*** is our immediate sensory encounter with objects through sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste.
 - ❖ ***Reflection*** is how we combine memories of sensation experiences to create new ideas of things we never actually experienced.
- ❖ ***Representational Theory of Perception*** – the suggestion that we do not *directly* experience anything in the external world, but instead only experience images or ideas our minds produce to tell us about those objects. (The difference in *appearance* and *reality*; the difference in *certainty of knowledge* and *sufficient knowledge*.)

- ❖ **Empiricism** – the belief that all knowledge ultimately arises from experience.
- ❖ **David Hume** (1711-1776) – Scottish empiricist and radical skeptic, agreed with Locke, but went further to say we can have *no* significant knowledge of the external world. Nothing is really *knowable* – we only have either direct impressions *about* things in the world, or logical relations *between ideas* produced by those impressions.
- ❖ Hume also questioned **necessary causality** – the idea that we can reliably predict events based on past experience. He instead insisted that all we can say is that something happened *in the past*, without any real assurance that – given the same circumstances – the results will be the same in the future.
- ❖ This all means we can have no metaphysical knowledge – no certain knowledge of reality beyond our own immediate, personal, sense experience. Therefore everything is completely subjective; God is unknowable; there are no absolute *moral* truths; cause-and-effect cannot be predicted; and we cannot be certain of the existence of anything – only that we have an impression of things.
- ❖ This is the logical conclusion of a purely empirical perspective, and is at the core of modern naturalism and skepticism.

➤ What is Knowledge?

- ❖ **Propositional knowledge** – our ability to know whether the contents of a statement is true or false.
- ❖ **Justified True Belief (JTB Account, or the “traditional tripartite analysis”)** – the traditional proposal that we have knowledge *if and only if* the proposition in question is true, if we believe it is true, and if we are justified in this belief.
- ❖ **Reliabilism** – the addition to the JTB standard of knowledge the idea that “true belief must be produced by a *reliable* belief-forming process.” For example, if my belief is based on sense experience, my senses must have been used in an appropriate environment and circumstance so they can be trusted.
- ❖ **Internalism** – the idea that a person’s justification for belief must be *internal to his own mind* – meaning he has sufficient cognitive grasp of his justification for a belief that he can explain *why* he holds that belief.
- ❖ **Externalism** – the idea that a person does not need to understand *why* or *how* a belief is held, as long as the process that produced that belief was appropriate and valid. (A form of *reliabilism*.)

➤ What is Knowledge?

- ❖ ***Virtue Epistemology*** – the idea that, since knowledge is achieved by persons, the study of knowledge should be *person based* – taking into account personal characteristics.
- ❖ ***Noetic Structure*** – the entire set of a person's beliefs, together with the logical and explanatory reasons for those beliefs.
- ❖ ***Foundationalism*** – the premise that a good noetic structure is based on foundational beliefs that are immune, or at least resistant, to doubt.
- ❖ ***Coherentism*** – the premise that there is no such thing as basic (undoubtable) beliefs, but that all beliefs get justification from other beliefs in the noetic structure.
- ❖ ***Contextualism*** – the premise that beliefs are justified by the particular context in which they are experienced.