

Study Guide for *Modern Philosophy: Kant to the Present*

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Lecture One

- Describe the role of change in Heraclitus's philosophy.
- What is the logical result of accepting Heraclitus's concept of flux?
- How did Plato respond to the Heraclitean flux when describing reality?
- What argument does Plato provide to justify his view of universals?
- Given his metaphysical Idealism, how does Plato explain how we attain knowledge?
- What is Aristotle's answer to the problem of change?
- Explain Aristotle's answer to Plato's argument regarding universals.
- How does Aristotle account for the acquisition of knowledge?
- Describe the basic difference between the modern Rationalists and Empiricists.
- Why did Nominalism collapse into Sensualism and Skepticism in David Hume's philosophy?
- What was the state of philosophy after David Hume?

Lecture Two

- Describe the two philosophic approaches to the question of whether reason can know reality in philosophy prior to Immanuel Kant.
- Explain the distinction between necessary and contingent and how it relates to analytic and synthetic.
- Why did Kant attempt to provide a solution to the question of a priori synthetic truths?
- Explain the steps in Kant's argument for innate structures of the human mind.
- Why does Kant's claim of defending objectivity result in subjectivism?
- Explain how Kant attempts to prove the argument for a priori synthesis in the mind.
- Why are space and time so important to Kant's argument?
- What is the Copernican Revolution at the heart of Kant's account?

Lecture Three

- Explain the difference between what Kant calls the sensibility and the understanding.
- Why is it important to Kant to note the flow of experience (the manifold) on the sensory level?
- Given our experience of synthesis of sense experience, what does Kant deduce must be necessary?
- How does Kant explain the necessity of concepts to govern the mind's activity?
- Explain what Kant means by a "category."
- What is the Transcendental Unity of Apperception?
- How does Kant think that concepts are used?
- What does Kant believe is inescapable about human concepts?
- How does Kant claim to demonstrate that reality is unknowable as it really is?
- What were the two major approaches to ethics prior to Kant, and why does he reject them?
- Why does Kant eliminate the goal-directedness of conventional ethics?
- How does Kant establish a non-experiential basis for moral obligation?
- What is the Categorical Imperative? How does it connect us to the noumenal world?

Lecture Four

- On what grounds does Hegel reject the Kantian idea of things in themselves?
- How does Hegel escape the mistakes he believes that Kant made in reference to reality?
- Why does Hegel's analysis result in a radical primacy of consciousness?
- Explain how Hegel argues for Idealism in his metaphysics.
- Why is Being the most basic category for Hegel? And how is it the same as Non-Being?
- How does the dialectic process result in a physical world?
- What does Hegel think is the ultimate reconciliation of the Absolute?
- Why does Hegel's idealism in metaphysics imply an authoritarian politics?
- What are the special individuals who act historically according to Hegel?
- What is the coherence theory of truth? How does it differ from the correspondence theory?

Lecture Five

- Explain the assumptions behind the voluntarist approach.
- What is Schopenhauer's theory of how humans can know reality?

- How does Schopenhauer arrive at his metaphysical pessimism?
- What ultimate guidance does Schopenhauer give for man?
- Why is Nietzsche mistakenly seen as an individualist?
- How does Nietzsche use the concept of power?
- What are the types of men according to Nietzsche? What are the implications for society?
- How does Marx arrive at his materialism and his dialecticism?
- Explain how Marx leads to the theory of polylogism.

Lecture Six

- How did Comte's extension of Hume lead to a rejection of self?
- In the absence of causality, how does Comte defend science?
- Explain Comte's resolution of science and religion in his theory of society.
- Why did Bentham and Mill reject final answers in logic?
- What did the utilitarians use as an objective basis for their ethics?
- What are some of the flaws with the hedonic calculus?
- How did Spencer mistake the implications of evolution for human society?
- Explain how Spencer's ethics led to his concession to collectivism in politics.

Lecture Seven

- Explain how pragmatism developed from implications of each of Descartes, Hegel, and Kant.
- Why is dis-ease considered to be the origin of thinking?
- How do pragmatists differentiate between something that is doubtful and something that is dubitable?
- Why is the pragmatist mantra "the true is what works" a reversal of the correct view?
- Explain the pragmatist theory of meaning. Why is this contentless?
- What is the difference between how the two sub-schools of pragmatism define "desirable consequences"?

Lecture Eight

- Describe the pragmatist view of logic.
- Why is Dewey sometimes mistaken for a proponent of scientific ethics?

- How does the pragmatist ethics collapse when one searches for a standard of value?
- Why is the pragmatist ethics ultimately parasitical?
- What implications does pragmatism have for political life?
- Explain one of the false alternatives within the pragmatist approach.
- How does the analytic-synthetic dichotomy lead to conventionalism?
- What is the Logical Positivist's theory of meaning?
- Why were Logical Positivists unable to agree about a principle of verifiability?
- How does metaphysics become meaningless according to Positivism?

Lecture Nine

- How does Moore's approach to philosophy fundamentally differ from previous approaches?
- What is the theory of definite description?
- Explain the steps Russell used to arrive at his theory of material implication.
- What is the main error of the logical atomists' approach to language?
- How did Wittgenstein derive his theory of language games?
- According to the Analysts, what is the function of philosophy?
- In Analytic Philosophy, what is the basis for ethics? Is there a final authority in ethics?
- What is the basic mistake in the Analytic view of language?

Lecture Ten

- How does existentialism depart from previous post-Kantian schools of thought?
- Describe the relationship between the theory of universals and the origins of existentialism.
- What gives rise to the "existential emotions"?
- How does voluntarism produce a conflict between self and reason?
- Why does Kierkegaard believe that free will creates a burden on man?
- How does Heidegger arrive at the concept of Being?
- Explain Heidegger's view of man and some of its implications for ethics.
- What is Sartre's concept of freedom? Why does he think we are condemned by that fact?
- How might Zen Buddhism be taken as the logical extension of existentialism?

Lecture Eleven

- Why is the starting point so important in philosophy? And where does it lead one astray if you start in the wrong place?
- Explain what Objectivism means by the primacy of existence.
- What does it mean to say that man has free will?
- How does the law of identity apply to human consciousness?
- Explain Objectivism's account of the validity of the senses.
- What is the metaphysical status of sense qualities?
- Define the difference between the intrinsic, subjective, and objective.

Lecture Twelve

- What is the role of concepts in human knowledge?
- What does it mean to say knowledge is contextual?
- Explain the role of definitions.
- Using examples, derive the steps to form a first-level and second-level concept.
- How does the Objectivist theory of concepts differ from previous theories?
- Explain how the Objectivist ethics bridges the supposed is-ought gap.
- How does the Objectivist view of egoism differ from previous versions?
- What is the connection between rationality and the other virtues?
- What is the connection between Objectivism's view of reason and its support for capitalism?