

Introduction to Human Sciences

Philosophy Module
(or ‘the region of liberating doubt’)

Faculty: Ashwin Jayanti

What is Philosophy?

- What is Philosophy?
- What is a philosophical question?
 - How is it different from a scientific/technological question?
- Why study philosophy?

What is Philosophy?

- **What is Philosophy?**

- *Philo*: love
- *Sophia*: wisdom

- **Why study philosophy?**

- The oldest surviving discipline!
- Learn to reason and argue and disagree
- Learn to not conform to readymade beliefs masquerading as truths
- **Dunning-Kruger effect**
 - The less people know about an area or how to do something, the more likely they are to overestimate their ability to do it or understand it. The more ignorant we are, the more brazen we are in our belief about our abilities and knowledge.
 - ‘Socratic irony’ as an antidote to the above!
- **Socrates:**
 - “*The unexamined life is not worth living.*”

What is a Philosophical question?

- **Normative vs. descriptive**
- Philosophy usually deals with **normative questions**
- It is also involved in **clarifying concepts**, such as
 - Justice, language, meaning, sport, truth, knowledge, etc. etc.
- Philosophy **questions assumptions**
 - That observation leads to knowledge
- It involves **providing arguments** in support of a conclusion.
 - A good argument gives the reader a **good reason to believe in the conclusion.**
 - The **history of philosophy is the history of arguments** that have stood the test of time.
 - Hence, thesis!
- Think of an activity/subject that you are truly fond of....
 - ...**philosophize it!**

Philosophy (in the context of other IHS disciplines)

- Political science
- Sociology
- Economics
- History

Philosophy (in the context of other IHS disciplines)

- **Philosophy as the oldest discipline in Western thought**
 - Philosophy as sticking it out to the unanswered questions
 - Other disciplines as branching off out of philosophy as certain questions are answered satisfactorily
 - Biology
 - Physics
 - Science
 - Linguistic
 - Psychology
 - AI??

Domains of Philosophy

- **Logic**
 - What is right reasoning?
- **Epistemology**
 - How is knowledge possible?
- **Ontology and Metaphysics**
 - What exists?
 - What is the relation between mind and world?
- **Ethics**
 - What is right or wrong? Good or bad?
- **Axiology**
 - What is value?
- **Aesthetics**
 - What is beauty?
- **Philosophy of x**
 - Where x = law, economics, history, society, technology, politics, sport, etc. etc.

Which of these are philosophical questions? And Why?

- List of questions

What concerns Philosophy?

- Questions that science cannot answer
- Questions involving justification of the claims we make
- Analysis of concepts
- Normative questions

Why Philosophy?

- Clarity of thought
- Realize **what it is that we don't know**
- Understand each other's views and participate in the eternal conversation.
- Greater **understanding of the world**
- Inculcate curiosity for various domains of knowledge and **see how they hang together**
- Hilary Putnam's classic answer
 - **“because bad philosophy is all around !”**

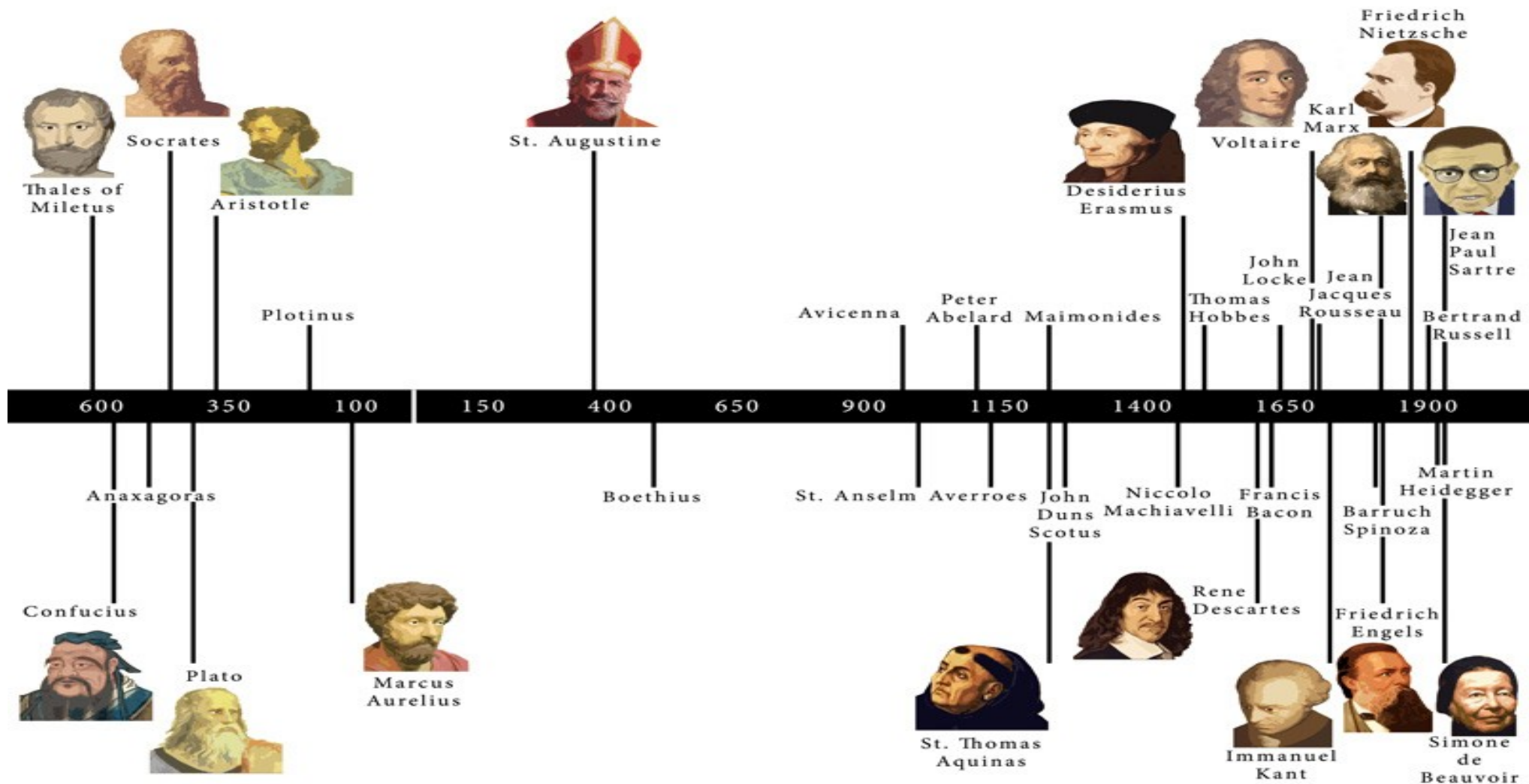
In this module, we shall

- Start with logic and clarify how to differentiate good reasoning from bad
- Look at how to make inferences and recognize improper inferences
- Logic as normative
 - Concerned **not with** *how we reason* (descriptive)
 - But with **how we ought to reason** (normative)

To become good philosophers

- Do the assigned readings for the class
- Seek clarifications until you've attained clarity
- Exercise your reasoning by arguing against anything you are not in agreement with
- Make no assumptions and take nothing for granted
- Practice, practice, practice
 - In everyday life...

Usual Suspects



Unusual Suspects

- Who studies philosophy?
 - Source: www.apaonline.org/whostudiesphilosophy

Philosophical Toolbox

- Wonder
- Curiosity
- Logic and reasoning
- Quest for understanding
- Thirst for books
- Quest for clarity
- Interdisciplinary adventurousness

Philosophical Attitude

- **Socratic Irony**
 - “*All I know is I know nothing*”
- **Philosophy is not mere opinion**
 - Not just a matter of opinion
 - Values: coherence and consistency and reason
 - Philosophy is **not ‘right to one’s opinion’**
 - It is **sound argumentation**; the premises must give us reason to believe in the conclusion
 - Hence **logic and critical thinking**

- **Truth vs. Relativism**

- Philosophy guards **against relativism**
- **A true belief matches the way the world actually is**
- **We cant have two conflicting yet true beliefs**
 - Either one is true, the other false

- **Honesty and Courage**

- To seek truth, we must **admit our own ignorance**
- Must **admit our own gaps in reasoning**
- **No belief as immune to scrutiny** or criticism
- **Takes courage to admit when one is wrong**

Bertrand Russell on ‘the value of philosophy’

- *“Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubts which it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom.”*
- *“Thus, while diminishing our feeling of certainty as to what things are, it greatly increases our knowledge as to what they may be; it removes the somewhat arrogant dogmatism of those who have never travelled into the region of liberating doubt, and it keeps alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect.”*
 - From *The Problems of Philosophy*

For Next Class:

- **Read:**
 - Copi and Cohen, *Introduction to Logic*, "Basic logical concepts"
 - Chapter 1, "What is Philosophy?", from Stich and Donaldson, *Philosophy: Asking Questions, Seeking Answers*

Hitchhiker's Guides to Philosophy

- **Non-Fiction**

- Peter Catapano and Simon Critchley, *The Stone Reader: Modern Philosophy in 133 Arguments*
- Bertrand Russell, *Wisdom of the West*
- Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*
- Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*
- T.Z. Lavine, *From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophical Quest*
- Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*
- A.C. Grayling, *Philosophy: A Guide Through the Subject*

- **Fiction**

- Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World*
- Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*
- Apostos Doxiadis and Christos Papadimitriou, *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth*
- Albert Camus, *The Stranger*
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*

- **Podcasts**

- Philosophy Bites
- ABN The Philosopher's Zone
- BBC In Our Time
- Hi-Phi Nation

- **Documentaries/Movies**

- *Examined Life*
- *Philosophy and the Matrix*
- *Being in the World*
- *Philosophy: A Guide to Happiness*
- *The Joy of Logic*
- *The Man from Earth*
- *Cartesius*
- *Agora*
- *Hannah Arendt*
- *Genius of the Ancient World*
- *What is Democracy?*