

1) Worldview

A **worldview** is the “lens” through which you interpret reality: *Who am I? What is truth? What is good? What is the meaning of life?* It’s not only intellectual; it’s also a deep **orientation** that can be partly unconscious.

Key idea (course-style): worldview = a set of **presuppositions** (assumptions that can be true/partly true/false) that guide how we live.

Main categories a worldview covers:

- **Ontology:** what exists (God? matter? mind?)
- **Epistemology:** how we know (reason, senses, faith, science)
- **Axiology:** values (what is valuable)
- **Anthropology:** what a human is
- **Logic:** how reasoning works
- **Ethics:** right/wrong action
- **Aesthetics:** beauty/art

Worldview types (general): theism, naturalism, pantheism; also individual/collective, secular/theistic.

2) The Socratic Method: the art of asking questions

The **Socratic method** is a technique of teaching/learning through **structured questioning**, not lecturing. It’s meant to test beliefs and improve thinking.

It is also called:

- **Dialectic** (dialogue aimed at truth)
- **Elenchus** (refutation through questioning)

How it works (clear steps):

1. **Ask for a definition** (e.g., “What is justice?”)
2. **Probe assumptions** behind the definition
3. **Test consistency** with counterexamples
4. **Expose contradictions**
5. Reach **aporia** (productive puzzlement)
6. Move toward clearer, stronger ideas

Important: the goal is **not to win**, but to **reach truth and clarity**.

Practical “Socratic” question forms:

- “What do you mean by that?”
- “How did you reach that conclusion?”
- “Have you considered...?”

3) Socratic method: “Know yourself”

"Know thyself" means understanding:

- what you really believe (and why)
- where your reasoning is weak
- your values and motives
- your limits and ignorance

Socrates' moral thesis (core exam idea):

Knowledge = virtue. People do wrong mainly from **ignorance** (confusion about what is truly good).

So self-knowledge is not just psychology; it's the base of **ethical improvement**.

4) Plato: Allegory of the Cave

In *The Republic* (Book VII), Plato describes prisoners chained in a cave who see only shadows and mistake them for reality. One prisoner escapes and sees the real world, then returns to tell the others.

What each element symbolizes:

- **Cave/shadows** = appearances, opinions, manipulation, "surface reality"
- **Chains** = habits, social conditioning, ignorance
- **Exit** = education + philosophical awakening
- **Outside world** = truth/real being
- **Sun** = the highest principle (the Good), source of intelligibility
- **Return** = the philosopher's duty; society often resists truth

Connection to Plato's **Theory of Forms**:

- Physical world = changing, imperfect "copies"
 - Forms = eternal, perfect realities (true knowledge is about Forms)
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5) Aristotle: the 4 causes

Aristotle says: to explain a thing fully, you must answer **four "why" questions**:

1. **Material cause**: what it's made of
2. **Formal cause**: its structure/essence (what makes it that kind of thing)
3. **Efficient cause**: what brings it into being (maker/process)
4. **Final cause (telos)**: its purpose/end

Example (simple): a table

- material: wood
- formal: design/shape
- efficient: carpenter
- final: to eat/work on

Aristotle strongly stresses **telos**: nature isn't random; things tend toward ends (acorn → oak).

6) Aristotle: Golden Mean

Aristotle's ethics aims at **eudaimonia** (human flourishing), achieved by living according to **reason** and **virtue** over a lifetime.

Virtue is the **mean** between extremes:

- courage: between cowardice and recklessness
- generosity: between stinginess and wastefulness

Very important clarification:

- the "mean" is **not mathematical**
 - it is **relative to the situation**, guided by practical wisdom and habit
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7) Christian thought: how it formed Western thought

Christian thought shaped the West by becoming more than religion: it formed a **complete worldview** answering metaphysics, ethics, and meaning, and by synthesizing **Greek philosophy** with **Judaic revelation**.

Major "novelties" Christianity emphasized:

- **human dignity** (personhood)
- strong **moral responsibility**
- **free will** + sin/grace framework
- **linear history** (creation → fall → redemption), not endless cycles

Key historical stages (course structure):

1. **Apologetics (1st–3rd c.)** Goal: defend Christianity and show it is not irrational superstition; some thinkers argue Greek philosophy contains partial truth ("seeds of the Logos").
2. **Patristics (4th–8th c.)** Church Fathers define doctrine; Augustine is key: original sin, "I believe in order to understand," and a philosophy of history (City of God vs City of Man).
3. **Scholasticism (11th–14th c.)** Universities; faith and reason harmonized; Aristotle reintroduced; Aquinas: reason can know much, revelation is needed for salvation; arguments for God.

Influence on Western civilization:

- universities/education
 - moral and legal concepts (duty, person, rights)
 - a framework where reason and faith can cooperate
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8) Modern philosophy: what it is, premises, 2 main currents (+ philosophers)

Modern philosophy (17th–18th/early 19th century) marks a break from medieval scholasticism. It begins (often) with **Descartes** and culminates with **Kant**.

Core shift = **epistemological turn**:

Philosophy moves from "What is being/God?" to "How do we know?"

Premises/catalysts:

- Scientific revolution (new cosmology + new method)
- new confidence in human reason
- challenge to authority and tradition

Two main currents:

1. **Rationalism** (Continental)

- reason is primary (a priori)
- model: mathematics/deduction
- often supports innate ideas
- philosophers: **Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz**

2. **Empiricism** (British)

- experience is primary (a posteriori)
- model: observation/induction
- mind as **tabula rasa** (Locke)
- philosophers: **Locke, Berkeley, Hume**

9) Bacon: the 4 idols

Bacon develops the scientific mindset by identifying deep cognitive distortions ("idols") that block truth.

1. **Idols of the Tribe** Errors from human nature in general: wishful thinking, pattern-seeking, oversimplification.
2. **Idols of the Cave** Personal biases: upbringing, education, temperament, "my personal cave."
3. **Idols of the Marketplace** Language errors: vague terms, misleading words, arguments caused by words not reality.
4. **Idols of the Theatre** Blind trust in philosophical systems/authorities: theories treated like staged plays that people accept as real.

Exam trick: be able to define each quickly and give 1 short example.

10) Descartes: the basic method (+ Bacon vs Descartes)

Descartes wants **certainty**, so he uses **methodological doubt**:

- doubt everything that can be doubted
- find one indubitable foundation
- rebuild knowledge from it

Indubitable foundation:

Cogito, ergo sum — if I doubt, I think; if I think, I exist.

He values **clear and distinct** ideas as the mark of truth and uses a more **deductive**, mathematical style.

Bacon vs Descartes:

- **Bacon**: empirical induction, experiment, remove biases (idols)
 - **Descartes**: rational deduction, internal certainty, mathematical method
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11) Kant, German Idealism: rationalism vs empiricism + categorical imperative

Kant is the "great synthesizer." He accepts:

- from empiricism: knowledge starts with experience
- from rationalism: the mind has structures not derived from experience

Key idea:

The mind actively **structures** experience. We know the world as **phenomena** (appearances shaped by our cognition), not the thing-in-itself (**noumenon**).

Categorical imperative (morality)

Kant's ethics is duty-based (deontological). Rule:

Act only on a maxim you could will to be a **universal law**.

So morality is not based on emotions or outcomes, but on rational universality and respect for persons.

12) Nihilism + Nietzsche: meaning, premises, ideas, solutions

Nihilism rejects objective foundations: meaning, truth, morality, value can appear groundless.

Premises (typical in course logic):

- critique of religious worldview
- scientific revolution and Enlightenment critique of tradition
- social revolutions/transformations
- German philosophy influences

Types (good exam structure):

- **existential nihilism**: life has no intrinsic meaning
- **moral nihilism**: no objective good/evil
- **epistemological nihilism**: radical skepticism about knowledge
- **political nihilism**: institutions must be destroyed as corrupt

Nietzsche:

- **"God is dead"** = warning: the old foundation for values collapsed; danger of chaos and replacement idols (state, dictators, etc.).
- **Will to Power**: fundamental drive is not just survival but overcoming, growth, creation.

Nietzsche's "cure" for nihilism:

- create new values (life-affirming)
 - **Übermensch** (self-creating, not herd morality)
 - **amor fati** (love your fate)
 - **eternal recurrence** as a test: live so you'd accept repeating your life forever.
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13) Sartre: existentialism + existence precedes essence

Atheistic existentialism: if there is no God, there is no predetermined human blueprint.

"**Existence precedes essence**":

- tools have purpose before they exist (designed)
- humans exist first and define their "essence" through actions

Key concepts:

- **absolute freedom**
 - **responsibility** (no excuses: not parents, DNA, society)
 - **anguish** (burden of freedom)
 - **bad faith**: lying to yourself ("I have no choice, I'm just this role")
 - **the gaze / "Hell is other people"**: others objectify you through judgment; you lose control over your meaning.
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14) Camus: absurdism + meaning of life

Camus focuses on living with dignity in a universe that gives no ultimate meaning.

The Absurd:

- humans demand meaning, clarity, purpose
- the universe is silent/indifferent
- the clash = absurd

Camus rejects:

- suicide (escape)
- false hope (religious/metaphysical "solutions")

Response:

- lucid acceptance
 - revolt (refuse surrender)
 - live fully (intensity, creativity, solidarity)
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15) Postmodernism: identity (fragmented vs stable) + weak vs strong ontology

Postmodernism challenges fixed essences, stable truths, and unified "selves."

- **Stable identity** (modernist idea): coherent self with a stable core
- **Fragmented identity** (postmodern): self as multiple roles, narratives, contexts; shaped by society, media, discourse, power relations

Ontology:

- **strong ontology**: reality is stable, objective, grounded
- **weak ontology**: reality is partly constructed/interpretive; less "final foundations"

Postmodernism tends toward weak ontology.

16) Postmodernism: language, modernism vs postmodernism, metanarratives, death of the author

Modernist view of language:

- language represents reality
- meanings can be stabilized and clarified

Postmodern view:

- language shapes/constructs reality
- meaning shifts with context and differences between words

Metanarratives (Lyotard):

- big "grand stories" that claim to explain everything (progress, science as salvation, single religious truth, etc.)
- postmodernism is skeptical of them

"Death of the author" (Barthes):

- meaning is not finally controlled by the author's intention
 - meaning emerges through readers, contexts, interpretations
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17) Posthumanism vs transhumanism (roots, common points, differences, AI)

Course distinction:

- **Transhumanism** = human enhancement (upgrade humans)
 - rooted in Enlightenment: reason, science, progress, technology
- **Posthumanism** = deconstruction of "the human"
 - rooted in postmodern deconstruction; critiques anthropocentrism and dualisms

Common ground:

- “human” is open, not fixed
- technology changes identity, body, agency

Differences:

- transhumanism asks: “How do we become stronger/smarter/longer-lived?”
- posthumanism asks: “Why must humans be the center? What about non-humans, ecology, AI agency, power?”

AI application:

- transhumanist: AI as augmentation and optimization
 - posthumanist: AI as challenge to human exceptionalism and to who counts as an “agent” or “subject”
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18) Transdisciplinarity: 3 axioms + multi vs inter vs trans

Basarab Nicolescu: “Trans” = across, between, beyond disciplines, aiming at unity of knowledge (not encyclopedism).

Multi / Inter / Trans:

- **Multidisciplinary**: disciplines side-by-side (additive)
- **Interdisciplinary**: disciplines interact and exchange methods
- **Transdisciplinary**: beyond boundaries; integrates levels of reality, values, meaning

Three axioms:

1. **Ontological (levels of reality)**: reality is discontinuous; different levels have different laws.
 2. **Logical (included middle)**: contradictions A and non-A at one level can be reconciled by a third term **T** at another level.
 3. **Epistemological (complexity)**: reality is interdependent; reductionism loses the essence of complex phenomena.
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19) Philosophy of mind: reductionism + subject, perception, mind–body

Philosophy of mind studies:

- mind and mental states
- consciousness
- relation between mind and body/brain
- perception, subjectivity

Reductionism:

explain mind entirely in physical terms (mind = brain activity; consciousness = neural processes)

How it applies:

- reductionist approach: explain perception, thought, emotions as neural computations and biology

- critiques emphasize **first-person experience**: subjective “what it is like” cannot be fully captured by third-person physical description

Mind–body problem:

- **dualism** (mind and body distinct) vs **physicalism/materialism** (mind is physical)
- modern debates include emergence, irreducibility, and limitations of purely mechanistic explanations.