Introduction

I. Traditonal approach

A. Typically an intro to phil course approaches philosophy sequentially, from Plato to . . .

1. discusses the various arguments of each philosopher

sequentially

2. exams traditional areas of philosophical investigati

- metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics

3. A corollary to this is that there are perennial questions that all philosophers are confronted with

and that they must try to answer

4. a study of different schools, rationalists, idealists,

existentialists

B. Problems with this approach

1. Ignores the problem of culture and language, in doing

so it makes philosophers look stupid, worse irrelevant,

or a historical curiosity of prescientific times

an example of this is PBS series in which the"great minds" sit together at a table and talk

- another textbook used for this course combines

these assumptions

"What would Descartes say to Black Elk about

Black Elk's idea that the world is alive, or

inspirited?" The obvious problem here which

points to the broader problem, is that once,

they would have to learn each others language,

and in doing so would learn each other's culture

and worldview

- we already know what those for whom Descartes

spoke, European "enlightenment" society thought

of the native American worldview

C. World views and cultural assumptions

1. Experience, including, knowing, feeling, thinking,

and even seeing are mediated by one's culture and

the worldview of that culture

2. Different cultures experience and understand the world differently, but

3. Not only different cultures, but within our own

culture, conceived from Plato to Sartre there is as

much or more discontinuity than continuity

4. If I start with Plato and say Plato is trying to answer

the question what is it to know and how to it relate

to what one ought to do

5. and I explain Plato's answer, that once one knows the

good one will do it, we say, just because someone knows

the good doesn't mean he'll do it

6. or if I give you St. Anselm's ontological proof for

the existence of God

7. or Black Elks, that everything is alive

8. why would someone say something so self-evidently

wrong -- from our point of view.

8. all these people had a different world view from

ours, they had different cultural assumptions that

they took to be self-evident, the truth, natural, that

any right-minded person would know to be true.

Plato -- the soul turned towards the good through

reason -- knows the good through participation in

Good, it would be self-evidently contradictory to

say that the sould would act otherwise

Anselm -- assumed there were two aspects to

ultimate reality, substance and attribute, and

that they were logically connected

Black Elk -

II. Our approach - Philosophy as Critique

A. Critique -- Although they each mean it in considerably

different ways, Plato, Kant, and Foucault talk about philosophy

as critique -- an unmasking of cultural idols, demystification, or

simply looking at one's cultural assumptions as historical developments, rather than "natural" "true" and "good"

1. Plato makes the claim in the mouth of Socrates that

the "unexamined life isn't worth living"

2. Kant argues that we are only free to the extent that

we understand or assumptions

3. And Foucault claims that subjectivity is not given, but

is a project conceived against a background of power

relationships which need to be unmasked

B. Although we will look at Plato, Descartes, Locke etc we

will be looking at them to help us answer the question,

of our own self-understanding,

what does it mean to be an individual in modern society,

what type ofsociety do we live in,

what is our relationship to the natural world?

How did this world view develop?

How ought I to live my life?

E. Plato's allegory of the cave as a model for philosophy as

critique, which is in The Republic, his vision of the ideal state

1. Read the Cave, the modern cave, electronic media and

consumer society, but the contours

2. The basis of modern society and the modern

conception of the individual arise during the Enlightenment - which Lavine speaks of as a historical

period, ( 1650-1770) but it is also a historical project

2. It continuously informs the present, progress and

improvement through technology, Lusk, Wy

3. the individual

II. What is Enlightenment?

A. Hisorical and social transformation

1. In the political sphere, monarchies were replaced

through revolution gradually representative democracies

and the idea of "rule by law"

Clinton - we are a society of laws, no one person

is higher than the law

- law reflects the normative foundation to

society, we value certain things

- violating the law is violating the moral

order

2. In the economic sphere the feudal arrangements were

replaced by capitalism -- rational organization of this

realm around the idea of the pursuit of enlightened self-

interest

3. In the sphere of technology human and animal power

was being replaced by water, steam, electricity

4. human productivity was being replaced by machine

productivity -- massive amounts of natural resources

5. Industrial production caused a rearrangement of

of division of labor

6. new society created a division between public and

private

7. in the cultural sphere, church authority, and religious

worldviews -- the great Chain of Being - the Sacred Canopy were being challenged by the new science of physics

8. new cultural authorities replaced the nobility

and priests, "experts" scientific and social, attempt to

unify knowledge under the banner of the natural

sciences

B. What were the idols of this transformation?

1. Idol one is Reason, a new conception though, the

model of the new reason was that of science, especially

physics

2. Idol two is Progress, Reason, was going to allow us

to not only master and control the physical universe

through discovering the laws of the natural world and

then using them to control the natural world -- technology of power, but organized the social world

to eliminate social problems

3. Idol three is the individual who actualizes

is rational will in the newly organized political and economic domains. Freedom becomes a necessary

correlate to reason

C. These "idols" were truly something to bow down before

for the Enlightenment thinkers- Condorcet in Sketch for a

a historical picture of the progress of the human mind

1. "The Future Progress of the Human Mind" discusses

the continued progress, inevitable, toward the indefinite

perfectability of the human species - claims being made

by those involved with human Genome project

2. the hero is of his narrative is Reason, first manifested

in philosophy, then in the natural sciences, then in

the "moral and political sciences"

3. condorcet thought that he was just predicting what

could be derived from the discovery of the physical laws

of the universe. Reason to Condorcet and the other

enlightenment thinkers was self-evidently good.

4. Just need to discover the moral laws and the laws of

society in order to keep progressing

5. The discovery of the laws of the universe will lead to

man's freedom from superstition (priests), tyrants, and

enable man to organize society rationally in line with the

laws of society

6. clearly this concept of progress persists today, science

and technology is and will solve all of our problems,

disease to hunger to global computerized village

III. The "dialectic of enlightenment",

A. a counter-narrative has been constructed, which suggests

why we might not recognize ourself

1. Enlightenment has led, to the gas chambers of Auschwitz, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the colonial and neo-colonial immeseration of the third world and extermination of indigenous people, the destruction of the environment, massive species "technological progress." and the battle against evil

2. As early as the nineteenth century philosophers

began to question the validity of this historical

project

B. the philosophical critique of the Enlightenment is directed

against the hero of the Enlightenment narrative, reason.

1. Fredrich Nietzsche and Max Weber were the first

to argue this counter-narrative, also Kierkegaard

2. They said that reason is tied to mastery and control

of nature, in this sense it is an instrument, instrumental

rationality, "how to", this form of reason is severed from

the good, norms and values

3. They both argue that reason conceived as technical

expertise leads to unfreedom, conformity or adaptability

4. Weber argues that every sphere of society is being

organized around instrumental reason, a process

he says isn't progress but "rationalization"

5. Much like science reduces the world to the fewest

laws which can be mathematicized and calculated to

make the physical world predictable

6. Society is organizing in terms of formal rules and

procedures based on the same norms of calculation,

predictability, and efficiency

7. These become social values which are contra

uniqueness, spontaneity, difference -- if you don't

fall under a general rule you don't exist

8. Capitalism is the rationalization economic realm

understood in terms of calculation for investment

and effeciency and speed for production, and predictability for sales

8. the realm of administration in both the governmental

and economic sphere is bureaucratized, large formal

organizations in government and private

9. this emphasis on formal rules and procedures, the

need for calculation and predictability for the

individual to conform to society's institutions, DMV,

and Financial Aid

10. the realm of freedom becomes increasingly

circumscribe by the demands of social institutions, to

the private realm

C. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno argue in their book,

the dialectic of Enlightenment that even this last realm of

freedom is increasingly undermined by the cultur industry

1. Rationalization has become total, the administered

society, a seamless process

- domination of nature to domination of

humans

2. the picture or web is complete with the emergence of

the "culture industry" -- the modern cave

- with mass media the individual is constructed as

a passive spectator, whose ideas, opinions, and desires are constructed by the mass media

- unfreedom appears to be freedom, as the

individual is allowed to pursue his/her decreasin

leisure time in consumption

- this unfree, passive, and powerless spectator,

glorifies his alter-ego, Dirty Harry, Rambo, the

Enlightenment individual transformed

D. Enlightenment or enlightenment?