

My Knowledge

A book containing knowledge belonging to highly unrelated
topics

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Chapter 1

Introduction

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Chapter 2

Geography

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2.1 Borders

Borders define the limits of continents, countries or regions. Some are defined by historical facts, others by cultural differences, but they are mostly based in political (or geopolitical) decisions, either taken by groups of population that decides how to split the land they inhabit or by third parties that, one way or another, happened to have the power of define those borders.

2.1.1 Spanish Borders

This subsection is mostly inspired by RealLifeLore[7].

While Spain is often seen as just a regular peninsula in the westernmost Europe, it also possess several islands, and some very particular borders with the nearby countries.

Hispano-Moroccan Border

After the *Reconquista* (801 - 1492 A.D.), the Spanish Kingdom conquered several North-African territories, some of which still remain Spanish. These pieces of land are claimed by Morocco until this day. Most of these territories are islands near the African coast. However, three are actually part of mainland Africa, those being:

- **Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera:** It is located around 100 Km towards the East from the Strait of Gibraltar. It consists in two rocks, a big one (hosting a small town) and a smaller one. It is separated from morocco by an 80 m wide sand beach, making it the shortest international border segment in the world (given than the actual border with Morocco, when adding up all the Spanish territories, is bigger than the border between Zambia and Botswana[6])
- **Ceuta and Melilla:** These two autonomous cities, with almost 80,000 people living in each of them, are surrounded by 6 m high fences and are the only European Union territories in Africa. Unlike Melilla, Ceuta does not have an airport, so a boat is needed to get to mainland Spain. On top of that, a single road next to the East coast connects Ceuta with Morocco, making it quite isolated.

Regarding the islands, the most resonated case is the one of the **Isla Perejil**. It is a very small uninhabited rock near Ceuta. It is both claimed by Spain and Morocco, which led to an interesting event in 2002, when 12 Moroccan soldiers planted a Moroccan flag in it. It was an international conflict in which the Arab League backed up Morocco, while Spain was supported by NATO and the European Union. Several warships surrounded the tiny island and it all ended with an Spanish operation that closed the conflict arresting the Moroccan soldiers. Afterwards, the island was declared no-man zone with the agreement of both countries.

Hispano-British Border

This border separates Spain from a small British city, **Gibraltar**, located at the very South of the Iberian Peninsula. After the War of the Spanish Succession, in 1713, Spain gave it to the United Kingdom as part of the peace treaty. It has been a subject of dispute between the two contries.

Hispano-French Border

Last but not least, there are some pretty particular borders between Spain and France. One consists in the **Pheasant Island**, a small uninhabited islands in the middle of the Bidasoa River, at the West side of the border between Spain and France. In 1659, as part of a peace treaty, the sovereignty of this island was decided to be shared amongts France and Spain. Although no body is allowed in the island, the island belongs to either one of the abovementioned countries for only six months of each year, and there is ceremony to transfer such sovereignty each six months.

Another consequence of the same treaty is **Llivia**, a small Spanish city not far from the East border of Andorra completely surrounded by France and 1.6 Km away from the northern Spanish border. That French territory that is now surrounding Llivia was before a part of Spain, and it was transfered to France. Both countries, however, agreed that Llivia could remain being a part of Spain due to its importance at the time. This kind of situation is called an *enclave*.

2.2 Time Zones

Time zones are regions of the Earth that share the same time. They are meant to be set in relation with the relative position of the Earth and the Sun to accomodate similar hours for sunrises and sunsets across the Globe so that we can all consider *mornings* the part of the day when the Sun is rising and *evenings* the part of the day when it lowers it's altitude until it sets.

If all the planet would be in the same timezone, 12:00 would be the moment in which the Sun is at its highest point for some people, while for the people in the other side of the Earth, it would be the darkest moment of the day. As explained by Anne Buckle[2], aiming to facilitate transport and commercial interactions, time zones were created towards the end of the 19th century. Here we get to the meridians, which are circles that passes by both Earth poles and some other place. Since the Greenwich Observatory (in the United Kingdom) had a huge reputation regarding navigational data, the meridian passing by it was the most widely spreaded reference back on that day. This is why it was chosen to be the reference meridian for the timezones (i.e. prime meridian), and the timezones of the whole world would be defined with reference to the hour in that place. This is how the *Greenwich Mean Time* (GMT), alongside the 24 hours, became the world standard that persisted until today.

Once the reference was set, hour differences with respect to that reference time zone were set across the world, mostly depending on the countries' borders, but following the general rule of increasing the hour in the time zones East from the GMT and decreasing them while going West.

2.2.1 Spanish Time Zone

This information is extracted from an article by Jaime Rubio Hancock[4]. Before the standarization of timezones, all Spanish cities had a different hour, based on the average sun incision in that area, leading to time differences between cities as close (in a global scale) as Madrid and Barcelona. After January 1st 1901, all Spain started using the same hour, the GMT+0, due to its almost vertical alignment with Greenwich.

Political Time Zone Change

However, an interesting change happened during the 2nd World War. The Saturday 16th of March 1940[3], at 11 PM, Spain changed its time zone to be aligned with the German one. This happened, as with other countries, to make the synchronization easier between the country and Germany and the Nazi regime that was in power at the time. The reason that pushed this change forward was the close alignment between the ideology of the Spanish fascist movement of the dictator Francisco Franco and Hitler's Nazism in Germany.

Canary Islands Time Zone

Manuel M. Almeida[1] exposes a fun fact about the official time in the Canary Islands, a Spanish archipelago located in the North-West coast of Africa. Even though Spain chose an official common hour for most of its territory in July 1900, it was not until February 1922 that, by action of a different King, an official hour was provided for the Canary Islands. Until that year, they were not included in the legal document that specified the Spanish time zone. Due to the difference position of the Canary Islands with mainland Spain, it was decided that, in these islands, the time zone would not be GMT+0, but rather GMT-1.

This time difference was kept after General Franco, the Spanish dictator, decided to increase by 1 the hour in all Spanish territories, since when approving that change no exceptions were specified for the Canary Islands. This is why, until this day, most of Spain uses the GMT+1 and the Canary Islands keep the GMT+0.

Chapter 3

Philosophy

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3.1 10 Main Schools of Philosophy

The content of this subsection was extracted from BigThink's *10 schools of philosophy and why you should know them* [5]

3.1.1 Nihilism

It consist of a group of view angles and problems rather than being an actual school of thought. It's approach is to question the existance of meaning in something. Some examples would be:

- Moral Nihilism, which proposes that nothing can be affirmed to be *moral*.
- Metaphysical Nihilism says that no metaphysical affirmation can be a facts.
- Existential Nihilism considers that life itself does not possess any meaning or value. This problem is what is most commonly related to the Nihilism.

As opposed to popular belief, Nietzsche was not a nihilist. Rather, he wrote about the dangers posed by nihilism and offered solutions to them. Real nihilists included the Russian Nihilist movement.

3.1.2 Existentialism

Originated in the work of Soren Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, existentialism focuses on the problems posed by existential nihilism. It dives in the problematics that a nihilist approach of our existance brings. Existentialists would philosophize about the fact that, if there is no particular purpose on life, there would not be any point on living. These thoughts lead to question many things, such as our ability to act freely. This approach would also bring many difficulties to exist outside of a system, as an individual.

The existentialists also included Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Martin Heidegger. Albert Camus was associated with the movement, but considered himself independent of it.

3.1.3 Stoicism

A philosophy popular in ancient Greece and Rome, and practiced today by many people in high-stress environments, such as athletes.

Stoicism is a school that focuses on existence in a non-ideal environment. Whenever something undesirable happens around one self, the way to go is acceptance. Pain and discomfort will pass, but we will remain, so we should not let things beyond our control distract or disrupt us but. Rather, we shall focus in what we are actually able to control.

Famed stoics included Zeno of Citium, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius.

3.1.4 Hedonism

Hedonism affirms that pleasure/happiness is the only thing that matters, the only thing that provide value to us. Other schools, such as the utilitarians, defended the same idea. Often, Hedonism is related to the idea of accepting depravity and the absence of limits. However, some hedonists thinkers, such as Epicurus, linked happiness and pleasure with a moderation-based moral and ethics.

Many hedonistic philosophers considered pleasure to be a kind of happiness, but not the only one. Often, different happiness types would be ranked and actions that increase your culture level were comonly considered to bring a higher happiness than excesses in other actions or the blind following of an instinct, which are the things commonly meant when someone uses the word *hedonistic*, when used as a slur.

Famous hedonists include Jeremy Bentham, Epicurus, and Michel Onfray. Hedonism is also the oldest philosophy recorded, making an appearance in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

3.1.5 Marxism

Karl Marx is the father of this school, and it developed after his death with the contributions of others. The core of it is a criticism of the capitalism, arguing that it makes us not being aware of the results of our work and that it tends to produce more than needed and, as a consequence, it suffers cyclical crashes. It also proposes that *value* comes from the work and effort invested in doing something. This is, it says that when something is sold, it has a certain value because people worked to generate it. He also proposed

some ideas to fix, or reduce, some of the issues that he found in the capitalist approach.

This school shall not be mistaken by the conspiracy theory of the *Cultural Marxism*, which claims that a big part of the instability of the interwar period is planned by the marxists and the Frankfurt School to subvert the western society. Some say this school was actually oriented to the criticism of consumism and our tendency to commodity, while others defend that it had a strong political side that rejected the ways of the western capitalist approach to government.

Famed Marxists include Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Slavoj Zizek; though all of the listed individuals have been called heretics at one point or another by other Marxists. Ironically, Marx himself claimed to not be one.

3.1.6 Logical Positivism

This school tries to use logic and empirical proofs as the base for everything.

Particularly popular in the early 20th century, it proposed that many philosophical topics, such as metaphysics, ethics, theology or aesthetics could not be studied due to their lack of true value. However, this same belief could be reciprocally applied to itself, making a paradox out of this school, since it is always possible to doubt about the veracity of a verification. With these kind of thoughts, the school and the verificationism arrived to a decline that ended up killing it.

Ludwig Wittgenstein caused great damage to this school when he rejected his previous work in favor of it. However, this line of thought had a considerable influence in future thinkers, amongst which Karl Popper and Wittgenstein are to be highlighted for their work to disprove core tenets.

Famed members of the movement included Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the Vienna Circle.

3.1.7 Taoism

Taoism is based in the *Tao Te Ching*, written by the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu when he quitted China to pursue the life of a hermit. This school proposes that we should focus in ourselves, following the *Way*, which is based in valueing the simple and natural things. It is practiced as a folk religion by the Chinese, and Taoists may make offerings to various gods.

Taoism has common elements with Buddhism and Zen, and parts of it were taken by the Neo-Confucianism. The way this school Viewing opposites as complementary is one of Taoism's principles, which influenced people such as the physicist Niels Bohr.

3.1.8 Rationalism

It is based in the fact that our senses may misinterpretate things, so this school would not trust in their ability to provide us with a true perception of reality. Thus, since the senses can not be trusted, the only way we have to perceive reality is the reasoning, not empirical evidence.

This was a popular idea through history, with defenders such as Socrates, Rene Descartes and Spinoza. However, the idea that only the reason can be trusted when trying to reveal the actual nature of the world has been losing popularity, favouring a combination between rationalist basis and empirical observations.

3.1.9 Relativism

The relativist approach is based in the idea that things are relative to the perspective with which we look at them. It therefore questions the existence of an absolute moral or truth.

Cultural Relativism argues that it is not possible to compare the morality of two cultures and no one can criticize anotherone's culture because that would mean, that other person could do the exact same thing. However, this is often not strongly supported and it is usually considered to be self-defeating by the people philosophizing about ethics.

3.1.10 Buddhism

It is a religion based around the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha), an Indian prince. Buddhism's tenet is that suffering has a cause and it can be overcome by meditation, by following the *Noble Eightfold Path*, and by contemplating *sutras*.

While there are many buddhist schools, all are connected by their belief in Buddha's vision on suffering. Some of their differences come from their divine figures, that can go from not having any god to having a pantheon with

several divine and demonic figures. Also, they may differ in the existence of *karma* and reincarnation, or even afterlife itself.

The many schools of Buddhism are rather diverse in their thought, bound together primarily by Buddha's ideas on suffering and meditation. However, some are non-theistic while others have a pantheon of gods and demons. Some hold that karma exists and reincarnation is a part of life while others reject any discussion of an afterlife.

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