What is Philosophy? How do we study it?

* From the Greek Philo (“love”) and *Sophia (*“wisdom”)
* “First Philosophy”: *metaphysics (origins of the universe), epistemology (theory of knowledge).*
* For any Philosopher, we at least want to know:
  + What questions do they ask?
  + What ideals do they pursue?
  + How does their intellectual, social and economic environment shape their questions (and answers)?

SLIDE

Steven Marone Quote

SLIDE

Front of Handout

SLIDE

What is Medieval Philosophy?

* In the medieval period, the discipline was inseparable from a concern with the divine in Christian, Judaic, and Islamic traditions.
  + Some thinkers recommended abandoning philosophy for faith:
    - Terullian (c. 160 – c.230) “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”
  + Many produced commentaries on the few ancient works that existed after the efall of the Roman Empire:
    - MORE INFO
* SLIDE

What about the rest of Greek Philosophy

* Examine your handout, Table 1
* The only work of Plato’s known to medieval thinkers until the twelfth century was his philosophical creation story, Timaeus
* 700 years about (522-1125) NO NEW WORKS – DARK AGES
* SLIDE

Plato’s thought was mostly known through neo-Platonists such as

Plotinus – “Mankind is poised midway between the gods and the beasts.”

SLIDE

“The Great Chain of Being” – Christian Neo-Platonist Emanation Scale Picture

SLIDE

What about the Rest of Greek Philosophy

* Jewish and Muslim scholars preserved and extended ARistotellian ideas
  + Some thinkers like averroes (1126-1198) followed Aristotle in affirming the possibility of the highest kind of knowledge, while att he same time denying the immortality of the soul.
  + Others like Maimonides (1138-1204) used Aristotelian thinking to advise how to conflicts between strong intellectual desire and improper instruction in divine matters as found in the Torah in his Guide of the Perplexed.
    - They may find that what they think they know about got and what they learn may be in conflict
* “Negative Theology”
  + When you move away from reality, you aren’t changing in quality, you are changing in kind of thing. (Going from seattle to Spokane vs seattle to California)
  + “God is Not Not Wise” god will never do something that is not him.
    - It is better to state what god is NOT versus what he actually is.
* SLIDE

Problems of Medieval Philosophy 1

* Faith and Reason
* “The faith-reason controversy… is peculiar to Christian philosophy and arises only because the Christian Philosopher accepts the authority of revelation.” – W.T. Jones
* I do not seek to understand so that I may believe, but I believe so that I may understand.” – St. Anselm of Canterbury
* SLIDE

Got Revelation?

* Most religious traditions assert not only that there are divine objects of belief and worship (god, angels, genies, etc) but that there are non-natural ways of accessing or communicating with those objects.
  + Mysticism; beatific states; prayer; direct revelation
  + Natural – can be confirmed by other people
  + Non-Natural – only the person who communicated knows.
* This non-natural access is not typically available to most of us, so we must have faith in the authority of those who’ve received special revelations.
* SLIDE

Concerns surrounding special revelation

* What if those to whom God revealed Himself contradict one another?
* What if the language by which they reported their revelation is unclear and ambiguous?
* Revelation directly addresses matters of faith, morals and salvation, but should we use reason in all other areas of life?
  + If so, where is the boundary between the authority of faith and the authority of reason?
  + And if there is a boundary, but it is unclear, which is to adjudicate the disputes: faith or reason?
* SLIDE

Faith or Reason: the extreme position

* “I confess. I say in my folly, that the Word has visited me and that many times. And though he has often entered into I have never known when he came…. How then, you ask, when his ways are thus altogether unserchable, could I know that he was present?....” – I can’t give oiu proof – St. Bernard
* SLIDE

Faith or Reason: apriori reason

ANSELM’s ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT (for the existence of God) – Page 3 of Handout (first logical argument for god’s existence)

Problems of Medieval Philosophy: 2

* The Problems of Universals
  + A “universal” = something shared by different particular objects. A wheel, a dinner plate, and a ring all are circular, so they have at least one thing (circularity) in common.
    - Forms???
  + Objects that are circular are said to be instances of the universal, or to instantiate, exemplify, or partake of it.
* P=The problem of Universals: an example
  + Beauty – Ryan Gosling, Van Gogh’s Starry Night, the Ocean, etc.
    - Is the term beauty consistent?? If so what is beauty?
  + Personhood – an example.
    - People are People! – What is a person? How do we define it? A Soul? A conscious? Self Awareness?
* Background for the Problem of Universals
  + Substances and accidents (this comes from Aristotle)
    - Aristotle’s 10 Categories of Being
      * People are Substances (Primary kind of universals)
        + They have various Changeable traits

1 Kevin – 2 chairs

Kevin is 6 feet tall, etc

Time

* + - * Browness and Color is a Quality, you can’t talk about it like a substance,
        + You don’t go walking around and bump into a patch of Browness.
* ARISTOTELLIAN HIERARCHY of REALITY
  + Porphyry’s Tree
    - Page 4 of Handout.
    - Looks like the “Which pet should I have tree”
  + The classification in each circle is a species of all those above it (sub sets)
  + The circled classification above any circle is the genus of that species (father set)
  + To the left and right are the specific differences (characteristics) that distinguish species from their genus (deciding factors about what kind of thing is it
  + At the bottom, we find three named individual substances that are corporeal, animate, sensible, and rational: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

3 SOLUTIONS

* One Solution to the Problem of universals: realism
  + Church Fathers and medieval philosophers influenced by Plato tended to believe universals were real but non-material things.
    - Realists like John Scotus Erigena distinguished between the independently real universal (left), the sensible representation of the universal (middle) and memory of the representation (right),
* Realism: prospects and problems
  + PROSPECT
    - Realism accords well witht eh medieval world-picutre of the “Two Cities”: one the source of all reality, all truth, all goodness, the only a pale reflection of that source.
  + PROBLEM
    - If universals are not onlyl real, existing things, but exist in a hierarchical relationship, then it can be argued that reality is not a collection of individuals, but one idivual with many aspects. This is pantheism, a heterodoxical view. – All is God

SOLUTION 2

* St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74)
  + A Italian and Dominican friar, nicknamed both “The Angelic Doctor” and “The Ox”
* Thomistic Philosophy
  + All Human knowledge starts from facts of sense experience (even our knowledge of God). If a being produced no effects in experience, it could not be known.
  + PIC IN PHONE
* Thomas on universals – conceptualism
  + PIC IN PHONE

SOLUTION 3

* William of Ockham (1285-1349)
  + Wrote the Summa Logicae and many political tracts in the time.
* William of Ockham
  + “Ockham’s Razor”
  + Deflationism – The Way in which man knowns the world is not the way in which the world naturally exists, for the knowledge is the expression of universals, while in nature only particular and individual things are found (there is no two leaves that are the same, no overarching real universals actually exist)
  + Nominalism – All that universals are the names that we use to describe similar individual things (leaves, people, dogs, etc.)
  + Ockham’s innovation:
    - We think about individual particulars of sense perception (My favorite Coffee Cup)
    - But we think about them with universal ideas (The idea of a coffee Cup)
  + “Rational” Science: Logic, which deals in signs without worrying about their meanings.
  + “Real” Sciences: Physics (finds the meaning of signs) Psychology (how we combine signs to express meanings.)

The Medieval Synthesis – Painting > (The church Militant and the Church Triumphant, Andrea da Firenze in Santa Maria)

* Political
* Economic/Social
* Religious
* Philosophical/Scientific