**Outline of the four Lectures for “Introduction to Human Sciences”**

Lecture I

We begin by asking what it means to raise philosophical questions, and how such questions differ from those in other disciplines. We introduce the notion of philosophizing as a ‘meta-inquiry’ which may not, unlike other disciplines, lead to any permanent solutions, or ‘progress’. This forces the question: what value, if any, can such activity have? Marking the entanglement of epistemic and normative concerns at the very inception of philosophy, that is, the entanglement between ‘doing philosophy’ as an ethical possibility (even the ‘highest’ possibility) of human-rational existence and what such activity aims at, then allows us to approach philosophical questions from a perspective that is fundamentally distinct from those constitutive of other disciplines.

Reading: Bertrand Russell. The Value of Philosophy” in *The Problems of Philosophy*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2001

Lecture II

We turn to the origins of the Western philosophical tradition in Greek philosophy, by examining Plato’s (and Aristotle’s) famous assertion that ‘philosophy begins with Wonder’ (*Thaumazein*), and the conception of *philo-sophia*, with its inherent sense of finitude that emerges from such an outlook. In this context, we emphasize how philosophical inquiry arises as an attempt to provide a ‘rational explanation’ of our surrounding world. We examine the ‘common root’ of what comes to be later separated as ‘philosophy’ and ‘natural science’, by uncovering the sense of “rational” and of “explanation” involved, in, for instance, the pre-Socratic cosmologies. The latter brings to light the manner in which ‘meta-empirical’ or ‘speculative’ questions are already inherent both in philosophy and science.

Reading: Erwin Schrödinger. *Nature and the Greeks and Science and Humanism*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996

Lecture III

We step back and inhabit a broader historical perspective by explicating the manner in which our very conceptions of ‘rationality’, ‘explanation’ etc. undergo a sea-change with the onset of enlightenment modernity, and the ensuing ‘disenchantment’ of nature. Here we introduce the problems and dilemmas that emerge with the reflective realization of the reducibility of ‘explanation’ to ‘description’; the *circularity* of explanation; the attempt to found knowledge on the ‘objective’ grounds of reason and/or sensible experience, and its culmination in the skeptical impasse of modernity.

Reading: Ernst Cassirer. “The Mind of the Enlightenment” in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*,Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1968

Lecture IV

We continue our discussion of the problematic of epistemic and normative foundations by elaborating the two great opposing camps of thought into which philosophy comes to be divided in modernity, namely, Rationalism and Empiricism. We emphasize that these are not merely names for positions historically held by various thinkers, but indicate fundamentally opposed and ‘irreducible’ conceptions of the nature of ‘knowledge’, ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ that continue to shape current discourse across disciplines. Against this background we take up and discuss one basic philosophical problem, namely, the reducibility/irreducibility of the mind/consciousness to the body/brain.

Readings:

Thomas Nagel. “What is it Like to be a Bat?”, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 4, pp. 435-450, Oct. 1974