

Philosophical Vocabulary

GENERAL

Reason: man's intellectual or mental capacity.

Presupposition: an elementary assumption or basic commitment or foundational perspective.

Worldview: a network of presuppositions which is not verified by the procedures of natural science but in terms of which every aspect of man's knowledge and experience is interpreted and interrelated.

Dualism: the general perspective that reality or man's experience is properly interpreted by two different kinds of explanation, the one religious and the other non-religious; thus the endorsement of a sacred/secular distinction. [This should be distinguished from the specific metaphysical doctrine given the same name.]

Autonomous: characterized by self-sufficiency or independence from outside authority (especially a transcendent authority); being a law unto oneself.

Transcendent: the quality of originating beyond man's temporal experience or exceeding it.

Objective: the quality of having a public nature, independent of our thoughts.

Absolute: unconditioned by qualifications or limitations.

Relativism: all judgments are conditioned by factors like cultural milieu and individual bias; thus there is no objective, absolute truth.

Humanism: (secularism), the view that man is the highest value and authority in terms of knowledge or behavior, rather than any transcendent reality or revelation.

Rationalism: the general attitude that man's autonomous reason is his final authority, in which case divine revelation may be denied or ignored. [This should be distinguished from the specific epistemological school given the same name.]

Rational: an adjective used for *either*: (1) whatever pertains to man's intellect (cf. "reason"), (2) whatever is based on the authority of man's mind (cf. general attitude called "rationalism"), (3) whatever is known apart from experience or observation (cf. the epistemological school of "rationalism")

LOGIC: the study of principles for distinguishing correct reasoning from incorrect reasoning.

Judgment: a movement in thought which asserts a predicate (quality or relation) of a subject.

Inference: a movement in thought which draws a conclusion from premises.

Fallacy: an error in reasoning or a mistaken inference.

Deduction: inferring with necessity a particular conclusion from general premises.

Induction: inferring with probability a general conclusion from particular premises.

EPISTEMOLOGY: the study of the nature and limits of human knowledge.

Belief: a mental state affirmative of a proposition.

Knowledge: justified, true belief.

Certainty: the property of a proposition that it cannot fail to be true.

Confidence: the psychological property of feeling assurance that a proposition is true.

Skepticism: the view that denies the possibility of knowledge or certainty (sometimes limited to certain areas).

Mysticism: the view that reality is ineffable and transcends precise conceptual schemes; thus it is known by non-rational means.

Intuition: direct, immediate (non-discursive) knowledge.

***a priori*:** independent of observation, experience, or sense perception.

***a posteriori*:** dependent upon observation, experience, or sense perception.

Innate idea: a concept known *a priori* and characterized by universality and necessity.

Rationalism: the view that some knowledge is *a priori*.

Empiricism: the view that all knowledge is *a posteriori*.

Phenomenalism: the view that what we know is mind-dependent, so that knowledge is limited to appearance (the data of inner or outer sense).

ETHICS: the study of right and wrong actions and attitudes.

Metaethics: the study of the meaning and justification of fundamental moral terms and judgments.

Hedonism: the view that pleasure is the sole good.

Voluntarism: the view that asserts the primacy of will over intellect (as explanatory of human behavior, God's nature, or the universe as a whole).

Utilitarianism: the view that goodness is the quality of promoting the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Emotivism: the view that moral utterances are mere expressions of feeling (and are thus non-informative in function).

Marxism: dialectical materialism (the sole reality, matter, develops through history according to the pattern of thesis C antithesis C and then synthesis or resolution at a higher level), leading to revolution and then the stateless society.

METAPHYSICS: the study of the nature, structure, and origin of what exists.

Ontology: the theory of being itself.

Cosmology: the study of the universe, its origin, and its process of development.

Universal: a general concept (idea, form) which is predicable of many individuals.

Particular: an instance of a universal.

Essence: that-about-a-thing-that-makes-it-*what-it-is*.

Accidents: the non-essential properties of a thing.

Existence: the actuality of a thing: *that* it is.

Substance: (1) whatever is real; (2) something's essence; (3) whatever exists in its own right and depends on nothing else; (4) that which underlies (or has) the properties of a thing.

Contingent: the quality of not being necessarily determined: whatever may or may not be the case.

Determinism: the view that there is no contingency, for every event is necessary (according to some laws); thus the view that every event is the theoretically predictable consequence of antecedent causes.

Behaviorism: determinism applied to every detail of man's behavior.

Materialism: the view that the whole of reality consists of matter.

Dualism: the view that there are two ultimate and irreducible principles for explaining reality:
mind and matter (body).

Monism: the view that reality consists of only one kind of substance.

Solipsism: the view that everything other than one's self is a state of one's self.

Teleology: the view that the universe is characterized by design or purpose.

SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

Realism: the view *either* that (1) universals are independently real (vs. nominalism, conceptualism), *or* (2) objects of knowledge exist independently of the mind (vs. idealism), *or* (3) reality is not greatly different from appearance (vs. phenomenalism).

Nominalism: the view that only particulars are real; universals are only a name given to an observable similarity.

Conceptualism: the view that universals are neither independently existing, nor mere names, but rather concepts abstracted from the particulars by the mind.

Idealism: the view that fundamental reality is mind-dependent or mental in nature (thus non-spatial and non-sensuous). Subjective idealism holds that to be is to be perceived. Objective idealism maintains that there is no categorical distinction between the knower and what he knows—that both are part of absolute thought.

Pragmatism: the view that the meaning of a statement is its practical consequences in experience, and that truth is satisfactory problem-solving (success).

Logical Positivism: the view that all meaningful sentences are verifiable scientifically or logically (scientism).

Linguistic Analysis: the view that conceptual confusions should be resolved by clarifying our use of words and getting back to ordinary usage.

Process Philosophy: the view that all reality is united into one interdependent, evolving whole.

Existentialism: the view that "existence precedes essence," so that man is radically free to choose what he will be.