

- PHI 2010: PHILOSOPHY
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West Campus

Introduction to Philosophy

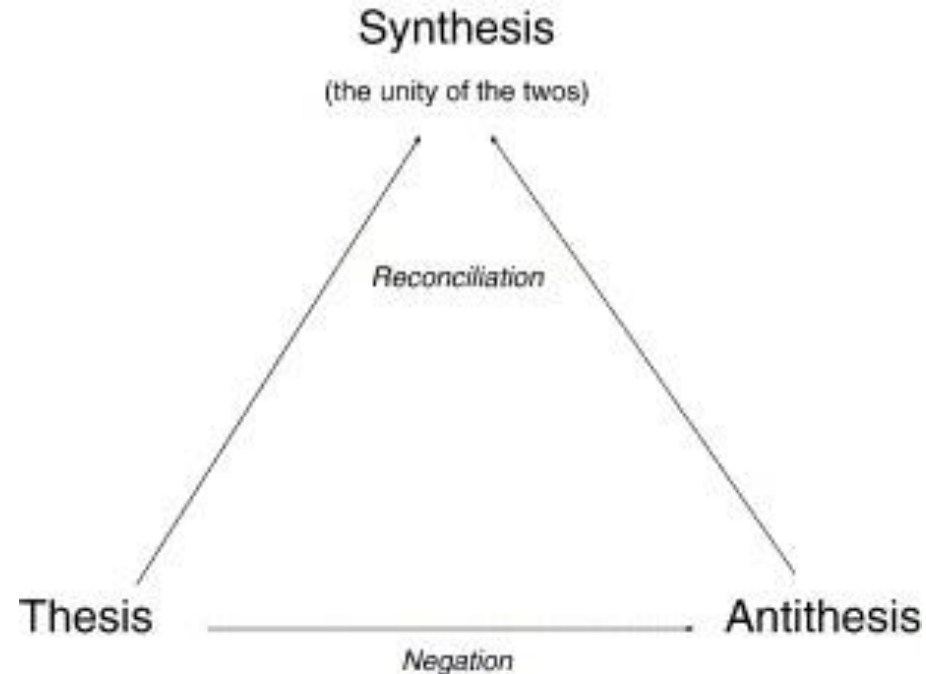


DEFINING "PHILOSOPHY"

- From the Greek philosophia, "love of wisdom" (philo = "love," sophia = "wisdom")
- Commonly defined as "thinking about thinking"
- Philosophers generally debate the views held by earlier philosophies. We will see that philosophers "debate," although separated by many years.

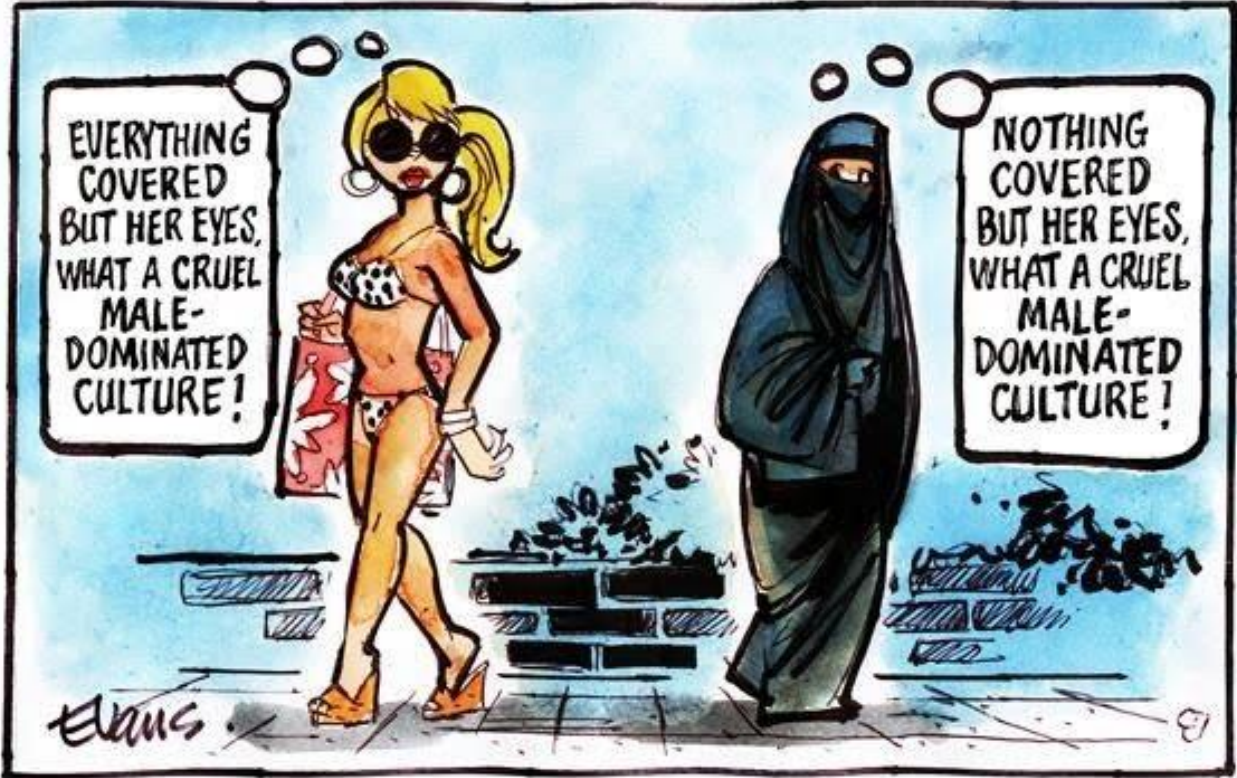
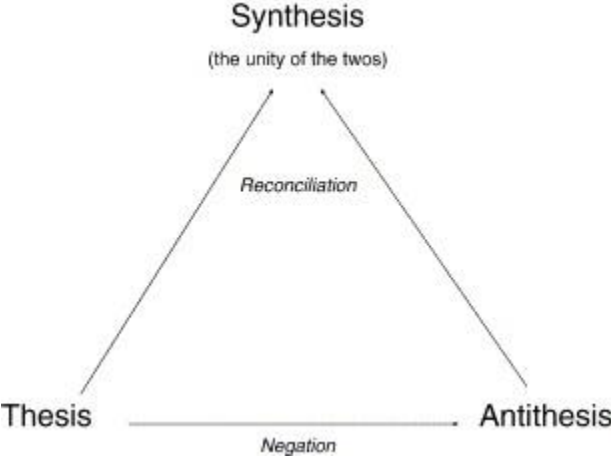
EXAMPLE... The Bible and Franz Boas offer two different alternatives to the view of ethics—relativism vs. universalism.

Let us consider each through the Hegelian Dialectic of Thesis/Antithesis/Synthesis...



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Cultural Relativism is a theory of anthropology that views all cultures as equal. Early anthropologist **Franz Boas** first used the idea of cultural relativism in 1887, but the concept did not have a name until Alain Locke coined the term in 1924.^[1] This concept is now accepted by anthropologists around the world.

An early example of **Moral Universalism** can be found in the Judeo/Christian culture: the Seven Laws of Noah (Hebrew: שבוע מצוות בני נח, Sheva Mitzvot B'nei Noach), a set of imperatives which, according to the Talmud, were given by God as a binding set of universal moral laws for the "sons of Noah" – that is, all of humanity. The Seven Laws of Noah include prohibitions against worshipping idols, cursing God, murder, adultery and sexual immorality, theft, eating flesh torn from a living animal, as well as the obligation to establish courts of justice.

CULTURAL RELATIVISM

"What is believed or practiced as true, or right, or wrong for any culture is whatever that culture believes or practices as true, or right, or wrong" (Gairdner, 2008, p. 29).

RELATIVISM VS UNIVERSALISM

Relativism

The cultural relativist perspective stands against ethnocentrism. It defends the principle that one should not impose one's values on others

Universalism

In contrast to relativism, universalism emphasizes universal truths that should be defended regardless of cultural differences.

HOT TOPICS

- 1 Public breastfeeding

- 2 Child labor

- 3 Women's dress codes

- 4 Public affection

- 5 Same-sex marriage

- 6 Eating habits

Overview of Philosophy:

- **Metaphysics**
- **Epistemology**
- **Ethics**

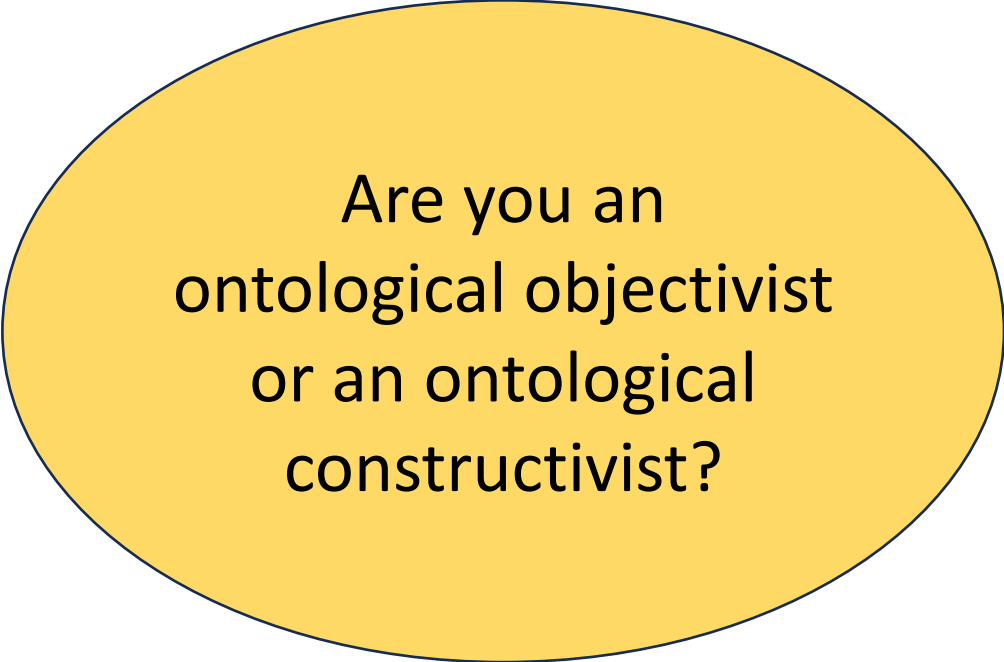
OVERVIEW OF METAPHYSICS

Metaphysics is concerned with the ultimate structure of reality.

A. Typical questions include: Does life have a meaning? Does God exist? How does one event cause another? What is essential and what is accidental in something's nature? What can we say exists? (**Ontology**)

ONTOLOGY

- Can (should) social entities be considered objective entities
 - If the answer is YES: the research takes a position of **Objectivism** (social phenomena confront us as external – independent and objective – facts)
- or are they social constructions
 - If the answer is NO: the research takes a position of **Constructionism (Constructivism)** – social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors; the phenomena are not only produced through social interactions, but they are in a constant state of revision

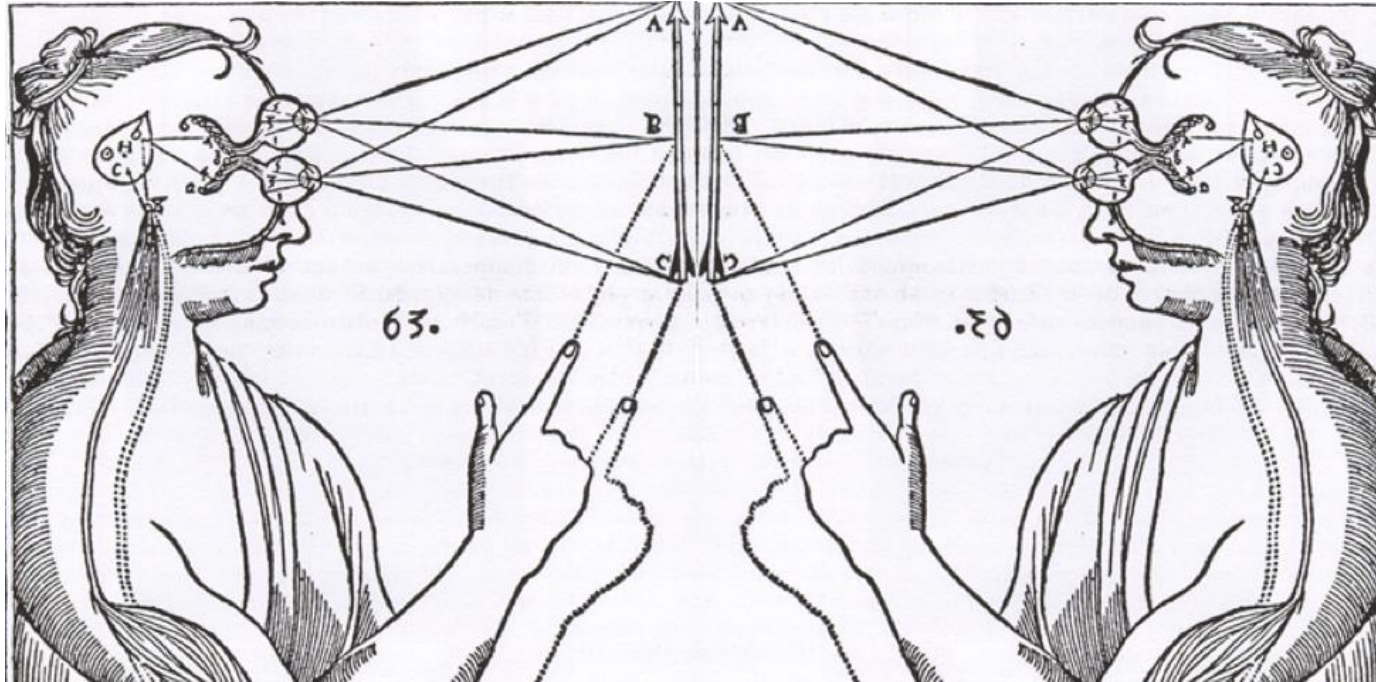


Are you an
ontological objectivist
or an ontological
constructivist?

1. The mind-body problem: How are mental processes related to physical states?

- Traditionally answered with some form of **dualism**: mind and matter are two distinct aspects of reality.

Cartesian dualism is proposed by Rene Descartes...



René Descartes's illustration of dualism. Inputs are passed on by the sensory organs to the brain, and from there to the immaterial spirit.

The real *world* and *the body*, in this view, are considered part of the material world.

In the philosophy of mind, **mind-body dualism** denotes either the view that mental phenomena are non-physical, or that the mind and body are distinct and separable. Thus, it encompasses a set of views about the relationship between mind and matter, two distinct entities.

Go to Dualism Lecture