

Table 3.1
Epistemology or Theory of Knowledge:
How do we “Know what we [think we] Know”

Concept	Explanation	Typical Advocates
<i>Rationalism</i>	<p>Knowledge can be obtained through reason (but not necessarily by just anyone!) In other words, knowledge exists independently and prior to humankind. <i>Example (Plato):</i> We know that the Pythagorean theorem in geometry would be true even if no people existed to understand it. Also esthetics, such as truth and beauty, are ideas that exist independently of humanity.</p>	Plato, René Descartes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, Kant
<i>Empiricism</i>	<p>Knowledge can only be obtained through direct sensory experience. Or, nothing can be known without a knower to discover it. <i>Example:</i> We know this book exists because we can feel its hardness and see its shape. (But would this be true of an idea?)</p>	Aristotle, John Locke, John Stuart Mill
<i>Nativism</i>	<p>1. Certain <i>ideas</i> are inborn (hence knowledge is as well); a form of rationalism. 2. Psychological nativism: Certain patterns are innate; or “hardwired” in the brain. <i>Example 1:</i> This cow exists because it conforms to the ideal form of a bovine. (But would this be true of a book?) <i>Example 2:</i> This horizon exists in our minds because evolution provides us with an inborn “horizontality pattern” to recognize it as such. (But again, would this be true of a book?)</p>	1.Plato 2.Steven Pinker, Noam Chomsky
<i>Postmodernism</i>	<p>Knowledge is constructed by social convention; absolute knowledge does not exist. <i>Example:</i> We only agree that this is a book because “book” is a traditional Western construct. It has no reality apart from our social consensus of what a book is. (But would this be true of a tree?)</p>	Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, certain feminist scholars

Note: From these examples it can be seen that the knowledge of the existence of an idea differs from the knowledge of the existence of a “natural” object like a cow or tree; but the latter also differs from the knowledge of a manufactured item, such as a book or automobile. The reasonableness of the concept (rationalism, empiricism, etc.), might thus depend on the object under consideration.

Table 3.2
Metaphysics and the Mind-Body Problem

Concept	Explanation	Typical Advocates
<i>Dualism</i>	The mind and body are separate entities; the nature of each is different.	Descartes
<i>Monism</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Materialistic monism</i>: All is matter. (Mind is an <i>epiphenomenon</i>.) 2. <i>Idealistic monism</i>: All reality consists of ideas (ideas exist independently of our minds) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aristotle, John Locke 2. Plato, Bishop Berkeley
<i>Interactionism</i>	Mind and body are separate but interacting systems. Interactionism is one form of dualism due to Descartes, who believed that the pineal gland was the “meeting place” of the two.	Descartes
<i>Parallelism</i>	The mind and body are separate systems that do not interact (another form of dualism). Rather, they are harmonized by/in God.	Leibnitz
<i>Dual Aspect Theory</i>	Mind and body are two aspects of the same (divine) underlying reality.	Baruch Spinoza

Note: The last three – interactionism, parallelism, and dual aspect theory – are all variations of dualism.

Table 3.3
Metaphysics: Free-Will versus Determinism

Concept	Explanation	Typical Advocates
<i>Free Will</i>	People can freely make choices and take responsibility for their actions.	William James, Rollo May, Judeo-Christian-Islamic theologians, Libertarians, existentialists
<i>Determinism</i>	People's actions are determined by forces beyond their control. For example, all behavior is determined by one's genetic endowment, by external (environmental or cultural) forces, or by a combination of the two. Karl Marx advocated a form of <i>historical</i> determinism; B. F. Skinner's was a <i>mechanistic</i> determinism (i.e., people respond to their environment in a machine-like fashion).	The Epicureans, Spinoza, Karl Marx, B. F. Skinner
<i>Compatibilism</i>	Compatibilists believe that free will and determinism are not contradictory concepts. One form of compatibilism argues for <i>soft determinism</i> , or the belief that, although all actions are determined (caused) in a physical sense, one is relatively free in choice if not forced or coerced into an action.	David Hume, Rudolf Carnap
<i>Indeterminism</i>	In principle, the course of people's actions cannot be completely determined. (Extrapolated from Heisenberg's uncertainty principle in quantum physics.)	(This is an interesting, though not well-accepted, concept.)

Table 3.4
Ethics and the “Nature of Human Nature”

Concept	Explanation	Typical Advocates
<i>Goodness is not natural but can be attained through reason</i>	People are capable of leading moral lives through their rationality, but only certain people (philosophers). The rest must be socially controlled or educated.	Plato, Aristotle
<i>Natural goodness is preempted by society</i>	People are basically good, but negative social experiences make them evil.	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Carl Rogers
<i>Moral neutrality—environmental bias</i>	People are neither good nor evil; morality is learned (environmental emphasis).	B. F. Skinner, Rollo May
<i>Moral neutrality—genetic/evolutionary bias</i>	People are neither good nor evil, but are capable of both; and moral predilections are genetically determined via evolutionary processes.	Steven Pinker, David Buss, Robin Wright
<i>People are basically evil and destructive (or at minimum selfish and egotistical)</i>	People are inherently sinful or evil, or self-centered. <i>Example 1 (Christianity):</i> They can be redeemed by exercising free will through God’s grace. <i>Example 2 (Hobbes):</i> They must be controlled by a powerful central authority (the “leviathan”); otherwise life is “nasty, brutish, and short.”	Christianity (some forms), Thomas Hobbes

Table 3.5
Ethics and the “Good Life”

Concept	Explanation	Typical Advocates
Duty	The good life is one of morality and responsible living. For Kant, the <i>categorical imperative</i> meant determining one’s own moral principles and always adhering to them.	the Stoics, Emmanuel Kant, Christians and Muslims
Happiness (eudaimonia)	The goal of life is individual happiness. Being happy requires moderation in all things, but happiness is always relative to the individual’s needs. Aristotle believed that happiness required avoidance of unnecessary harm to others – in other words, virtuousness is a prerequisite for true happiness.	Aristotle
Pleasure (hedonism)	The goal of life is one of pleasure. <i>Example 1 (Epicureans):</i> Although pleasure is the goal, moderation and morality are required. <i>Example 2 (Freud):</i> All of us seek to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.	the Epicureans, Freud
Love	Christianity stresses love (as well as duty).	Christ
Power	Power over others is stressed.	Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Nichol6 Machiavelli
Meaning	Pleasure and happiness are not enough. The good life is one in which people can find or create a meaningful existence.	Jean-Paul Sartre, Viktor Frankl
Contemplation	The way to peace of mind is through contemplation and meditation.	Buddha

Note: It should be clear that the various conceptions of the good life are not mutually exclusive.