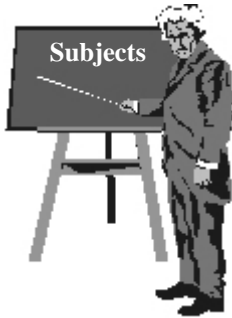


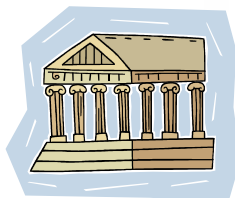
Concepts & Cameos
A Page Or Two Of Philosophy



The Hellenistic Era
Of Girls, Boys and Bumble Bees
The Marxists
Ethics/Morality
Sir Francis Bacon

Check
Codes

Concepts & Cameos A Page Or Two Of Philosophy



The Hellenistic Era

The intellectual and cultural history of the Greeks, after the death of Alexander the Great (323 B.C.) up to the founding of Constantinople (330 A.D.) by the Roman Emperor Constantine, is regarded as The Hellenistic Era. This era in Greek history is marked by the modification of its culture through foreign influence, chiefly that of the Romans. A period of social and cultural decay diminished the glory that was Greece, and with it the Golden Age of Greek Philosophy, too.

"To the Hellenistic peoples the Romans appeared as barbarian invaders who imposed their rule by force for a limited period but brought little of lasting value outside the areas of law and government".

(Easton. The Western Heritage).

S.1.6.



It appears that not all city states which comprised the nation contributed to its culture, especially Philosophy. One historian lists the people Of Ionia, Doris, Aeolis, Athens, as the more significant. But this fact shows that while Philosophy is for *anyone*, it is not for *everyone* .

As the Hebrews were noted for their religion, so the Greeks - the "Hellenes" - were noted for their humanistic culture.

"They were the first to emancipate man in ny degree from the supernaturalism and intolerance of the Orient. They challenged the traditional superstitions which were inherited from pre-literary ages, and flung out bold hypotheses about the origins of the universe ad the facts of nature. Free thought, intellectual tolerance and urbanity were the great gifts of the Greeks to the Western World" (H.E. Barnes)

Although in a different way from its classical period, Philosophy was still to make its mark in the schools of a different kind.

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Of Girls, Boys and Bumble Bees

By girls and boys, I simple mean people like us.

By bumble bee, I mean a flying insect which, in the nature of its being, holds a message for us on thinking realistically.

It appears that the bumble bee lives in his (or her) world simply by a series of assumptions, i.e., whenever it flies. It is said that some unnamed Swiss aerodynamicist performed rough calculations at a dinner party to demonstrate that bumble bees can't fly. According to the density of its body in relation to its wing size and its wing-beat per second, the insect just cannot get up into the air or sustain flight. But the fact remains, the bumble bee does fly, and that by "the power of its own arrogance" as one scientist suggests.

S.2.6.



Explained philosophically, the bumble bee just assumes he can fly and he does. Moreover, it appears to be that way with us in our world, too. Because we cannot know reality, we assume it as part of our day to day existence.

You have heard it said to ass-u-me is to make an "ass" out of "u" and me, but such thinking is for donkeys. According to the theory of reality, our comprehension of it is an assumption on our part -

A -

S - secondary

S - sense of an otherwise

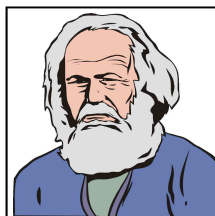
U - unknowable

M - material

E - existence.

Another reinforcement of our observation that to think truthfully is to think realistically, and a reminder of the assumptive nature of our interpretations of reality.

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ACTIVIST SCHOOLS

1. The Marxists

Activist philosophers believe Philosophy must be an active part of life. He (or she) accepts that having been cast into a role for life without an audition, he/she must nevertheless play their part - however they see it. Given this life-oriented way of thinking philosophically, there are at least three different kinds of activism in the philosophic enterprise. (1) The Reformist. (2) The Pragmatist and (3) The Existentialist. In this (S.3.6.) study and the next two in the "Schools: category (S.3.7. and S.3.8.), we will examine the distinctive contribution each seeks to make. It is important to see that for as committed an activist philosopher may be, finally, all he (or she) has is a point-of-view along with many others.

S.3.6.



To change the framework of society.

The Marxists afford a good example of political activism inspired by an activist philosophy. "Heretofore philosophers have only interpreted the world differently: the point is, however, to change it". This famous saying from Karl Marx, defines his enterprise as an activist thinker. Marx considered human society should be a level playing field of equal opportunity for all without exception. E. Fromm says: "Marx's aim was that of the spiritual emancipation of man, of his liberation from the chains of economic determination, of restituting him in his human wholeness, of enabling him to find unity and harmony with his fellow man and with nature". It is a fact that this *activist* philosopher spent most of his time researching in libraries. Philosophy and social activism are somewhat competitive. One can do one or the other, but not both together. Striking a balance between theory and practice is vitally important.

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Ethics/Morality



Ethics is the name given to the theory of what is considered right or good behaviour. The basic question is: who has the right to rule over us in this way? In civic matters, it is the rule of law. In conscience matters it can only be the individual person. However, the individual can be guided by at least three initiatives when deciding conscience matters.

Rules. A person may adopt a set of rules dictated by some moral authority which he/she applies as they would the rules of the road. It's right; it's wrong.

Relativities. This is the "when in Rome" thing, since varying customs and codes provide for different behaviours in societies. "So, do as Rome does"

Real Life. This is the moral decision taken *after* the event requiring it. The ethic here is that decisions can only be made in the context of the real-life circumstances. The degree to which a decision serves the well-being of all concerned makes it "right".

Can good come from evil?

S.4.6.



Morality is the name given to the practice of what is considered right or good behaviour, and it has two sides to it. It has a sneaky side, (an outward show of what is not inwardly real), and a sincere side (what you see is what is there).

How would you behave if you had a magic ring with which you could disappear and re-appear at will?



The story is told of Gyges the shepherd of Lydia, who while attending his flock came across a corpse on whose finger remained a ring. Placing the ring on his own finger, Gyges discovered that by turning the ring this way or that, he could become invisible and re-appear again at will. Gyges used his new found power to kill the king, seduce the queen and took over the kingdom

Confessing his sneaky sin to God, King David said: "Surely you desire truth in the inward part" (Ps.51:6) He's not the only one. Husbands and wives; parents and children; employers and workers; MP's and their constituents - we all want people to be -

fair dinkum!

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Francis Bacon
(1561-1626 A.D.)

Francis Bacon was born at York House, The Strand, London. His elegant address reflected the salubrious lifestyle he enjoyed. Well-connected by family and marriage, he graduated in Law from Cambridge University at age 23. Knighted by King James in 1603 and appointed to the Privy Council in 1616, in 1618 he became Lord Chancellor of England. Three years later 23 charges of bribery and corruption were brought against him. Found guilty he was stripped of public office and exiled to his estate in Gorhambury. While experimenting in the preservation of chicken-meat by stuffing it with snow, he caught a chill and developed pneumonia from which he died.

S.5.6.



Bacon lived at a time that was nudging the modern era when a new pride was taken in the capacity of man's rational mind, purged of primitive superstitions, to understand and control the natural world. This fact is reflected in Bacon's *Magna Instauratio, or "the Great Reconstruction"*, in which he attempted "a total reconstruction of the sciences, arts, and all human knowledge". (He was a synoptic thinker). He began this venture when he was 31, developed it during his 40's, but it was when he was exiled for being a naughty boy (or just one who by reason of his high profile got caught?), much of the great work was completed. Bacon was a high-minded human being, but a human being like us all. He spent 4 days in the Tower, after which through the intervention of King James, his fine was cancelled and he was released to do his research.

Good did come from evil!