

# Epistemology

The Study of Knowledge

# Dialectic

- Socratic Method
  - idea that learning how little we know is the best way to gain knowledge.
  - asks questions designed to find the limits of one's knowledge.
  - Standard method of “philosophy in action.”

# Dialectic in Practice

- Aristotle's pro and con approach is the standard version.
- Not so much about winning as helping the audience learn.
- Useful not just in discussing a specific question, but also in clarifying an entire way of thinking.

# Empiricism vs. Rationalism

- Rationalists: Empiricism eliminates too many topics.
- Empiricists: Rationalism has no evidence and is too speculative.
- You can't combine them, but a good dialectic conversation could bring you the best of both worlds.

# Idealism

- Immanuel Kant's attempt to combine rationalism and empiricism.
- Looked at rationalist ideals as empirical conditions of the mind.
- the fact that philosophers want to believe in God (R'ism) shows us how the mind works (E'ism). R'ist thought, therefore is an em. fact.

# Idealism, cont'd

- Emp things can only be known with the mind.
- As a result, even things you think you can prove depend on how your mind works.

# Idealism 2.0

- Friedrich Hegel: dialectic isn't just something the mind does to reality, it's something reality does to the mind.
- human consciousness develops and changes through history.
  - The historical process *is* dialectic.

# Idealism 2.1

- Hegel would argue that Kant didn't work out the E vs R debate, but that it worked itself out in the human consciousness. Kant was irrelevant.
- In response to "*I think, therefore I am*", Hegel would argue "*history works the same way thinking does, there for a shared consciousness exists.*"

# Ideology

- Karl Marx disagreed with Hegel.
- Dialectic of history is not the shared consciousness that Hegel described.
- It is instead, the D of H involved changes in the way society took care of people's material needs.

# Marxism

- Less interested in dialectic between R'ism and E'ism. More interested in industrialism vs farming.
- History is structured by economic relationships.
- Economic relationships influenced the way people think.

# Still Marxism

- Agreed with Hegel that the individual mind is less important than the larger picture.
- His “larger picture” was the economic forces that determined social relationships.
- Since social relationships impact the way you think, “knowledge is limited and structured by the way you see to your material needs:  
*Ideology.*

# A Quick Comparison

- Knowledge as ideology is different than seeing knowledge as reason.
- Descartes argued that knowledge came from inside the mind. Marx is thinking about knowing from outside society. How social forces like econ. impact how you think.

# The Least You Need to Know

- Different views of knowing include rationalism (Descartes), empiricism (Locke, Bacon), idealism (Kant and Hegel), and ideology (Marx).
- Rationalism is the view that knowledge is possible without experience.
- Empiricism is the view that knowledge comes from experience.
- Ideology is a system of beliefs or ideas that reinforce the values of a particular class or group of people.
- Different logical techniques for acquiring and testing knowledge are deduction, induction, and dialectic.