

# COGNITION IN WESTERN THOUGHT – A REVIEW

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# To My Teachers

- ▣ Bill Jones- Existential Phenomenology
- ▣ Hans George Gadamer-Hermeneutics
- ▣ Dieter Georgi-Greek and Greek Philosophy
- ▣ Willard Quine-Analytic Philosophy
- ▣ Helmut Koester-Textual Criticism
- ▣ WAMPANOAG PEOPLE

# Introduction

- ▣ Cognition, the states and processes involved in knowing, which in their completeness include **perception and judgment**.
- ▣ Cognition includes all **conscious and unconscious processes** by which knowledge is accumulated, such as perceiving, recognizing, conceiving, and reasoning.
- ▣ Cognition is a **state or experience of knowing** that can be distinguished from an experience of feeling or willing.

# Cognitive Process

- ▣ Cognitive processes are the procedures we use to incorporate **new knowledge** and make decisions based on said knowledge.
- ▣ Perception, attention, memory, reasoning... Each of these cognitive functions work together to integrate the new knowledge and create an **interpretation** of the world around us.

# Cognition in Western Thought

- ▣ **Anthropocentric:** Only humans cognize, although there are hints in early Greek traditions about animal cognition
- ▣ **Patriarchal:** No recognition of women thinkers
- ▣ **Eurocentric:** European thought being the center of the world thought.
- ▣ Modern psychologists and philosophers are studying animal cognition.



# Cognition in Native American Traditions (800 BCE–2020 CE)

- ▣ Matriarchal
- ▣ Blood Memory
- ▣ Performative Knowledge
- ▣ Embedded Cognition
- ▣ Visions , Stories and Metaphors
- ▣ Interaction of Body, Mind, Sprit in Nature
- ▣ Anne Waters, Vine Deloria, Viola F Cardova, Thomas Norton Smith
- ▣ Everything is related and constantly changing- the essence of any particular thing is what it is only insofar as it relates to what it is not

# European Philosophers (600 BCE– Present)

## Thales: The First Philosopher

- ▣ Cognition: Three features
  - Experience
  - Intuition
  - Observation
- ▣ Materialist
- ▣ Water from which everything Emerges and into which everything Returns

# Materialists

- ▣ **Anaximander**, the closest follower of Thales:  
“out of those things whence is generation for existing things, into these again does their destruction take place.”
- ▣ **Xenophanes**: "Everything comes from earth and into earth everything dies."
- ▣ **Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and the Atomists**:  
that things consist of the same indestructible elements “from which they first come to be, and into which they are finally destroyed.”



# Heraclitus (500 BCE)

- Evidence of the **senses**, “The things of which there is sight, hearing, experience, I prefer.” Sight is the best of the senses: “The eyes are more accurate **witnesses** than the ears.”
- “Learning many things does not teach **understanding**. Else it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, as well as Xenophanes and Hecataeus!”

# Heraclitus

- ▣ “All men have a share in **self-knowledge** and **sound thinking**.”
- ▣ “Sound thinking is the greatest virtue and wisdom: **to speak the truth and to act on the basis of an understanding of the nature of things**”. Such an understanding can result only from an ability to interpret the language of nature. The proper understanding allows one to act in a harmonious way.

# Epicurus (350 BCE)

- ▣ Just as sensations occur as a result of thin films emitted by objects that enter the appropriate sense organ, so too some of these simulacra are fine enough to penetrate directly to the **mind** (located in the chest), and that is how we **imagine such objects** .

# Epicurus

- ▣ A great barrier to correct thinking is **language** itself, which, because it has a name for death, may suggest that death (being dead) is something a person can experience and hence deserves to be feared. **Words** must be understood in their basic sense, Epicurus says, as opposed to “empty sounds.”

# Plato

## (500 BCE–420 BCE)

- ▣ **NOESIS:** Intuition, immediate perception, without mediation
- ▣ **DIANOIA:** Discursive thinking
- ▣ **EIKASIA:** Imagining
- ▣ **PISTIS:** Faith, Belief, Trust



# Aristotle

## (385 BCE–325 BCE)

- ▣ **Anima, Psuche:** Soul of All Beings, Animals, Plants and all animal beings
- ▣ **NOUS:** Mind
  - **Nous Poietikos:** Active Mind, a craft, light , deathless, everlasting
  - **Passive Mind:** Matter and Perishable
- ▣ **Need Both to think**

# Aristotle

## Sensation (sentient cognition):

- ▣ Sensation involves the **alteration** of the sense organs by the objects sensed.
- ▣ The objects sensed are external to the senses and act upon them to configure them in characteristic ways.
- ▣ The sensing faculty becomes like the object sensed (sensible species or likeness), and this underlies the alteration (or configuration) of the sense organ counting also as **intentional** and as *having an interior side*, i.e., as being a type of *cognition, an act of sensing*, as well as a **physical state** of the organ. Think of the sensible species or likeness of the object *O* as a certain configuration of the sense organ by virtue of which the animal senses-in-the-*O*-way through that organ.

# Aristotle

- Sensing just is an **operation of a physical or material organ**, and this is why each sense is limited to a fixed range and intensity of object. In addition, sensing is the foundation for imaginings, remembering, etc.
- A corresponding account can be given of feelings (or emotions). **Feelings are the interior aspect of certain physiological changes** wrought by sensing (or imaginings or remembering, etc.), and they have the objects of those sensing (or imaginings or remembering, etc.) as their own objects.

# Aristotle

## Intellection (intellective cognition):

- ▣ Intellection is similar to sensation in that the intellect becomes like the object which is understood. Aristotle conceives of **sensation and intellection** by *analogy with* the composition of material substances from **form and matter**:
  - **Reality**: Object constituted by matter configured by form.
  - **Sensation**: Matter (sense organ) is configured by form (sensible likeness corresponding to object)
  - **Intellection**: Matter (intellect as passive or receptive) is configured by form (intelligible likeness corresponding to object)



# Francis Bacon

## (1561 CE–1626 CE)

- ▣ **MAN**, as the minister and **interpreter of nature**, does and understands as much as his observations on the order of nature, either with regard to things or the mind, permit him, and neither knows nor is capable of more.
- ▣ **The unassisted hand and the understanding left to itself possesses but little power.** Effects are produced by the means of instruments and helps, which the understanding requires no less than the hand; and as instruments either promote or regulate the motion of the hand, so those that are applied to the mind prompt or protect the understanding.



# Francis Bacon

- ▣ Knowledge and human power are synonymous, since the ignorance of the cause frustrates the effect; for **nature is only subdued by submission**, and that which in contemplative philosophy corresponds with the cause in practical science becomes the rule.
- ▣ Inductive Method-We have but one simple method of delivering our sentiments, namely, we must bring men to particulars and their regular series and order, and they must for a while **renounce their notions**, and begin to form an **acquaintance with things**.

# BARUCH SPINOZA (1532 CE–1600 CE)

- ▣ COGNITION- THREE TYPES
  - Imagination or Opinion
  - Reason or Ideas
  - Intuitive Knowledge

# Rene Descartes

## (1596 CE–1650 CE)

- ▣ Whatever I have accepted until now as most true has come to me through my senses. But occasionally I have found that they have deceived me, and it is unwise to trust completely those who have deceived us even once.
- ▣ So after thoroughly thinking the matter through I conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, must be true whenever I assert it or think it.

# Rene Descartes

- ▣ I now know that even bodies are perceived not by the senses or by imagination but by the intellect alone, **not through their being touched or seen but through their being understood**; and this helps me to understand that I can perceive my own mind more easily and clearly than I can anything else.
- ▣ So I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule that *whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true.*

# Rene Descartes

- ▣ Among my ideas, some seem to be **INNATE**, some to be caused from the outside, and others to have been invented by me. As I see it, my understanding of what a *thing* is, what *truth* is, and what *thought* is, derives purely from my own nature, which means that it is INNATE, my hearing a noise or seeing the sun or feeling the fire comes from things outside me; and **sirens, hippogriffs and the like are my own invention.**



# Immanuel Kant (1724 CE–1804 CE)

- ▣ Cognition and Knowledge are separate
- ▣ **Perception:** A representation with consciousness.
- ▣ **Sensation:** A perception that relates only to the knowing subject as a modification of its own state (e.g., pain) and without reference to any other object.
- ▣ **Cognition:** Objective perception.
- ▣ **Intuition:** Cognition relating immediately to an object, which is single.
- ▣ **Empirical Intuition:** Wholly contingent sense perception of a single object.
- ▣ **Pure Intuition:** Object necessarily joined to all empirical intuitions in advance of any particular perceptions. There are two pure intuitions: space and time.
- ▣ **Concept:** A cognition relating immediately to an object by means of some feature that several things have in common.

# Immanuel Kant

- ▣ **Empirical Concept:** A concept of what several objects of sense perception have in common.
- ▣ **Pure Concept:** A concept of what objects must have in common.
- ▣ **Notion:** A pure concept having its origin in the understanding alone.
- ▣ **Idea:** A concept of reason (not understanding), transcending the possibility of all experience. As with other concepts, these may be pure or empirical.

# GWF Hegel

## (1730 CE–1820 CE)

Knowledge does not relate to anything beyond experience, but is itself the ultimate or absolute object.

- **Sense Certainty**
- **Perception**- knowing what an object is requires the mind's mediation
- **Understanding**-unity of cognitive object and subject
- **Cognition**, Erkennen-to know in what the object's determinate, substantial nature consists in
- **Knowledge**, Wissen-practical interest of self consciousness

# GWF Hegel

- ▣ **Self-consciousness** achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness
- ▣ Consciousness is the mental function that accounts for **ordered experience** and which provides us with a **unified experience of reality**, instead of a chaotic flow of meaningless information. By means of consciousness, we are therefore able to represent and process in a meaningful way the stimuli that fall in our phenomenal space.



# GWF Hegel

- ▣ **Self-consciousness** exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it **exists only in being acknowledged**.
- ▣ **Dialectical Method**- In this method dialectical laws are observed and the unity and struggle of opposites can be found. **Opposites of cognition processes move, condition and complement each other**, they make cognition process continuous and ongoing. There is a transition from one cognition stage to another one. The notion is cognized as real idea in a dialectical movement.



# Karl Marx

## (1818 CE–1885 CE)

- Cognition- Human sensuous activity to satisfy needs. Humans have to “BE” before they can think.
- The assimilation of the external world, which is at first biological, subsequently social and therefore human, (and occurs as an)
- Organization of the raw material of nature in an effort to satisfy needs; cognition, which is a factor in the assimilation, cannot evade this universal determinism.

# Karl Marx

- ▣ For **all consciousness is actually born of practical needs**, and the act of cognition itself is a tool designed to satisfy these needs.
- ▣ **Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.**
- ▣ Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and **the existence of men is their actual life-process**. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.

# Edmund Husserl (1859 CE–1941 CE)

- ▣ **Intentionality**- Consciousness
- ▣ **Consciousness is always consciousness of something**
- ▣ Intentional acts as momentary components of certain trans-temporal cognitive structures — *dynamic intentional structures* — in which one and the same object or state of affairs is represented throughout a period of time during which the subject's cognitive perspective upon that object or state of affairs is constantly changing.

# Edmund Husserl

**Noema:** Perceptual content

**Experience:** Religious, mythical, aesthetic, perceptual, linguistic, and bodily.

**Consciousness:** is a rich field where believing, loving, hoping, feeling, willing, imagining, perceiving, sensing, remembering, attending, anticipating, and all other conscious and unconscious acts are performed, and the meaning of objects of these mental acts are disclosed.



# Edmund Husserl

Phenomenology: Science of all sciences

- ▣ **Experience**, in a phenomenological sense, includes not only the relatively **passive** experiences of **sensory perception**, but also **imagination, thought, emotion, desire, volition and action**. In short, it includes everything that we **live through or perform**.
  - Noesis: Act of consciousness
  - Noemata: Object of consciousness
  - Bracketing: Knowledge is only possible by bracketing all assumptions about the world and experience



# Martin Heidegger (1889 CE–1976 CE)

- ▣ Practice more primordial than cognition
- ▣ Dasein-Being in the world with others towards death
- ▣ Cognition:
  - ▣ Embedded-Interaction between body and the world
  - ▣ Embodied-Body plays decisive role in cognition
  - ▣ Enactive- Actively create our environment to interact
  - ▣ Extended- Mind does not reside in brain it extends to the world
  - ▣ Affective---Emotions play an important role in cognition

# Martin Heidegger

- ▣ Our average everyday dealings in the world are not guided by cognition. Rather they are a matter of **engaged familiarity**.
- ▣ We are familiar with our environment and the paraphernalia we encounter in it primarily through our **skills/abilities/competences** rather than through cognition.

# Martin Heidegger

- ▣ Dasein is in its world not primarily by being conscious of it or having beliefs about it and intentions to act in it. Rather, dasein is most fundamentally in its world by being **familiar** with it.
- ▣ Heidegger replaces traditional notions of consciousness and intentionality with a triple-faceted analysis of:
  - **Understanding**: by which he means practical understanding, that is to say: know-how, competence — skillful mastery of the world around us
  - **Mood**: disposedness — sensitivity to how important something is and the way things matter to us
  - **Language**: discourse — the ability to articulate the world in language

# Merleau Ponty (1908 CE–1961 CE)

- ▣ Embodied Cognition
- ▣ Cognition not regarded anymore as “brain-bound”
- ▣ Cognition is realized by complex patterns of interactivity between brain, body, and world.
- ▣ Cognition is “distributed” over brain, body, and even world.

# Merleau Ponty

- ▣ The lived body, or “body proper”: the body not as a physical object, but as experienced from the first-person perspective, “**subjectively.**”
- ▣ Perception is not a matter of passively representing the external world.
- ▣ Perception is a bodily activity: it is something we do as embodied agents, and is closely interconnected with **action** and **motivation.**
- ▣ “**Every perceptual habitually is still a motor habit**”



# Hans Georg Gadamer (1900 CE–2002 CE)

- Cognition unreflectively depends on the **historical context** in which it occurs
- Context dependence involves **tradition and historicism**
- Our **preunderstanding is pre-given**, not as a set of axioms that we can select and adopt in freedom; it is rather an atmosphere into which we grow, a milieu, a *historical tradition* that forms us, that is all around us. It is part of our everyday practice. It takes the form of a set of *stories* that we tell about our life, and by which we live. Such stories are intricately related to stories of others, to culturally shared notions and historically shaped values.
- **The result of interpretation is a change of our preunderstandings, a change of our horizon into a mutual horizon**

# William James

## (1842 CE–1910 CE)

- Cognition is a **function of consciousness**. The first factor it implies is therefore a state of consciousness wherein the cognition shall take place
- Whatever elements an act of cognition may imply besides, it at least implies the existence of a **feeling**.
- Knowledge - cognition of '**realities**,' meaning by realities things that exist independently of the feeling through which their cognition occurs. If the contents of the feeling occur nowhere in the universe outside of the feeling itself, and perish with the feeling, common usage refuses to call it a reality, and brands it as a subjective feature of the feeling's constitution, or at the most as the feeling's **dream**.

# BERTRAND RUSSELL ( 1872 CE–1972 CE)

- ▣ COGNITION :
  - Perception
  - Memory
  - Belief
  - Desire- Conscious and Unconscious

# Summary

## Two Schools

- ▣ **Materialism:** Cognition, ideas, thought , consciousness is reflection of interaction of being in the world. **EXISTENCE PRECEDES ESSENCE**
  
- ▣ **Idealism:** Cognition arises due to a priori knowledge of soul, forms, spirit, mind, Being and God revealed by a revealer. **ESSENCE PRECEDES EXISTENCE.**

**Thank you**