

OPTION B

LESSON PLAN

LECTURER: MARIA WASMIRLI	COURSE LEVEL: A LEVEL
DATE: 13/04/00	LEVEL: A2
TIME: 3:00- 4:30	TOPIC AREA: CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
DURATION: 100	NUMBERS ON CLASS: 04
WEEK NUMBER: 29/30	

Newcastle-under-Lyme College

SPECIFIC LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF LESSON:

FOR STUDENTS TO BE INTRODUCED TO MAIN ISSUES IN S. KIERKEGAARD'S WORK

[the limits of objectivity', '(is subjective truth' as this is felt/experienced in faith, 'authentic-life').]

RESOURCES: - A mini lecture to set the context (with handouts to cover the material)
 - A brief discussion. This will draw upon central questions (handout)
 - Group work: to work out the main issues (how these relate in K's view) and to draw out any implications.

PROPOSED CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Introduction: mini lecture to set the context of the question Kierkegaard is asking in his Postscript. [see handout]

Development of theme: I will introduce Kierkegaard's main views in view of answers to certain questions. I will say a bit more on the issue of faith and how it relates to subjectivity and authenticity in view of the following themes:

- "Authentic human existence requires us to take a blind leap of faith".
- "It is with subjectivity that Christianity is concerned; and it is only in subjectivity that its truth exists".
- We have "forgotten what it means to exist as human beings".

Conclusion K's view, that it is more important to be passionately sincere (and in this sense truthful) than it is to be objectively right, will be made clear through group work. The class will go back to review the question, 'what would God's existence mean to me... how would it shape my existence, in the way I live, and act and think and feel?'

Homework: Students will work on flow-chart essays on the themes introduced in the lecture for after Easter.

SELF EVALUATION: The session went quite well despite the fact that I was being observed. Upon the arrival of Dr Lund and Ms Roberts I explained to the class that the visitors were here to observe my teaching and their learning experience and not to assess them. And I asked the class to be themselves and carry on as normal. I think this was a good idea because they were not so nervous in their presence. Still, the class was not as lively as usual at the start. Having said that, they enjoyed the topic and the group work, as planned. The mini lecture was a bit longer than anticipated because I allowed students to interrupt with questions. All in all though, we all had fun. I even forgot I was being observed and I think the students did too.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT TIME

I need to remind the students to leave discussing questions until after the mini lecture so that we don't get bogged down.

Handout for week 29/30
Kierkegaard on the Limits of Objectivity
Maria Kasmirli

Key points

- Kierkegaard addresses the question 'How should I live my life so as to be inwardly happy' by painting a picture of the religious lifestyle and contrasting it with inferior aesthetic and ethical lifestyles.
- He claims that the religious lifestyle is best because it involves a 'blind leap of faith'. It is a lifestyle you endorse on the intuitive level. You are drawn to it, you cannot help but 'leap' into such a lifestyle without having any inclinations to look for evidence that would support your choice.
- Kierkegaard thinks that only through this way of living can we become inwardly happy. The thought is that we get to be genuinely happy because we get to be true to ourselves.
- This sounds shocking to a person brought up in the analytic tradition! We have been taught to look for the truth, to look for objective facts of the matter: nothing less will do.
- But Kierkegaard tells us, 'Wake up: when it comes to questions about how to live your life, there *are* no facts of the matter!' He thinks we have two options:
- The first option is to live on the level of objectivity, searching for certainty and doubting everything. Since there are no facts of the matter, any answers will be temporary, open to doubt, and eventually falsified. And once we realise this, he thinks, we can never be inwardly happy because we will always be looking for a truth we cannot find and filled with emptiness and eternal worry. We will live a frustrated life as opposed to a genuinely happy one.
- The second option is to live a life 'true-to-yourself': to live a genuine existence. For this to be possible we have to live according to what feels right to us on an intuitive level, not on a factual level.
- To follow this second option, Kierkegaard says, we have to endorse the idea of objective uncertainty (the idea that the only claim we can hold onto objectively is that nothing is certain). And so you 'risk' your life, but you risk it like the religious do.
- The religious believe in God in the absence of a proof for his existence, on the mere basis that it feels right to them. Unlike those who adopt pleasurable or ethical lifestyles, these people are inwardly happy because they live a life they chose passionately and so are true to themselves. Their individual inward happiness is their own doing, not the result of a passive acceptance of common standards in response to societal and peer pressures.

Questions

1. If something is 'merely subjectively true', it is less important than if it was 'objectively true'.

Agree []
 Disagree []
 Don't know []

2. Which of the two modes of truth are more significant when considering issues that can be classified under the following categories:

Issue	Subjective truth	Objective truth	Don't know
Scientific			
Moral			
Aesthetic			
Religious			
Social			
Psychological			

3. It is necessarily the case that if one emphasises subjective and non-scientific notions at the expense of such things as objective truth, evidence, reason, and knowledge, then one must be recommending inconsistency, irrationality, superstition, and ignorance.

Agree []
 Disagree []
 Don't know []

4. Subjective truth in Kierkegaard's views amounts to the idea that, what I hold can be true merely *in virtue of the way in which* I hold it, even though *what* I hold is objectively false.

Agree []
 Disagree []
 Don't know []

5. We have forgotten what it means to exist as human beings". What does Kierkegaard mean by this? (Think here about issues to do with authenticity - with the way in which human beings ought to exist).

Agree []
 Disagree []
 Don't know []

6. It is inevitable that the adoption of a scientific world-view (with its emphasis on what is general, objective, testable...) leads to an increasing insensitivity or indifference to what is genuinely subjective and personal.

Agree []
Disagree []
Don't know []

7. If (6) were true, would that be a good thing?

Agree []
Disagree []
Don't know []

For general discussion

8. Does Kierkegaard's view lead inevitably to a radical form of relativism?
9. How, if at all, does relativism about scientific truth differ from relativism about moral, aesthetic... values?
10. Where does Kierkegaard's view leave people like Hitler and suicide bombers?

Maria Kasmirli
13/04/00