For my grandson Louis Bunnin
N.B.

In memory of my grandparents
J.Y.
The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy

NICHOLAS BUNNIN AND JIYUAN YU

Blackwell Publishing
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>745</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the Dictionary covers a wide historical range and explores many subject areas, it focuses on terms and individuals at the center of current philosophical discussion. Many readers will consult the Dictionary for help in understanding individual terms and the contributions of individual philosophers, but others will explore a given philosophical issue or area by reading a range of related entries. A philosopher browsing through the text will learn much about the history and structure of Western philosophy and its sources of creative dispute. We hope that the Dictionary will be an invitation to further thought and that it will not be taken as the last word on any topic.

Entries for philosophical terms are intended to provide clear and challenging expositions that give access to major philosophical issues. Queries and objections are often included to capture the perplexity arising from philosophical questions and to encourage readers to be active and critical in their response to the Dictionary as a whole. Many entries give the derivations from Greek, Latin, French, or German. Entries for terms state the areas of philosophy in which the terms have their main use, provide cross-references to entries on philosophers and other terms, and conclude with illustrative quotations from a classical or modern source. The reference section at the end of the book gives details of the works cited in these quotations. Biographical entries discuss the philosophical contributions and list at least some of the major works of their subjects.

(Duckworth, 1990); A. C. Grayling (ed.), *Philosophy: A Guide Through the Subject* (Oxford University Press, 1995); Nicholas Bunnin and E. P. Tsui-James (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy* (Blackwell, 1996); Ted Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 1995); the *Blackwell Companions to Philosophy* series; the *Blackwell Philosopher Dictionaries* series; and the *Cambridge Companions to Philosophers* series.

In addition to those mentioned above, we wish to thank the Leverhulme Trust and the People’s Publishing House, Beijing. A grant from the Leverhulme Trust supported our preparation of the *Dictionary of Western Philosophy: English–Chinese* (People’s Publishing House, Beijing, 2001). The present Dictionary is a revised and augmented version of that earlier work. The Philosophy Library and the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford made their philosophical riches available to us. Edward Craig and Chad Hansen were referees for our Leverhulme Trust project, and Sir Peter Strawson assessed our initial list of headwords. Finally, we thank Nick Bellorini and Kelvin Matthews of Blackwell Publishing for their encouragement and support, and Valery Rose and Caroline Richards for their excellent editing. We both enjoyed our intensive work in compiling this Dictionary, and each learned so much from the philosophical insights of the other.

Nicholas Bunnin
Jiyuan Yu
abandonment

Modern European philosophy An experience gained through realizing that there are no objective principles or authorities to guide one’s life. According to existentialism, this experience helps us to recognize that one cannot attain authenticity by appeal to God or to philosophical systems. We should each understand our own unique existential condition, reject bad faith, and assume full responsibility for life. The conception of abandonment is hence related to the existentialist account of the autonomy of the agent.

“When we speak of ‘abandonment’ – a favourite word of Heidegger – we only mean to say that God does not exist, and that it is necessary to draw the consequence of his absence right to the end.”
Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism

abduction

Philosophy of science C. S. Peirce’s term for the logic of discovery, a creative process that is one of the three fundamental types of reasoning in science, along with induction and deduction. When we encounter a new phenomenon that cannot be explained through the application of a general law, we should pick out certain characteristic features of this new phenomenon and attempt to find relations among these features. After forming several theories or hypotheses that might explain the phenomenon, we should select one of them to test against experience. Such a process of reasoning to form empirical theories or hypotheses for testing is called abduction. Peirce also called it retroduction, hypothesis or presumption, but other philosophers have normally called it induction. Peirce distinguished abduction from induction by defining induction as the experimental testing of a theory. He held that abduction is what Aristotle discussed as apagago (Greek, leading away, substituting a more likely premise for a less acceptable one).

“Presumption, or more precisely, abduction... furnishes the reasoner with the problematic theory which induction verifies.” Peirce, The Collected Papers, vol. II

Abelard, Peter (1079–1142)

Medieval French philosopher, born near Nantes, Brittany. Abelard, whose main concern was logic, made valuable contributions to discussion of issues such as inference, negation, predicate-expressions, and transitivity. He sought to discuss theological problems by analyzing the propositions used to state these problems. He steered a middle course between realism and nominalism and maintained that the reference of a universal term is not necessarily something that exists. In ethics, he focused on the intention of the agent rather than on the action itself and considered sin to be an intention to act against God’s will and virtue to be living in love with God.
major works include *Dialectica*, *Theologian Scholarium*, *Ethics* (*Scito te ipsum*, or *Know Thyself*) and *Dialogue between a Christian, a Philosopher and a Jew*. He also wrote commentaries on Porphyry’s *Isagoge* and Aristotle’s *Categories* and *De Interpretatione*. The story of love between Abelard and Heloise has fascinated many later generations.

**abortion**

*Ethics* The intentional killing of a fetus or fertilized human egg by causing its expulsion from the mother’s womb before its birth. Whether abortion should be morally permitted has been intensively debated in the past few decades and has become a major political and legal issue in many industrialized countries. One focus of the debate is on the moral status of a fetus. Is a fetus a person with a substantive right to life? The anti-abortion argument holds that a fetus is already a person and therefore should be within the scope of the moral rule that “you should not kill.” This view leads to a discussion concerning the concept of personhood, that is, at what stage between conception and birth does a fetus become a person? Another focus concerns the rights of the pregnant woman. Does she have a right to bodily autonomy, including the right to decide what happens to her own body? Even if a fetus is a person, how shall we balance its rights and the woman’s rights? Still another problem concerns the extent to which we should take into account the undesirable consequences of the prohibition of abortion, such as poverty and overpopulation. Different sides of the debate hold different positions resulting in part from the moral principles they accept. There is currently no common basis to solve all the disagreement.

Nevertheless, abortion, which was legally permitted only in Sweden and Denmark until 1967, has become accepted in the majority of Western countries.

“Induced abortion is the termination of unwanted pregnancy by destruction of the fetus.” *Rita Simon, Abortion*

**Absolute, the**

*Metaphysics* [from Latin *absolutus*, in turn originating from *ab*, away, from and *solvere*, free, loosen; free from limitations, qualifications or conditions] To call something absolute is to say that it is unconditional or universal, in contrast to what is relative, comparative or varying according to circumstances. In metaphysics, the Absolute, as a technical term, is a single entity that is ultimate, unchanging, overriding and all-comprehensive. *Nicholas of Cusa* uses this expression to refer to *God*. Subsequently, the Absolute is always associated with concepts such as the one, the perfect, the eternal, the uncaused, and the infinite and has been regarded as the reality underlying appearance and providing rational ground for appearance.

The revival of the notion of the Absolute in modern philosophy derives from the debate in the 1770s between Mendelssohn and Jacob about *Spinoza’s* definition of substance. *Schelling*, employing Spinoza’s notion of substance, defines the Absolute as a neutral identity that underlies both subject (mind) and object (nature). Everything that is mental or physical is an attribute of the Absolute or of “indefinite substance.” He further claims that the Absolute is a living force, an organism, and something that is self-generating rather than mechanistic. *Hegel* claimed that the Absolute is the unity of substance and its modes, of the infinite and the finite. Such an Absolute is both a substance and a subject, developing from the underlying reality to the phenomenal world and reaching absolute knowledge as its highest phase. Thus, the Absolute is a self-determining activity, a spirit, and a concrete dynamic totality. Its development mirrors the development of knowledge. Hegel’s metaphysics sought to work out the process and implications of this development.

In the twentieth century, this term is particularly associated with *Bradley*, who conceives the Absolute to be a single, self-differentiating whole. Antimetaphysical thought argues for the elimination of the Absolute as an entity that cannot be observed and that performs no useful function in philosophy.

“Absolutes are the limits of explanation, and as such they have been the main theme of traditional philosophy.” *Findlay, Ascent to the Absolute*

**absolute conception**

*Metaphysics* A term introduced by Bernard *Williams* in his study of *Descartes* for a conception of reality as it is independent of our experience and to which all representations of reality can be related. To gain such a conception requires overcoming the limitations of our enquiry and any systematic bias,
distortion, or partiality in our outlook. Such a conception may enable us to view our representations as one set among others and to avoid assessing the views of others from our own standpoint. Williams claims that our notion of knowledge implies that such a conception is possible.

“This notion of an absolute conception can serve to make effective a distinction between ‘the world as it is independent of our experience’ and ‘the world as it seems to us’.” B. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*

**absolute idea**

Metaphysics The absolute idea, for Hegel, is equivalent to absolute truth in his *Phenomenology of Mind* and to the absolute in his *Logic*. It is also called absolute spirit. For Hegel, an idea is not something mental or separate from particulars, but is the categorical form of spirit. The absolute idea is the idea in and for itself, an infinite reality and an all-embracing whole. It exists in a process of self-development and self-actualization. As a metaphysical counterpart of the Christian God, it is the basis for the teleological development of both the natural and social worlds. Its determinate content constitutes reality. The absolute idea is what truly is, and the final realization of truth. For Hegel, the absolute idea is a dynamic self, involving inner purposiveness and normative ideals. By characterizing reality as the absolute idea, Hegel showed that his notion of reality is fundamentally conceptual. It is a unity of the ideal of life with the life of cognition. The core of Hegel’s idealism is the claim that the being of all finite things is derived from the absolute idea. In terms of this notion, Hegel integrated ontology, metaphysics, logic, and ethics into one system.

“The defect of life lies in its being only the idea implicit or natural, whereas cognition is in an equally one-sided way the merely conscious idea, or the idea for itself. The unity and truth of these two is the Absolute Idea, which is both in itself and for itself.” Hegel, *Logic*

**abstract/concrete**

Epistemology, metaphysics [from Latin *abstrahere*, to remove something from something else and *concrescere*, to grow together] At the outset of a process of recognition our concepts are likely to be expressed in two theorems: (1) **reflexivity**: $x = x$ (everything is identical with itself) and (2) the **indiscernibility of identicals** (or Leibniz’s law): if $a$ and $b$ are identical, whatever is true of $a$ is true of $b$, and vice versa. Hence, “a is identical with b’ means simply “a is the same as b.”

Peter Geach calls this account the classical theory of identity and believes that it is mistaken. Instead, he claims that identity is always relative, so that $a$ is not simply the same as $b$, but rather that $!a$ can be the same as $b$ relative to one concept but not the same as $b$ relative to another concept. In response, some argue that relative identity is qualitative identity, while numerical identity remains absolute.

“Absolute identity seems at first sight to be presupposed in the branch of logic called identity theory.” Geach, *Logic Matters*

**absolute rights**, see rights, absolute

**absolute spirit**, another term for absolute idea

**absolutism**

Metaphysics, ethics, political philosophy A term with different references in different areas. In metaphysics, it is opposed to subjectivism and relativism and claims that there is an ultimate, eternal, and objective principle that is the source and standard of truth and value. Ethical absolutism holds that there is a basic universal principle of morality that every rational being should follow, despite their different empirical circumstances. Moral absolutism is opposed to moral relativism, which denies that any single moral principle has universal validity. In political theory, it is the view that the government’s power and rights are absolute and that they always have priority when they come into conflict with the rights, interests, needs, preferences, or desires of citizens or groups in society.

“In ethics, the rejection of absolutism leads initially to the recognition of multiple moral authorities, each claiming its own local validity.” Toulmin, *Human Understanding*
vague or superficial. We must first abstract them in order to understand their diverse determinations. Being abstract is the product of abstraction, that is, of drawing away something common from diverse perceptible or sensory items and disregarding their relatively inessential features. Concepts and universals are thus formed. To say that something is abstract means that it is conceptual, universal, essential, or a matter of principle, while to say that something is concrete means that it is contextual, particular, personal, sensible. To be concrete is equivalent to being rich and vivid. Since what is abstract is drawn from what is concrete, to be abstract is equated with lacking the detail and individuality of the concrete and is thought to be meager, dependent, and lifeless. The existence and nature of abstract entities such as numbers and universals has long been a matter of dispute.

In another usage, which is especially prominent in Hegel’s philosophy, being abstract means being cut off from thoughts or from other sensory items, while being concrete is to be relational. Hence, a particular is abstract if it is isolated from other particulars, while a concept or universal is concrete if it is related to other concepts or universals and is one item in an organic system. Hegel called such a concept a “concrete concept” or “concrete universal.”

“Empiricists are in general rather suspicious with respect to any kind of abstract entities like properties, classes, relations, numbers, propositions, etc.” Carnap, Meaning and Necessity

abstract ideas

Epistemology, philosophy of language How can an idea stand for all individuals of a given kind even though the individuals vary in their properties? How can we form general statements about kinds of things and reason with regard to them? Locke introduced the notion of abstract ideas, also called general ideas, and claimed that they are universal concepts generated as a result of a process of abstraction from our ideas of individual exemplars of a kind, by leaving out their specific features and keeping what is common to all. As an empiricist, Locke believed that only particulars exist in the world. An abstract idea does not refer to something individual or particular, but is a special kind of mental image. This image is the meaning of the abstract general term. The function of abstract ideas is to classify individuals into different kinds for us. As classically understood in Locke, abstraction is something in the mind between reality and the way we classify it. He believed that an abstract idea encompasses a whole kind of thing. This claim was rejected by Berkeley, who insisted that all ideas are particular and only become general through our use of them. Berkeley’s criticism of Locke’s notion of abstract ideas, like his criticism of Locke’s theory of real essence, has been very influential, but it is a matter of dispute whether his criticism is sound.

abstract particular

Metaphysics An individual property that is peculiar to the individual or particular possessing it, for example the white color possessed only by Socrates and not shared by any other white things. A property is generally regarded as being universal, that is,
capable of being exemplified in many individuals or particulars. But some philosophers believe that there are also particularized qualities or property-instances. These are abstract particulars.

The issue can be traced to Aristotle. He classified all the realities into four kinds in his Categories: (1) that which is neither predicated of a subject nor inherent in a subject, namely, primary substances; (2) that which is predicated of a subject but not inherent in a subject, namely, secondary substances such as species and genus; (3) that which is predicated of a subject and also inherent in a subject, namely, universal attributes or properties; and (4) that which is not predicated of a subject, but which is inherent in a subject. For this last kind of reality, Aristotle’s example is a particular piece of grammatical knowledge. He seems to be distinguishing universal properties and particular properties. In contemporary metaphysics, some philosophers claim that individual properties are constitutive of concrete particulars, that is, of events and physical objects, while others apply Ockham’s razor to deny their existence. Alternative terms for abstract particulars are perfect particulars, particularized qualities, unit of properties, tropes, cases, and property-instances.

“Stout calls particulars which he postulates ‘abstract particulars’. In calling them ‘abstract’ it is not meant that they are other-worldly . . . It is simply that these particulars are ‘thin’ and therefore abstract by comparison with the ‘thick’ or concrete particulars which are constituted out of the abstract particulars.” D. Armstrong, *Universals and Scientific Realism*, vol. 1

abstract terms

Philosophy of language, philosophy of science, philosophy of mathematics The terms naming abstract entities, such as “natural number,” “real number,” “class,” or “property.” Different abstract terms can name the same abstract entity, and abstract terms can be either singular or general. Such terms have been used in mathematics and physics. In relation to the problem of the ontological status of abstract entities, it is also disputed whether the use of these terms will indicate the truth of Platonic realism. For according to Quine’s theory, to admit names of abstract entities commits us to the existence of the abstract entities named by them.

“The distinction between meaning and naming is no less important at the level of abstract terms.”

Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*

abstracta

Metaphysics [plural of Latin abstractum] Abstract entities or objects, which are not perceptible and have no spatio-temporal location. Because we cannot point to them, abstracta are not objects of ostensive definitions. It is generally thought that abstracta do not have causal powers, but this point is controversial in contemporary epistemology. Abstracta are contrasted with concreta (plural of Latin concretum), which are the things that make up the observable world. It is widely held that abstracta are dependent on concreta.

“Abstracta . . . are combinations of concreta and are not directly observable because they are comprehensive totalities.” Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*

abstraction

Epistemology [from Latin abs, away from + trahere, draw, draw away from] A mental operation that forms a concept or idea (an abstract idea) by picking out what is common to a variety of instances and leaving out other irrelevant properties. This is a process of deriving universals and establishing classifications. From this mental act we may form concepts, and then build them up into judgments involving combinations of concepts, and further join judgments into inferences. In ancient philosophy there was a persistent problem about the ontological status of abstract things, and this is also the central point in Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms. Aristotle also refers to abstraction as a mental analysis that separates form from matter. Locke takes abstraction as the means of making ideas represent all objects of the same kind by separating ideas from other existence. For him it is the capacity for abstraction that distinguishes between human beings and animals. His theory of abstract ideas is criticized by Berkeley.

“This is called abstraction, whereby ideas taken from particular beings become general representatives of all of the same kind; and their names general names, applicable to whatever exists