Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy, Queens College, Fall 2004
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Lecture Notes, December 6

I. Three problems of induction, continued

The weak problem of induction is just that sometimes there are two or more equally well-supported theories about the world, theoreis which agree on all the empirical evidence we have gathered. So, even if we presume these theories will continue to hold, and the physical laws will continue to be uniform and stable, we don't know which theory to use.
The weak problem can be solved by gathering more evidence.

The strong problem of induction is Hume's worry that we can't know that the laws of nature will remain uniform and stable. We presume that they will, but this is unjustified.

Now, consider the 'New Problem of Induction'.
(It gets its name from Nelson Goodman's *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*.)
You know what it means for an object to be green.
Consider the property called 'grue'.
An object is grue if it is green until 1/1/2010, when it suddenly turns blue.
How can you tell if a plant is green or grue?

The new problem of induction shows that Hume's problem is not just about physical laws, but about common terms we use to describe the world, too.
For, one could construct other artificial properties, like the property of being a papod.
A papod is a piece of paper which, on July 4, 2006, turns into an Ipod.
All papods, and all grue objects, look exactly like pieces of paper, and green objects, respectively, right now.
There is, in principle, no way to tell them apart.

II. Hume conclusions.
These problems of induction are among the most serious in philosophy, especially in the philosophy of science.
Berkeley had shown that Lockean empiricist principles led to difficulties with our beliefs in an external, material world.
Hume shows that these problems infect all of science, not merely belief in matter.
And Goodman shows that the problem infects even our most common uses of language.
Berkeley thinks that we can continue to speak with the vulgar and think with the learned.
Hume shows that even the most learned beliefs are unjustified.

Perhaps the problem is with Locke's basic empiricist principle.
But Descartes' position was unacceptable as well.
Perhaps we are just stuck as skeptics.

If you wish to continue to think about these matters, take Modern Philosophy, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Philosophy of Science.
We did not talk about Kant, whose work is the culmination of all that we've studied.
These issues are treated differently in contemporary philosophy, but there are recurrent themes.

Similarly, some of these themes are found in earlier writers, like Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle.
We'll look at Plato a little bit.

III. Plato (~428 B.C. - ~348 B.C.) and his metaphysics

The basic metaphysical question is, "What is there?"
Descartes argued that there were bodies, minds, and God
Locke had a similar metaphysics, though the minds could just be bodies, and we don't see any role for God.
We took Locke to be more materialist than he really is.
For Berkeley, there were just minds (and their ideas) and God.

Plato aruges for the existence of two distinct worlds: the material world, and the real world of forms.
The material world is full of contradictions, like those discussed by Descartes, Locke and Berkeley.
Berkeley solved the problems by denying the existence of a material world.
Plato's solution is similar, the material world isn't the real world.
The real world is the world of forms, or ideas.

The sensory world is a world of shadow and illusion, and contradiction.
Forms are the real things.
They are the real properties after which the properties in our world are patterned.
Forms are the causes of the qualities of things.
They are like universals, what Descartes called the building blocks of the material world.
When we say that the sky is blue, Plato says that we mean that the sky participates in the form of blueness.
There are forms of beauty, and justice, and truth, and love, and man, and life.
There is some debate about whether base things like mud have forms.
Read Phaedo, 100b-101b.
The forms are perfect, and unchanging.
Compare with Descartes, who sought "firm and lasting" knowledge.
We learn about forms through thinking, and reasoning.
Our souls become acquainted with the forms in the netherworld, before our birth.
We know them through recollection.
Compare with Descartes' innate knowledge.
See also the analogy of the cave, in Plato's dialogue *The Republic*, for further details.

Why do we need forms?
If we want to know if an act is just, we must know what justice is.
If we want to know if we have knowledge, we must know what knowledge is.
We need to understand the general concept before we can apply it in individual cases.
We are only sensorily acquainted with particulars, which won't give us the general rule.
This is Hume's point.
To know some things are equal, we have to know what equality is, Phaedo: 74d-75d.
Consider, how can we learn what blue is?
We can't unambiguously point to a color, since we are also pointing to a shape, and an object.

This discussion of the forms may be unsatisfying, but we aren't here going to argue for or against the forms.
Take Burstein's *Republic* course, if you want to know more.
Here, just note that Plato solve's Hume's problem.
If we can know the forms, then we can know the PUN, we can have direct insight into the nature of reality.
In the Euthyphro, we want to look at how he seeks the forms.

IV. Plato's dialogues

Plato was an Athenian, a student of Socrates.
Socrates spent much of his life asking questions, of any one who would listen.
Plato transcribed some of these conversations into dialogues, like plays.
These dialogues more formally seek answers to puzzling philosophical questions.
For example: What is justice? What is friendship? What is knowledge? What is beauty?