

Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy, Queens College, Spring 2005  
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Lecture Notes, May 9

## I. Hume conclusions

The 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.

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 same themes recur.

Similarly, some of these themes are found in earlier writers, like Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle.

We'll look at Plato a little bit.

## II. 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, really.

We read him as a materialist, though, ignoring the role of God, and taking minds as bodies (brains).

For Berkeley, there were just minds (and their ideas) and God.

Plato argues 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.

To know something, it can not be false.

But the material world is constantly changing, and what was once true may become false.

I was once a child, and now I'm an adult; once I had hair, and now I am bald.

The material world and its properties, since they change, can not be objects of knowledge.

Berkeley solved the problems by denying the existence of a material world.

Plato's solution is similar.

He claims that the material world is not 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, perfect, and unchanging.

Consider this quote from the *Phaedo*, 100b-e. (Forms are indicated by capitalized words, or by the term "itself.")

I assume the existence of a Beautiful, itself by itself, of a Good and a Great and all the rest... If there is anything beautiful besides the Beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in that Beautiful, and I say so with everything... I no longer understand or recognize those other sophisticated causes, and if someone tells me that a thing is beautiful because it has a bright color or shape or any such thing, I ignore these other reasons - for these all confuse me - but I simply, naively and perhaps foolishly cling to this, that nothing else makes it beautiful other than the presence of, or the sharing in, or however you may describe its relationship to that Beautiful we mentioned, for I will not insist on the precise nature of the relationship, but that all beautiful things are beautiful by the Beautiful... Do you not think so?... And that it is through Bigness that big things are big and the bigger are bigger, and that small things are made small by Smallness?"

The properties in our world are patterned after the forms.

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.

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 have sensory acquaintance only with particulars, which won't give us general rules or scientific laws.

This is Hume's point.

To know some things are equal, we have to know what equality is.

Consider, how can we learn what blue is?

We can not 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 going to argue for the forms here.

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.

### III. 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?

#### IV. Introduction to the *Euthyphro*

This dialogue is a search for the form of piety.  
We will also discuss an analogous search, for the good.  
The same problem arises for that, and for justice, generally.

Euthyphro is on the way to court prosecute his father for murder of a slave.  
Socrates is aghast that someone would do such a thing (not the murder, but the prosecution).  
He wants to know how Euthyphro could prosecute his father.  
To do so, Euthyphro must be sure what piety is, must know that he is doing the right thing.

Socrates asks Euthyphro what piety is.  
Euthyphro gives three responses.  
Socrates shows each response to be unsatisfactory.

#### V. Euthyphro's first definition of piety

Piety =df prosecuting wrongdoers, 5d-e.  
(The phrase '=df' means 'is defined by'.)  
This is not a definition, but an example.  
We want a tool to determine whether an action or person is pious.

A definition will have to work in both directions.  
That is, if A =df B, then everything that is A is B, and everything that is B is A.  
For example, bachelor =df unmarried man.  
So, all bachelors are unmarried men and all unmarried men are bachelors.

It may be that all prosecuting wrongdoers is pious, but it is clearly not the case that all piety is prosecuting wrongdoers.  
So, the first definition does not work, for this formal reason.

#### IV. Euthyphro's second definition of piety

Piety =df that which is dear to the gods, 7a.  
Impiety =df that which is not dear to the gods.  
This doesn't have the formal problem of the first definition.