

Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W

Spring 2011

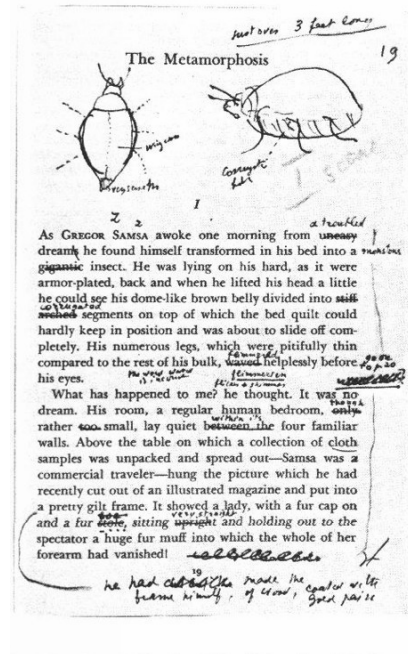
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February 25

Plato and the Soul Theory of Self

Questions on *Metamorphosis*

- What is Kafka's central theme?
- Why does Gregor change into a vermin?
- Is Gregor Samsa the same before and after the metamorphosis?
- Is there a deep meaning to the *Metamorphosis*, or is it just a story?

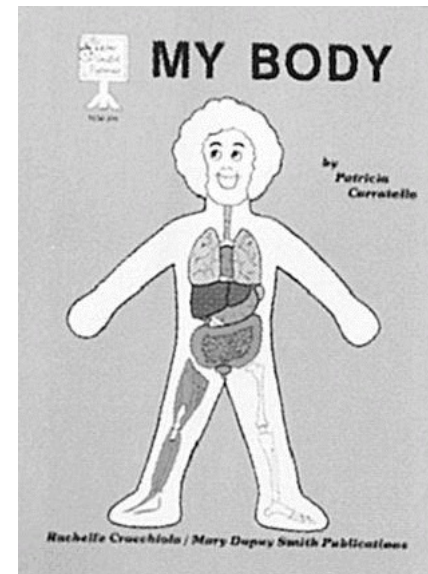


Doubt and the Body

- In the Second Meditation, Descartes asserts that he exists if he is thinking.
- In sections after the *cogito*, Descartes claims that the only essential property of himself is his mind.
- He gives up the body theory of the self for a mind, or soul, theory of self.

Descartes on the Body Theory

What then did I formerly think I was? A man, of course. But what is a man?...It Occurred to me first that I had a face, hands, arms, and this entire mechanism of bodily members: the very same as are discerned in a corpse, and which I referred to by the name “body.”...As to the body, I was not in any doubt. On the contrary, I was under the impression that I knew its nature distinctly” (Second Meditation).



Descartes

Giving Up the Body Theory

- The difference between the body and mind can be traced to doubting.
- We can doubt a lot about our bodies.
 - ▶ We mis-perceive them.
 - ▶ We could be dreaming.
 - ▶ We could be under the false impression that there is a material world.
 - ▶ Leibniz's rainbow



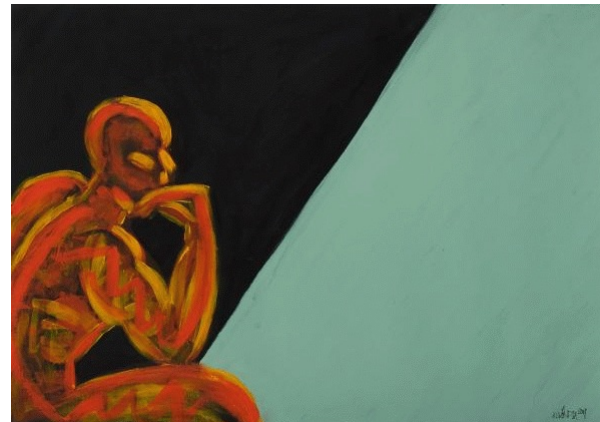
More Problems with the Body Theory of Identity

- The claim that we are identical to our bodies is problematic.
- Our bodies are constantly changing in a way that our selves are not.
- Artifacts like the ship of Theseus (and my sukkah) appear to have identity conditions that go beyond their material composition.
- We might want a strict criterion for identity, on which the ship is constantly changing.
 - ▶ We might be able to live with that inconstant result.
 - ▶ We would have a merely practical problem of determining which ship belongs to Theseus.
- For our selves, we have a deeper problem.
 - ▶ We remain constant.
 - ▶ I have interests in the future of my self that I do not have for other people.

Surety and the Mind

Descartes Embracing the Soul Theory

- Doubts about the physical world do not extend to the mental world.
- We can not doubt the existence of our thoughts.
- Thus, says Descartes, we can be sure about the existence of our minds without knowing anything securely about our bodies.
- Descartes concludes from this difference that we are essentially only our minds.
- The mind is the soul.



Descartes Full View

Not Quite the Soul Theory

- Descartes actually believes that we are an amalgam of our minds and bodies.
- But, Descartes's view is subtle, and liable to be interpreted as a soul theory of identity.
- “It seems that the argument proves too much, and takes us back to the Platonic view (which you reject) that nothing corporeal belongs to our essence, so that man is merely a rational soul and the body merely a vehicle for the soul, a view which gives rise to the definition of man as a soul which makes use of a body” (Arnauld, *Fourth Objections*, AT VII.203).
- Let's look at the original.

Clark

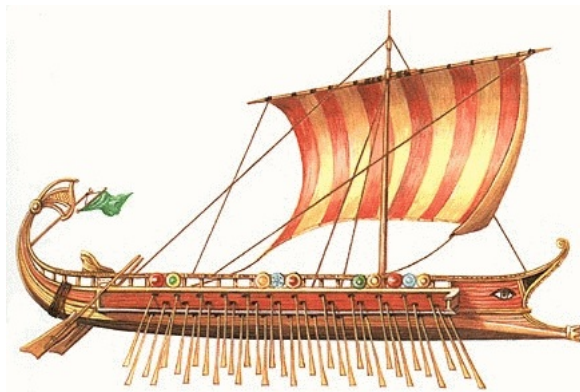
Sense Perception and the Forms

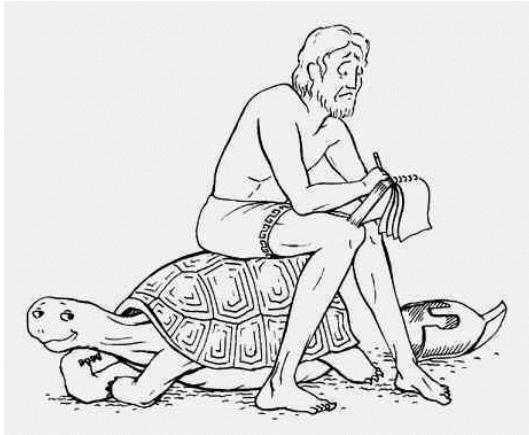
from *Phaedo*

- ▶ Do we say there is such a thing as justice by itself, or not?
- ▶ We do say so, certainly!
- ▶ Such a thing as the good and beautiful?
- ▶ Of course!
- ▶ And did you ever see one of them with your eyes?
- ▶ Never... (*Phaedo* 181).

Inconstancy in the World

- Plato believes that reality is not as we perceive it.
 - not perceivable with our senses
- The objects of our senses are constantly changing.
 - Particulars in our world are inconstant and unreliable.
 - Material constitution
 - My physical constitution





Paradoxes

- Zeno's paradoxes of motion
- The sorites
- Sorites arguments can be run for just about any physical property.
- So, all physical properties lead to inconstancy and paradox.
- But, reality must be stable and true.



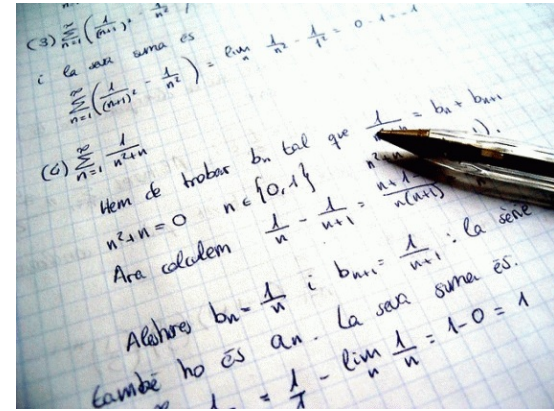
Knowledge and Constancy

- Plato: If we are going to know something, then, it has to be something lasting, not fleeting.
- Parmenides: all change is an illusion.
- Descartes
 - ▶ Some years ago now I observed the multitude of errors that I had accepted as true in my earliest years, and the dubiousness of the whole superstructure I had since then reared on them; and the consequent need of making a clean sweep for once in my life, and beginning again from the very foundations, if I would establish some *secure and lasting result in science* (Descartes, First Meditation 61).
- If some things were stable and perfect, then we could have knowledge of them.

The Forms

- Prototypes, universals on which the properties of particular sensible objects are based
- Causes of the qualities of things
 - Consider any two blue things.
 - They share a common property.
 - 'x is blue' means that x participates in the form of blueness.
- Perfect, unchanging realities
- Knowledge is thus always of forms.
 - beauty
 - justice
 - truth
 - love
 - other properties

Mathematics



- We have lots of mathematical knowledge.
- We never have any sensory experience with perfect geometric shapes or numbers.
- The theorems we know hold only of perfect mathematical objects.
- Similarly, we never experience anything perfectly straight, or pitched, or just, or beautiful.
- We must have knowledge of the perfect archetypes, since we can compare sensible things to them.

Two Arguments for Immortality

The Independence of the Soul

- The cyclical argument
- Learning is recollection.

The Cyclical Argument

- Any quality of a thing arises from participation in its opposite form.
- Sleeping and waking
- Bigger and smaller
- Living and death
- Irreparably unsatisfying

Learning is Recollection

- Poverty of the stimulus
- Knowledge of the forms must precede any knowledge of particulars.
- When I see a picture of my daughter, I can note similarities and dissimilarities with my idea of her.
- In order to note the similarities and differences, I have to know both my daughter and the picture.
- I also have to know when two things are equal, and unequal.
- Real equality must be absolute identity, which I never experience with my senses.
- My knowledge must precede my birth.
- The soul has to be able to exist independently of the body.

The Soul Theory of the Self

- The self is the soul.
 - ▶ longer-lasting than the body
 - ▶ pre-existing the body
- For Descartes, the soul is the mind, the seat of thought.
- Plato's soul is not exactly a mind.
- There are essentially two aspects of platonic souls.
 - ▶ 1. They are the seat of knowledge, performing the functions that we attribute to minds.
 - ▶ 2. They are the bringers of life; having a soul distinguishes living things from non-living things.
- The three-part division
 - ▶ a rational part
 - ▶ an appetitive part
 - ▶ a spirited part