

Epistemology

Epistemology (The study of Knowledge)

Rationalism- The theory that fundamental nature of reality can be known a priori (knowledge that is not grounded from sense experience, knowledge that is innate.).

René Descartes (1596-1650) • Father of Analytic Geometry (Cartesian Coordinate System) • The Meditations on First Philosophy ◦ Intellectual Background: Why is he trying to doubt all of these beliefs? a. Renaissance science (Galileo, Kepler, Copernicus) overturns the Aristotelian science that had dominated Western Europe for centuries. b. 1560s: First Latin translations of the Outlines of Pyrrhonism by Sextus Empiricus. (Classic work on skepticism) Not many people read Greek, so it was translated to Latin. c. A and B lead to C the: Revival of Skepticism in Late 16th and Early 17th Century France ◦ Skepticism: Theory that knowledge of reality is not possible.

Descartes's Aim: Defeat Skepticism... Put Philosophy on a Foundation of Certainty ◦ Method of Systematic Doubt § Method of Doubt: Resolves to accept as true only those beliefs he can find no reason to doubt. § Systematic: Calls into doubt the foundation of his former beliefs. § His strategy is to turn skepticism on itself. He wants to find his Archimedean Point, to build his entire philosophy. § The doubt is hyperbolic or exaggerated. (Reasons for doubt just have to be consistent) § Legitimate Reason to Doubt: ◻ Need not known to be true ◻ Need not known to be likely ◻ Need only be a consistent supposition that would render the belief doubtful.

Epistemology (cont)

Meditation One: Doubting the Foundations of His Former Beliefs § First Foundation: The Senses and Sense Experience ◻ Main Reason to Doubt ® The Dreamer Hypothesis: All of one's experiences might be and elaborate dream. Call into doubt the existence of the material world. § Second Foundation: Intellectual Intuition ◻ The use of reason to grasp a priori, self-evident propositions and to derive conclusions therefrom. ◻ Main Reason to Doubt ® The Deceiving God Hypothesis: There might be an omnipotent but malevolent being that uses its power to bring it about that we are deceived even in our intellectual intuitions.

Meditation Two: Descartes's Archimedean Point in Epistemology § Sum res cogitans = I exist as a thinking thing. § Even a deceiving god could not deceive Descartes about this belief. § Justification: in order to have any beliefs, including false ones, one must exist as a thinking thing. § The Cogito: This argument is commonly referred to as the "Cogito". ◻ Limitation on the conclusion of the Cogito: Descartes has proven only his existence as a thinking thing, but does not yet know with certainty that he has a body. (The existence of matter is still in doubt at this point in the Meditations.)

Meditation Three: Extending knowledge beyond the Cogito § What is it about the cogito that makes it certain? ◻ Descartes's Answer: I understand it clearly and distinctly. ◻ Truth Rule: whatever I understand very clearly and distinctly is true. ◻ Problem: the deceiving god hypothesis. ◻ Before he can trust the truth rule, Descartes must prove God's existence and veracity.

Meditation Four: Descartes's solution to the problem of error

Epistemology (cont)

Meditation Five: A second argument for God's existence. (The Ontological Argument)

Meditation Six: Two Arguments: § The proof of the real distinction between the Mind and the body. The proof of the existence of the external material world.

Background to Descartes' Argument for Gods Existence ◦ There are degrees of reality. § The degree of a thing's reality is a direct function of its degree of perfection. ◦ Distinction between two kinds of reality: § Formal Reality: the reality that a thing has in its own right. Objective Reality: the reality a thing has in respect of its representational content. (That is, the reality that exists as a representation.)

Descartes' Argument for Gods Existence 1) The cause of an idea must have at least as much formal reality as the objective reality contained by the idea. 2) I have an idea of God; that is, an idea of a being that is supremely perfect. From 1) and 2) 3) The cause of my idea of God must have at least as much formal reality as the objective reality contained in the idea. From 2) and the definition of formal reality: 4) A being with at least as much formal reality as the objective reality contained in the idea of God would be God. From 3) & 4): 5) God must be the cause of my idea of God. From 5): 6) God exists.

Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) ◦ An Apology for Raymond Sebond (1586) (A defense not an apology. He says that they really don't work, but the arguments that people use in metaphysics generally don't work) § He believed that all the articles of the faith could be proven by reason alone. ◦ Montaigne uses the skeptical arguments of Sextus Empiricus to "defend" 15th Century Theologian, Raymond Sebond.

Empiricism

Empiricism (All knowledge of reality is a posteriori/sense experience, David Hume)

a. David Hume- Working in the 18th Century otherwise known as the Age of Enlightenment. Characteristics: i. Optimism about human progress in science and technology ii. A call to each individual to trust her or his ability to use reason to understand reality and morality. iii. This force is Liberating: Human beings are liberated from the "bonds" of unreasoned faith in authority, superstition, and prejudice b. The figure responsible for this attitude is Isaac Newton (1642-1727) i. Offered a unified system of mechanics: a set of simple and comprehensive principles that governed the behavior of both celestial and terrestrial motions of bodies. c. Alexander Pope on Newton's Achievement- "Natures and Natures laws lay hid in night. God said "Let Newton be!", and all was light."

d. Hume's Aspiration- To be the Newton of Human Nature i. Goal: To provide simple and comprehensive principles that describe human behavior and human understanding. ii. Set Limits to Human Understanding iii. Debunk religious superstition and unfounded metaphysical speculation

Empiricism (cont)

e. A Science of the Human Understanding i. Twofold Classification of Perceptions (Perception = Any Mental Representation) 1) Impressions: Actual (Occurrent) sensations, emotions and desires. Tend to be very forceful and lively. 2) Ideas: Recollected or imagined sensations, emotions and desires. Less forceful and lively than impressions, but otherwise qualitatively similar to them. ii. The Copy Principle... "all our ideas or more feeble perceptions are copies of our impressions or more lively ones" (Enquiry, Section II) iii. The content of all our thinking ultimately is derived from experience. iv. Qualification: We can have compound ideas that did not previously occur as impressions v. Once we have derived various ideas from impressions we can arrange those ideas in ways that were never experienced as impressions. vi. An Exception to the Copy Principle: The Missing Shade of Blue 1) The mind can supply a simple idea that did not occur previously as impression

vii. Classification of Judgements (Knowledge Claims) 1) Judgements expressing relations of ideas: "every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain." a) True in respect of the meanings of the terms b) In that sense they are known a priori i) No experience would falsify them ii) They provide no positive knowledge about the world. c) This is why his belief that these judgements are a priori does not violate Hume's empiricism. d) Their Negotiation leads to an internally contradictory statement. e) All a priori judgements fall into this category

Empiricism (cont)

2) Judgments expressing matters of the fact: a) They're contingent judgments in that their truth and falsity are both conceivable and possible b) Their negation does not result in an internally contradictory statement c) Two kinds: i) Reports of direct experience One. Example: there are over three people in this room Two. I am wearing shoes ii) Claims about states of affairs not directly observed One. Example: claims about the future: this pen will fall when released Two. Claims about the past and the present can also fall in to this category: all bachelors are happy, there was a lightning strike iii) What is our justification for claims of type 2? iv) Hume's initial answer: our belief in casual relations v) What is our justification for belief in casual relations? Not a priori: negating a casual relation does not result in an internal contradiction. Studying a cause on its own will never reveal its effect vi) Hume's answer: experience of constant conjunction - one kind of event is said to be the cause of a second kind of event because the first kind of event is repeatedly followed by the second kind in our existence vii) This means we are justifying judgements of type 2 B with t 2 A

3) Inductive inference: using direct observation, both past and present, to draw conclusions about matters not directly observed a) Hume asks: Why should we think that this works? Can we give a rational justification for inductive inferences? NO

Empiricism (cont)

4) Possible rational justification: a) Principle of the uniformity of nature (PUN): state of affairs that resemble each other in all respects except spatial and temporal location will exhibit the same properties or characteristics b) The future will resemble the past c) Hume's question: what is your justification for PUN? i) Not known a priori: the negation does not lead to an internal contradiction ii) PUN has been repeatedly confirmed in our experience iii) Because that is an inductive inference and would amount to a circular justification iv) There is no rational justification for PUN - Hume

5) The problem of induction a) Inductive inferences are not reports of direct experience (by definition), are not known a priori (the negation test), and they cannot be derived validly from direct experience (attempting to do so is to offer a circular justification) b) Hume's conclusion: there is no rational justification for making inductive inferences c) What is the basis for our practice of making inductive inferences? i) Hume's response: the non-rational principle of habit (or custom) (defines habit as a propensity produced by the repetition of an act to renew the same act without using reasoning to do so

6) Important clarification of Hume's position a) Hume does not think we should stop making inductive inferences b) Hume does not think inductive inferences are bad c) Hume believes that inductive inferences are reliable d) He simply thinks it is an interesting fact about how the human mind works that our inductive practices are grounded in habit and not reason

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

a. Critique of pure reason (1781) i. A synthesis of Rationalism and Empiricism ii. Kant's classification of judgments 1) Hume's classification conflated two different considerations 2) Kant notes that judgments can be considered in two distinct ways 3) Epistemically: with respect to how they are known to be true or false Semantically: with respect to the meaning relations of their terms

iii. Epistemic distinction, two kinds of judgments 1) A priori: known to be true independently of experience. (no possible experience would ever falsify the judgment) Necessarily true. a) $5+7=12$, all bachelors are unmarried 2) A posteriori: known to be true on the basis of experience (experience might possibly falsify them) Contingently true. a) All humans are under 12 ft tall, all swans are white

iv. Semantic distinction, two kinds of judgements 1) Analytic: the meaning of the predicate term is contained within the meaning of the subject term. Negation leads to an internally contradictory statement. Explicative: the predicate term merely explicates the subject term Examples: all bachelors are unmarried, a red ball has color 2) Synthetic: the meaning of the predicate term is not contained within the meaning of the subject term, negation does not lead to an internally contradictory statement 3) Ampliative: the predicate term adds to or amplifies the meaning of the subject term 4) Examples: all humans are under 12 ft tall, all Mondays are depressing

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) (cont)

v. Kant's fourfold classification of judgments 1) Analytic A priori judgments a) Examples: all bachelors are unmarried, a red ball is colored, a triangle has three angles 2) Analytic A posteriori judgments a) THERE ARE NO EXAMPLES OF ANALYTIC A POSTERIORI JUDGMENTS b) THESE JUDGMENTS WOULD BE SUCH THAT EXPERIENCE MIGHT POSSIBLY FALSIFY THEM; HOWEVER, TO DO SO EXPERIENCE WOULD HAVE TO EMBODY A CONTRADICTION c) This will be a question on the test, the answer is none of the above 3) Synthetic A posteriori judgments a) Examples: all humans are under 12 ft tall, swans are white

This is not one of the factors that contributed to a revival of skepticism in early 17th century France. The publication of Hume's Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. Descartes's method of doubt is systematic because he subjects to doubt the foundations of his former beliefs. The following is an example of what Hume would call a judgment expressing a relation of ideas: All bachelors are unmarried. According to Hume, we can tell that the Principle of the Uniformity of Nature is not known a priori because its negation (denial) does not lead to an internally contradictory statement. According to Kant, which of the following is an analytic a posteriori judgment? Not Ball cabbage Black Bear, Human. None of the Above. Descartes says The idea of the human being has the highest degree of formal reality.