

I. Intelligible Reality v. The World We Live In

Each of the philosophers we have studied propose that we revise our understanding of the world we live in day and night (WWLI).

- a. WWLI – various “takes”
 - i. It’s a world of “inherited prejudice and received opinion,” fraught with error, mere custom, parochial points of view...
 - ii. It’s a world of sensible, “medium sized dry goods” – solid, colored, fragrant, useful, dangerous things. It’s the world in which we know how to conduct our practical lives. We’re habituated to it, and we “know the ropes” of this world. (We’d be lost without it.)
 - iii. It’s the world in which humans “first encounter themselves as humans” – the world in which we “discover” ourselves to be who we are. (Without this world, we wouldn’t know who we are.)
- b. Plato accepts that WWLI is in flux and subject to such change that we can *know* little about it. Because, however, it “imitates” or “participates in” or “reflects” an Intelligible Reality, we can make some sense of the WWLI. Our sense of IR, however, depends on figuring out what it is about the WWLI that is unchanging and fixed. The key that Plato offered was to take seriously the idea that particulars are systematically interconnected by way of abstract, singular terms, which themselves are systematically interconnected – in fact hierarchically arranged. This is what he makes of noticing that we think of, and know of, things not just that each exists as an individual. We know of them as particulars of particular kinds. I don’t just know Socrates as a particular individual, I know him as Socrates who is a man, or who is wise, or who is virtuous.
- c. It’s difficult to avoid the conclusion that insofar as the WWLI is subject to change, we cannot understand it.
- d. Aristotle builds on Plato’s insights. Indeed we do know, not just Socrates *as himself*, and we do know his *as a man*, but we also know a good deal about how he changes, particularly insofar as he is a man. *Being man*, Aristotle points out, isn’t a static condition, so it cannot be accounted for by postulating a things relation to a static, unchanging Form

II. "Ideas" in Plato and Descartes

- a. Plato holds a Representative philosophy of mind. We do not have "direct apprehension" of Reality; rather, varying states of the soul represent Reality to the individual. One sort of state might represent this triangle; another sort might represent Triangularity. This, in the end, is the source of "Cartesian Doubt," that what we have in mind, as representation, may not have much to do with Reality. All such "Representative Theories" are going to have to address this problem.
- b. Perception and Intellection are analogous processes for Plato. Outline perception as it's presented in *Theaetetus*.
- c. Plato takes seriously the fact that messy approximations of triangles can lead us into thinking of Triangularity. (*Meno*, of course) In his view, we can see The Triangle in *this* approximation of a triangle because we already have the concept of triangle in mind, albeit our present corporeal condition has beset us with confusing "noise" that has made us forget what we once actively knew. (Do we need perception to recover our memories? No, *Republic* Book VI. Dialectic will do the job. Compare Descartes.)
- d. Minds, however, are turned towards Forms in two ways: through perception and changing things; through intellection and unchanging Forms, i.e. in sensation and knowledge.
- e. We have come by our ability to think of triangles (or Triangularity, or *this* as a triangle) by way of our encounters with the Forms. As in perception, where this triangle causes us to sense a triangle, so in intellection. The Form Triangularity causes us to grasp Triangularity, to represent it in thought (and thus become able to think of triangles). The relationship between our representations and Reality is "causal." That's how our thoughts get to be *about* Reality.
- f. Descartes shares with Plato this causal theory of concept formation. This is a One to Many relationship. Many minds thus come to share the same concepts.
- g. Unchanging Forms "cause" our souls to be so modified. That unchanging Forms could "cause" changes in the soul was a puzzling idea. Soon, Augustine and other Platonists, would make Forms into Divine Ideas (and thus mind-dependent) and this causal relation into one of Divine Illumination. Aristotle rejected this notion of causality. "Primary substances," which are changing, can be causes not only of our perceptual representations, but of our intellectual representations as well.

- h. Plato's doctrine of recollection is a consequence of his analysis of how we can know what we know – the possibilities of knowledge.
- i. Forms (Ideas) are not mind-dependent for Plato. He's alone in this. In Descartes, the realm of ideas take up residence in the mind of God. Now God is the cause of our concepts, of our abilities to think of triangularity, for example. Divine illumination takes the place of "causation by the Forms" in Descartes thought.
- j. What is the relationship between God and the Forms, God's goodness and the World as we finally come to know it?

III. Aristotle: a brief comparison to Plato

"Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu"

- a. What is the relationship between what we have *in intellectu* and what we have *in sensu*?
- b. We must distinguish between *necessity* and *sufficiency* here.
- c. Plato does think that having something *in sensu* can be a help, but he does not accept this as a necessary condition for grasping what can really be known, the Forms and their relationships. See *Republic* VI. Certainly he does not see perception as *sufficient* for intellection, or knowledge.
- d. Aristotle, however, does hold that no universal can be apprehended without our having either the sense experience of instances of that universal or having images supplied by the imagination. See Ross, p. 148
- e. In *De Anima*, Book III, chapter 8, Aristotle lays out his position with some clarity.
- f. But again, necessity and sufficiency are two different matters. Only sufficiency leads to the position of *concept empiricism* that we will encounter in *British Empiricism*.

IV. What about Bacon and concept formation?

- a. Bacon seems to be a concept empiricist, and he surely falls within the broad Aristotelian tradition that nothing is found in intellect which has not first been found in the senses.
- b. Bacon proposes important reforms, and he concerns himself with how we might better realize our potential for "getting the world right." He raises a difficulty that Aristotelians had to confront. What will guide us from our

perceptions and imaginings to the “true Forms” of sensible things and their relationships? Our natures (tribe), histories (cave), associates (forum) and educations (theater) misguide, mislead, distort, and confuse us – with the consequence that our concepts have been badly formed. We should not however, construe these difficulties as arising from language, from our “way with symbols.” This would be seriously anachronistic. It wasn’t until the 20th c. that philosophers began to look at language not simply as the *expression* of thought but as something that either at a deep or surface level *determines*, in important respects, how we think.

- c. The problem that seems to be in the background of Bacon’s thinking is a real one for either Aristotelians, broadly, or concept empiricists. If our ability to think (have a concept) depends on our experience and our imagination, then what will ensure that we have requisite experience for coming to grips with the True Forms? However a philosopher gives this account of how we come by the sort of experience and imagination that will lead to adequate, “true” concepts, the account cannot imply that we already have those concepts prior to our experiencings and imaginings.
- d. Bacon’s solution is a method of “true induction.” A systematic search through our experience will lead us, by successive approximation, to concepts that represent the “true natures” found in reality: ultimately simple, interrelated, “structures of particles” that “mix” or “unmix” to produce Nature as we have come to know it *via* its various appearances.